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Understanding the place and meaning of physical activity in the lives of young people: An ethnographic study with two youth centres in a low-income urban area of Northern England

MORRIS, STEPHANIE,LAURA

Abstract

Understanding the place and meaning of physical activity in the lives of young people: An ethnographic study with two youth centres in a low-income urban area of Northern England

Stephanie Morris

This study was conducted in response to the low levels of physical activity in young people in the UK (and elsewhere) that are considered a major public health challenge. Adopting a critical ethnographic approach, this study explores how physical activity fits into the daily lives of young people (13-21-year-olds) from two youth centres in an urban area of Northern England. This approach enabled the exploration of young people's physical activity perceptions and practices within the context, complexities, and contingencies of their wider lives, rather than as a compartmentalised phenomenon.

Drawing on recent re-conceptualisations of the life-course and anthropological theories of childhood, I show that changes in physical activity over time were enmeshed within life-phase expectations and experiences, but were also non-linear and contingent. Social expectations of adolescence limited some young people's physical activity practices, and yet many etched out ways of being mobile and physically active, including re-living childhood games on the streets, parks, and at youth centres. Employing spatial theories, I explain how the young people negotiated their sense of safety in their local environments in order to be mobile; created places of their own for sociality; and used spaces and props in the material environment to engage in informal physical activity practices such as "hardcore parkour". I lastly use Foucauldian and gender theories to re-think how understandings and practices of physical activity were gendered, and centred around the self and the body's appearance and capability. Many of the young men in particular engaged in 'self-bettering' practices: some took up boxing to deal with challenges in their lives and some shaped muscular, fit, and 'healthy' bodies.

This thesis critically challenges the dominant discourses that shape young people's individualistic understandings of themselves, their lives, and their physical activity practices. Engaging closely with the young people's actions and experiences helps to reveal how the socioeconomic and material environments, that young people negotiate in daily life, interact with their physical activity and mobility practices.

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Stephanie Morris

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Department of Anthropology
Durham University

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

Statement of Copyright

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is written in response to both a public health problem and a problem with public health: the low levels of physical activity in young people, which are considered "one of the major public health challenges of our time" (Sallis et al., 2004:249), and the presentation of young people as a group who 'fail' to meet physical activity recommendations. This thesis analyses the place and meaning of physical activity within the complex lives of three different groups of young people from two youth centres in an urban area of Northern England. It explores young people's understandings, perceptions, and practices of physical activity within the context of young people's life circumstances, biographies, and experiences; and provides a critical interpretation using re-conceptualisations of the life course, understandings of spatiality, and Foucauldian theories.

Physical activity is defined as "any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure" (World Health Organization, 2016a). The term 'physical inactivity' has become widely used as a synonym for low levels of physical activity, below what is recommended for children and adults (60 and 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) per day, respectively) (World Health Organization, 2016a).

At the time of writing, 'physical inactivity' is said to be "the fourth leading cause of death worldwide" (Kohl et al., 2012:294). Reports claim that in "England physical inactivity causes 10 per cent of heart disease, 13 per cent of type 2 diabetes, 18 per cent of breast cancer and 17 per cent of all mortality" (Local Government Association, 2015:3). The 'burden' of 'physical inactivity' is also discussed in relation to the UK's National Health Service (NHS) costs (Allender et al., 2007): calculations suggested that 'physical inactivity'-related ill health costs the NHS £0.9 billion in 2006-2007 (Scarborough et al., 2011). In the UK, and in other Western societies, this 'burden' of 'physical inactivity' appears to be connected to societal changes since the 1950s. In recent decades, work has become more sedentary, and TV-watching and car use have increased dramatically (Pollard, 2008). However, according to Hallal et al. (2012), who reviewed numerous studies worldwide, adults' leisure-time physical activity, including sports participation, has increased in England and other high-income countries in the past 20-30 years.

The positive effects of 'physical activity' appear to have been recast into negative effects of 'physical inactivity' (Cohn, 2014). Obesity, which is at the forefront of public health concerns in the UK and other Western countries, is portrayed as a primary negative effect of 'physical inactivity' through individual positive energy balances (Williams et al., 2015).

According to Kohl et al. (2012:294), most of the disease risks associated with low levels of physical activity "are not mediated through body composition". Nonetheless, physical activity tends to be promoted as a means of weight loss in popular media, and is fully intertwined within the 'obesity epidemic' discourse (Gard & Wright, 2005). The conflation of 'physical inactivity' with obesity has led to problematic assumptions about certain body types: a body with 'excess' fat is assumed to be 'inactive' (Burrows & McCormack, 2013; Pike & Colquhoun, 2010; Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015).

Within these intertwined public health 'crises', young people, and adolescents in particular, take centre stage. Childhood obesity is said to be a 'growing problem' (Williams et al., 2015). Moreover, epidemiological studies in multiple Western countries show low levels of physical activity in children and adolescents, and declining physical activity levels as young people age, with teen years being where the largest declines occur (Hallal et al., 2012; Jago et al., 2008; Nader et al., 2008; Sallis, 2000). The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that 5-17-year-olds should spend at least 60 minutes per day in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA), whereas recent objective measures show that, of a sample of 11-15-year-olds in England, only 7% of boys and 0% of girls met these recommendations (Health Survey for England, 2009).

Low levels of physical activity in childhood, physical activity declines across adolescence, and the connection to concerns about childhood obesity, appear to be producing what authors call a 'moral panic' around childhood 'physical inactivity' (Wright & Macdonald, 2010). Today's children and young people have been labelled the "least active generation in history", and are considered a "ticking time bomb" (UKActiveKids, 2015:12). According to Wright and Macdonald (2010), the 'moral panic' around physical inactivity positions young people, and certain groups of adolescents in particular, as a homogeneous group who are making 'bad' health choices, dropping sports, and becoming sedentary.

Wright and Macdonald (2010) suggest that the way in which physical activity is conceptualised influences how physical activity is talked about in research, framed in public discourse, and included in governmental and non-governmental policies and interventions. Wright and Macdonald (2010) claim that physical activity has been categorised into sport, physical fitness, and exercise (Pink, 2008). I suggest that these categories emphasise formal and organised forms of physical activity, appear to ignore more daily forms of movement, and may in part explain a focus on sport and Physical Education in the UK. In 2013, the UK government "committed an additional £150 million per year towards Physical Education (PE) and Sport" (UKActiveKids, 2015:8), and in January 2017, a new national monitored exercise regime was announced to be rolled out in all primary schools across England (Yorke, 2017).

There is value in understanding and promoting school PE and sport: an analysis of accelerometer data from Swiss children (n=900, aged 7 and 11) showed that children were significantly more active on PE days in comparison to non PE days (Meyer et al., 2013). However, Fairclough and Stratton (2005) showed that low-ability English adolescents (n= 122, aged 11-14) were less active than high ability adolescents during PE lessons, and Oreskovic et al. (2015) showed that adolescents (n=80, aged 11-14) were most likely to be active outdoors, which included outdoor spaces in out-of-school contexts. These studies imply that there are limitations to PE and to sports that may require high ability. Therefore, more knowledge about the informal out-of-school activities that young people engage in is needed, and a greater understanding of how meanings regarding physical activity play out in daily life is necessary.

Similar to PE and sport, parks and recreational physical activity facilities are considered important infrastructures for facilitating physical activity in children and young people (Bauman & Bull, 2007; Davison & Lawson, 2006; Grow et al., 2008). However, research from a sample of children in England suggested that the majority of 11-12-year-olds' physical activity was located in concrete areas, roads, and streets (Lachowycz et al., 2012). Unsafe 'sidewalks' have been found to influence children's physical activity, especially in the USA and Australia (Bauman & Bull, 2007), and safe streets and street connectivity have garnered significant attention regarding active school travel (Giles-Corti et al., 2011). However, streets may be considered less 'appropriate areas' for young people to engage in informal and non-transport related physical activity because of the ideologies regarding where they should spend their time. Young people are a spatially 'marginalised group' (Vanderbeck & Johnson, 2000): when young people spend time on the streets they are either *in* danger themselves or *a* danger to others (Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Valentine, 1996). Consequently, on the one hand, young people are perceived as lazy for sitting indoors watching TV and using computers or consoles (Critcher, 2008), whilst on the other hand, they are considered troublesome or potentially 'at risk' if they spend time outside on the streets (Valentine, 1996). Young people's ability to use outdoor public spaces is therefore sandwiched between contradictory discourses.

Whether the focus is on sport, walking to school, or using parks, the UK government and other public health organisations tend to promote physical activity by persuading individuals to change their 'health behaviours' (Cohn, 2014; Pooley et al., 2013). Changing one's behaviours often involves making 'good' choices by engaging in discrete forms of physical activity (sports, exercise, physical fitness), which may include cycling to school or work, joining an after school/work sports club, or joining a gym. Pooley et al. (2013) note that policies for increasing cycling and walking tend to include promoting active travel as good for one's health, and infrastructure changes that aim to make

walking or cycling 'easy' for people to take up. However, as Pooley et al. (2013) explain, these approaches fail to consider the complexities of daily life that hinder change. Critiques of the 'health behaviour' approach to physical activity see the concept as too individualised, "too contained, too delineated and too far removed from everyday social life" (Cohn, 2014:162).

From the outset, in this thesis, I deliberately avoid conceptualising physical activity as a 'behaviour' in young people that needs to be changed. Anthropology as a discipline stresses the importance of 'context', and as such suggests that 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' 'behaviours', which can include physical activity, are socially and culturally construed, influenced by experience, and shaped by as well as shaping the contexts where daily lives play out (Guell, 2009). Thus, in this thesis, I view physical activity as a set of practices embedded in daily life that are "contingent upon, a wide range of factors", such as economic, material, and social factors, that occur alongside individuals' actions (Cohn, 2014:161).

"The circumstances in which people live and work are intimately related to risk of illness and length of life" (Marmot, 2004:14). And yet, children and young people's physical activity practices are often studied and presented in separation from their daily circumstances. Wright and Macdonald (2010:2), among others, have recently explored young people's subjective experiences of physical activity, and how their "choices are made in the context of their personal biographies and the political, economic, cultural and geographical contexts of their daily lives". This thesis contributes to this emerging field of physical activity research that harnesses a critical sociocultural and ethnographic approach: I use ethnographic methods to study informal physical activity and understandings of physical activity in out-of-school contexts.

Ethnography is a long established method for understanding young people's lives (see MacLeod, 1987; Mead, 1928; Willis, 1977), and yet only a handful of studies use ethnography to investigate young people's physical activity practices specifically (see Atencio, 2006; Barron, 2013; Fitzpatrick, 2011b; Hills, 2007). Much of the ethnographic literature that focuses on young people's physical activity is conducted in schools, or participants are recruited through schools (see Burrows & McCormack, 2013; Fitzpatrick, 2011b; Hills, 2007): only Atencio (2006) and Barron (2013) have used participant observation in neighbourhoods where young people live. However, as Barron's study focused on active play in 9-13 year olds living in housing estates in Ireland, which all had communal green areas with trees, bushes and flower beds, different findings are likely to arise in an urban inner city context, and with older groups of young people. Similarly, as Atencio's research with individual 13-18-year-olds from ethnically diverse urban neighbourhoods in a US city was driven by a poststructuralist theoretical perspective,

different analyses and focuses may reveal additional insights into different young people's lives and physical activity practices.

My PhD research is distinct from the ethnographic studies detailed above because my ethnographic fieldwork was conducted with established friendship groups in and around youth centres. This distinction is important because working in youth centres enabled access to young people's daily lives outside of school, and provided access to those who had also left school or who were considered 'disengaged' at school. Ethnographic methods have been used in youth centres to explore youth transitions and citizenship (Hall et al., 1999) and on the streets to explore young men's street cultures and the connection with drug and alcohol use (Pavis & Cunningham-Burley, 1999). However, this PhD study is the only study to use ethnographic methods to explore physical activity in the spaces where young people (13-21-year-olds) live and socialise, and learn about informal and organised physical activity outside of the school context.

1.1 Research aims, methods, and setting

The principal aim of this research was to investigate how physical activity fitted or did not fit into the young people's day-to-day realities. As themes emerged from the data, I began to focus on how aspects of the social environment influenced the young people's movement and use of space; how physical activity practices changed over time; and what the young people felt motivated themselves or others to engage (or disengage) in physical activity. To understand the young people's perceptions and day-to-day physical activity practices, I used a variety of ethnographic methods, including participation observation, mobile ethnography, visual ethnography, participant photography, and various interview techniques during immersive fieldwork over a 16-month period. I worked with three groups of young people who attended two youth centres: Space1 and HIDE2[1]. A small scale qualitative approach was chosen as it enabled an "in-depth and contextualised exploration of physical activity…which is not afforded with traditional quantitative methods" (Lee & Macdonald, 2009:372).

The fieldwork was situated in a city in Northern England, an area which has suffered the effects of de-industrialisation and unemployment. According to the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015, the 'neighbourhoods'[2] in which Space 1 and HIDE2 were located were amongst the 10% and 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country, respectively. The local area that the youth centres served was home to a diverse array of

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[1] For ethical reasons regarding anonymity, I use pseudonym names for all people and locations including, the city, wards, youth centres, staff, and young people.
[2] The lower-layer Super Output Areas in the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015 are considered 'neighbourhoods'.

people, having seen changes with different waves of migration, including from South Asia and, more recently, from Eastern Europe.

1.2 Thesis overview

The structure of this thesis intentionally merges the design of a public health research paper with an ethnographic monograph: the structure aims to show how bridges can be built between two polarised research paradigms in order to further knowledge of a complex phenomenon. The critical analysis presented in this thesis does not claim to provide a generalizable image of what young people do in terms of physical activity; instead it describes, analyses, and opens to scrutiny what can be considered "hidden agendas, power centres, and assumptions that inhibit, repress and constrain" young people's meanings and practices of physical activity (Thomas, 1993:3).

Chapter 2 provides a review of literature on physical activity and young people, and explains the rationale for using an ethnographic approach to research young people's meanings and day-to-day practices of physical activity. It outlines why young people are seen as a 'problem' within public health by reviewing epidemiological and social science literature, and highlights the gaps that this PhD study aims to help fill. This chapter argues that ethnographic studies, which are currently small in number, can contribute to understandings about physical activity in young people by building a picture of how individual experiences of physical activity are connected to local and national socio-economic contexts, and 'obesity' and 'healthism' discourses.

Chapter 3 then combines 'context' with 'methodology'. It tells the story of the research process, which, like the young people's lives, was non-linear, serendipitous, and fraught with logistical and emotional challenges. The chapter begins by addressing how the research project evolved over time, before introducing the youth centres, Space1 and HIDE2, and the young people. The chapter also provides a methodological rationale for combining participant observation, participant photography, interviews, and mobile and visual ethnography; it discusses details of the methods and analytical procedures used, and highlights the need to maintain flexibility when researching with young people in youth centres. Lastly, I reflect on the process of doing research, addressing the boundaries of ethnography, my positionality, and my role in the creation and interpretation of the data discussed in this thesis.

Due to my focus on understanding the young people's lives, as well as physical activity, the results and discussion chapters of this thesis include narratives of several of the young people I got to know. These narratives are inspired by Daniel Miller, whose stories of Londoners in *The Comfort of Things* (2008) and Trinidadians in *Tales from Facebook*

(2011) ignited in me a passion for anthropological writing. I use some of the narratives in this thesis in a similar manner to the vignettes written by MacLeod in his sociological ethnography, *'Ain't no making it: leveled aspirations in a low-income neighbourhood'* (1987), which provided detailed information on the young people's histories and realities: their pasts, presents, and futures. Three lengthy narratives, constructed from multiple fieldnotes, and interview and focus group transcripts, act to introduce and illustrate the central themes examined in each of the discussion chapters that they forward. Other narratives are found in the body of each chapter as extended examples. These provide the reader with a grounded insight into the empirical basis of the theoretical developments, and enable the reader to get to know some of the young people throughout the course of this thesis, as I did throughout fieldwork.

The results and discussion part of this thesis comprises three chapters. Each chapter discusses an overarching theme that utilises a particular set of theoretical ideas and literature. This use of contrasting theories is connected to my inductive approach to data analysis, which is preferred in critical ethnography: different theoretical ideas are used to help explain the key themes that emerged from the data, rather than the research aims and questions being formulated and shaped along one particular theoretical line.

Chapter 4 unpicks the overarching theme of 'changes in physical activity' that emerged from a conglomeration of themes in data analysis. The chapter explores *when*, *how,* and *why* changes in physical activity occurred, through enmeshing young people's experiences of growing up with theoretical re-conceptualisations of life-phases and transitions. An understanding of young lives as non-linear or consisting of 'critical moments' and 'vital conjunctures' has been discussed elsewhere (Johnson-Hanks, 2002; Thomson et al., 2002); however, to-date, no other study has analysed data regarding young people's physical activity patterns using re-conceptualisations of life transitions or highlighted the non-linearity and contingency of physical activity in such a way.

Chapter 5 addresses themes concerning young people's daily uses and negotiations of the socio-material environment. It utilises Lefebvre (1991) and Massey's (1994) understandings of space and place to explain how the young people created meaningful places; negotiated their mobility and safety in public spaces; and innovatively used their socio-material environments, etching out spaces for fun, friendships, and movement.

Chapter 6 re-visits healthism and obesity discourses introduced in Chapter 2, and explains how the young people's understandings and meanings of physical activity were shaped by these discourses. Using Foucault's (1985) notion of 'the technologies of the self', and understandings of masculinities and femininities, this chapter discusses the

young people's gendered understandings and practices of physical activity in relation to their selves and their body's appearance and capability.

Lastly, Chapter 7 summarises the key arguments and contributions of this thesis, and discusses the themes that cut across the overarching concepts of time, space, bodies, and capabilities. This final chapter argues there is a distinct need for critical ethnographic approaches that question dominant understandings of young people's physical activity practices and study how physical activity is meaningful in young people's ever changing daily lives. Finally, based on insights from this research, some implications for public health promotion are proposed.

Chapter 2: Why study young people and physical activity?

This review begins by asking why physical activity is a focus of public health promotion and why young people are positioned as a 'problem' in this field. It subsequently provides an account of the public health and epidemiological literature concerning declines in physical activity behaviours as young people traverse adolescence, exploring the apparent differences in young people by gender and socioeconomic status. Following this, it discusses what interventions are being implemented to tackle these issues, before exploring key perspectives concerning influences on physical activity, including geographical literature that details the role of the built environment. Building on this literature, critiquing aspects and highlighting gaps, it is argued that there is a distinct need for studies that consider local understandings and practices within national socioeconomic, geographic and political contexts, and global discourses concerning physical activity, sport and health. Such approaches enable an understanding of *how* things have come to be, question the status quo, and provide insights into more beneficial ways of promoting daily physical activity.

2.1 The 'problem' of young people and physical activity

In Chapter 1, I explained that some scholars argue a 'moral panic' has been created around childhood 'physical inactivity' (Gard & Wright, 2005; Wright & Macdonald, 2010). This 'moral panic' is strongly connected to how young people are portrayed in media and in research. Common discourses found in grey literature and the media include statements such as, "we must prevent an inactive generation of children growing into inactive adults" (UKActiveKids, 2015:12), and an "inactive lifestyle of 'sofa generation' could lead to type 2 diabetes epidemic" (Diabetes Research & Wellness Foundation, 2016). Similarly, internet media and newspaper headlines include claims such as "unfit, lazy children are six times more likely to develop early signs of heart disease than those who are active and take exercise, scientists warn" (Smith, 2008) and "childhood inactivity will cost your kids 5 years of life, says new Nike research" (Fera, 2012).

The prevalence of these statements is connected to children's futures and the health benefits of physical activity across the life course. As physical movement can reduce body fat stores by expending energy (Hayes et al., 2002), the urgent need to address physical inactivity in childhood is to a great extent concerned with obesity and obesity-related diseases: cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, and hypertension. Concerns over physical inactivity are entangled with the positioning of adolescence as "a period of

increased risk of developing obesity" (Gordon-Larsen et al., 2004; Nicholson & Browning, 2012:55), and claims that "75-80% of obese adolescents will become obese adults" (Guo & Chumlea, 1999; Lifshitz, 2008:53). However, ideas regarding "children growing into inactive adults" are arguably based on overinflated interpretations of results from studies that suggest declines between childhood and adolescence are likely to track into adulthood (DeMattia & Lee Denney, 2008). Due to the small number of studies these claims are based on, and the inconsistent results found, the tracking of 'behaviours' from childhood to adulthood is considered "by no means conclusive" (Chalkley et al., 2015).

Nonetheless, physical activity during childhood is widely recognised as important for physical, emotional and social health and development (World Health Organization, 2010). There are valid concerns regarding the low levels of physical activity in children and young people aside from body composition. Studies show physical activity has beneficial effects on children's mental well-being, including reducing depressive symptoms (Darbyshire et al., 2005; Janssen & LeBlanc, 2010). A recent systematic review of controlled trials revealed outdoor physical activity was "associated with greater feelings of revitalization and positive engagement" (Coon et al., 2011:1761). It is said that physical activity plays a role in decreasing tension, confusion, anger, and depression: issues and feelings adolescents commonly contend with for the first time in their lives (Thompson Coon et al., 2011).

A systematic review of 86 studies suggests that physical activity has several physical health benefits for children, including beneficial effects on systolic blood pressure and bone mineral density (Janssen & LeBlanc, 2010). Physical activity during childhood is also regarded as beneficial for developing healthy muscular skeletal tissue and cardiovascular system (World Health Organization, 2016b) and reducing blood sugar levels (Hayes et al., 2002). In contrast, sedentary time is associated with poor physical fitness, high body composition, and, although to be judged with caution due to small sample sizes, a risk of metabolic syndrome (Tremblay et al., 2011). Self-reported sedentary 'behaviours' were associated with high systolic blood pressure during adolescence in a 5-year longitudinal adolescent study (n=844) in Canada (Dasgupta et al., 2006). Similarly, a 26-year-long New Zealand longitudinal study with a birth cohort (n=1000) from 1972-3 showed self-reported sedentary behaviours were associated with raised serum cholesterol levels in adulthood (Hancox et al., 2004).

The 'moral panic' surrounding children and young people's 'physical inactivity' is heavily intertwined with obesity and body composition, and is arguably presenting children and young people as a group who are 'inactive', 'lazy', and 'at risk' of non-communicable diseases. However, as studies suggest that many significant physical and mental health benefits of engaging in physical activity during childhood and adolescence are not

connected to body composition, concerns over low levels of physical activity, and how these concerns are presented, must be addressed.

2.2 Changes in physical activity as young people age: a developing field of Public Health literature

The difference between physical recommendations by the WHO for under 18s and over 18s, 60 and 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) per day, respectively, imply that a reduction in physical activity between 'childhood' and 'adulthood' is expected and considered normal. Sallis (2000:1599) argues that physical activity declines are "strongly influenced by biological factors", and that age-related declines in young people's physical activity levels are to an extent expected. Nonetheless, a significant amount of quantitative research is being conducted to document age-related changes in physical activity patterns in both boys and girls as they transcend childhood and adolescence. These studies use cross-sectional or longitudinal designs: they compare either children of different age groups or the same children at different ages. Longitudinal studies are considered more appropriate as they allow for the analysis of changes in individuals' physical activity patterns over time.

Longitudinal studies using validated questionnaire methodologies over 10 years (Kimm et al., 2002) and 5 years (Brodersen et al., 2007) have found patterns of decline in physical activity during adolescence. Kimm et al. (2002) documented an overall 83 percent decline in the median activity score in US girls between age 9-10 to age 18-19 (n= 2397 girls). Likewise, Brodersen et al. (2007) detailed a 46 percent decline in physical activity in girls and a 23 percent decline in boys (n= 5287 girls and boys) between the first and last years of secondary school in London (ages 11-12 to 15-16). A systematic review and pooled analysis of predominantly longitudinal questionnaire studies from the US calculated a mean physical activity decline of 7% per year during adolescence (Dumith et al., 2011). However, questionnaire and self-report studies have been criticised for their reliance on recall, hence, objective measurement tools are becoming more widely used.

Numerous epidemiological studies with children now use objective physical activity measurement tools, including pedometers (Clemes & Biddle, 2013) and accelerometers (Puyau et al., 2002). Researchers filter and manage accelerometer data using cut points, which differentiate between categories of physical activity: light (LPA), moderate (MPA), and vigorous (VPA). Most researchers are interested in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) due to evidence that suggests MVPA is most important to physical and cardiovascular health: according to Ekelund et al. (2012), who conducted a meta-analysis of data from the International Children's Accelerometry Database (n= 20871), more time

spent in MVPA was associated with better cardiometabolic risk factors, irrespective of time spent sedentary.

Longitudinal studies have used objective accelerometer data to document declines in MVPA from childhood to adolescence (Jago et al., 2008; Nader et al., 2008). The longitudinal accelerometer-based study by Nader et al. (2008) followed 1032 9-15-year-old participants: a representative sample of US society in terms of ethnicity and household income. At age 9, children were participating in an average of 3 hours of MVPA per day, whilst by age 15 they were participating in 49 minutes on weekdays and 35 minutes on weekend days. By age 15, 17% and 31% of the young people met physical activity guidelines (60 minutes of MVPA per day) on weekends and weekdays, respectively (Nader et al., 2008). Objective accelerometer data from a sample of 1778 children from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) in the US showed that 49% of boys aged 6-11 accumulated 60 minutes or more of MVPA per day and 35% of girls achieved these recommendations (Troiano et al., 2008). Both of these figures declined between ages 12 and 15: 12% of boys aged 12-15 met recommendations and only 3% of girls aged 12-15 achieved 60 minutes of MVPA per day (Troiano et al., 2008).

Other studies disaggregate age-related declines by assessing whether reduction in physical activity occurs during specific times of children's daily lives. For instance, Arundell et al. (2013) conducted analyses on data sets from two large longitudinal studies with children in Melbourne (Children Living in Active Neighbourhoods study (CLAN, 2001); Health, Eating and Play Study (HEAPS, 2002/2003)), focusing specifically on the afterschool period. They assessed changes in physical activity and sedentary time across a 3 and 5-year age range in two different cohorts, one with 5-6 year-olds and one with 11-12-year-olds at baseline. Declines in MVPA and VPA were evident in both cohorts, as was an increase in sedentary time (SED). Conversely, in the older cohort, the contribution of the afterschool period to over overall MPA and VPA increased by 10% over the 5 years of study. This implied that certain types of physical activities may be decreasing across adolescents, whilst other forms of movement may be emerging in unanticipated ways.

Ridgers et al. (2011) analysed the same data sets as Arundell et al. (2013) to assess five-year changes in the contribution of school recess and lunch time periods to overall daily physical activity. They found a general decline in VPA, MVPA and LPA and an increase in SED between baseline and 5 year follow up, with the largest decline occurring across the transition from primary to secondary school, which occurs at ages 12-13 in Australia. Overall, physical activity decreased by greater magnitudes in other sections of the day compared to recess. Thus, despite declines in physical activity during recess, in the younger cohort, the contribution of recess physical activity to overall daily physical activity increased over three years.

A 4-year longitudinal study by Brooke et al. (2014) used the Youth Physical Activity Questionnaire (YPAQ) to highlight the types of activities that were maintained during the transition to adolescence in a sample of children (10-14-year-olds) from the Environmental Determinants in Young People (SPEEDY) study in Norfolk, UK. Findings suggested that, by age 14, activities such as household chores, walking the dog, playing with pets, and jogging or running were 'dropped' less than activities such as skipping, rollerblading, netball, and gymnastics (Brooke et al., 2014). Kjønniksen et al. (2008) also found that, in Norway, cycling, fast walking, hiking, and hard physical work, such as house-hold chores, were most frequently reported at age 15. This research suggests that less organised unstructured daily activities may continue to occur across adolescence.

The research discussed shows that physical activity patterns are not homogenous across age groups or times of the day. Declines in children's physical activity levels appear to be more complex than large-scale population-based statistics and media representations might suggest.

2.3 Exploring physical activity in low-income areas: rationales for and problems with targeting 'at risk' young people

Socioeconomic status (SES) is an important facet of heterogeneity in children and adolescents: SES is often a variable in large scale physical activity studies. Much of the public health rationale for examining physical activity in low-income locations stems from findings that suggest relatively poor health outcomes in poorer neighbourhoods (Marmot, 2005; Schrecker & Bambra, 2015). Research suggests youth from low SES areas, and particularly girls, are less active than those in high SES areas. For instance, self-report surveys from a longitudinal study (n= 5863) in London showed that amounts of sedentary behaviours were greater in adolescents from lower SES areas (Brodersen et al., 2007). Lower levels of parental education have been associated with greater self-reported declines in physical activity in both White American and Black American adolescent girls (n=2379) (Kimm et al., 2002). A Portuguese study, that assessed SES by mother's level of education, showed that high SES girls were more likely to be active than low SES girls, when they self-reported their physical activity (n=599 girls) (Mota et al., 2011). An ecological momentary assessment study from England (Gorely et al., 2009) (n= 1171) found girls and boys categorised as low SES reported lower participation in sports and exercise compared to those of high SES. It is suggested that low SES areas in the US have few sports facilities and recreational areas, and high crime rates, which may influence young people's ability to be physically active and account for health disparities (Popkin et al., 2005).

Although the social gradient of health (Marmot, 2004, 2005) is well evidenced, others suggest that associations between physical activity, health and obesity are variable and complex in low SES areas. For instance, an analysis of data from The National Longitudinal study of Adolescent Health (US) found that neighbourhood disadvantage increased the risk of obesity in young women in a curvilinear manner, whereas neighbourhood disadvantage did not increase the risk for young men's health (Nicholson & Browning, 2012). Why this was the case remains unclear and requires investigation. Nonetheless, in low SES areas, health risks are generally said to be high and physical activity levels are thought to be low (Richter et al., 2009).

Physical activity interventions in low SES areas also aim to help young people from such areas become less 'at risk' or 'disengaged' from school or society. The notion of 'at risk' is grounded in an understanding of youth as a transition from childhood to adulthood, in which "*ideal* adult futures" can potentially be jeopardised (Kelly, 2006:26). A recent review of various forms of physical activity interventions with 'at risk' youth (Lubans et al., 2012) suggested that outdoor education programs have the capacity to improve resilience and self-concept. Five studies (USA (3), South Africa, and Taiwan), out of the seven reviewed, showed significant improvements in social and emotional well-being (Lubans et al., 2012). They also suggested that outdoor physical activity programs can play a role in shaping youth to be confident and motivated young adults. Others researching re-engaging 'disaffected' youth argue that participation in physical activity can promote positive socio-moral development, when life learning processes and skills exist within the physical activity programs (Armour & Sandford, 2013; Sandford et al., 2006, 2008).

The ways in which public health initiatives and research conceptualises and targets young people in low SES areas as 'at risk', provides a rationale for my own study, and is further discussed in Section 5.3.1. Dagkas and Quarmby (2012) suggest that research regarding children's physical activity in low income areas can portray low income families as homogeneous, and further marginalize these families as disengaged from physical activity pedagogies. However, some studies are reflective, providing explanations for how physical activity is unable to fit into the lives of young people from low SES neighbourhoods, and highlight how young people's lives are shaped by the contexts in which they are living. For example, Dagkas and Quarmby (2012) showed that families on low incomes in inner cities in the Midlands, UK, experienced both severe financial and time constraints that impacted on children's ability to be active. Their study of 100 young people (11-14-year-olds) explained that, although some families had positive attitudes towards physical activity, often lone parent families or stepfamilies were unable to support adolescents' physical activity practices because of "interlocking inequalities (economic capital, locality, immediate environment)" (Dagkas & Quarmby, 2012:222). They argued

that "good parenting" in the inner city contexts was hinged on ensuring their child returned safely from school and stayed out of trouble: issues derived from the 'neighbourhoods' where they lived. McEvoy et al. (2015:6), who conducted focus groups with 40 young people in a deprived neighbourhood of Limerick, also found that "structural forces" were at play: these enabled and constrained the young people's agency as they assessed, engaged with, rejected, or created opportunities for physical activity. The "structural forces" included the social environment of a 'non-sporty' school, restricted freedom of movement in local areas due to police surveillance, and a lack of attractive activity options other than hanging around.

In summary, public health research suggests that young people in low-income areas are 'at risk' of low levels of physical inactivity. However, many of these young people are simultaneously positioned as 'at risk' of becoming disengaged from school or society. Physical activity interventions targeting young people in low-income areas are therefore enmeshed within two interrelated rationales or sets of discourses. Only a few studies have helped to qualitatively understand the low levels of physical activity in low-income areas. However, as McEvoy et al.'s (2015) study was short-term and relied solely on focus groups, more in-depth research is required with young people in low income areas, and this research should be sensitive to the issues of marginalisation and homogenization.

2.4 Gender differences and a focus on girls in physical activity research: the problem, the pitfalls, and a need to include boys

Gender is often a key variable in epidemiological studies that investigate physical activity. For instance, an English ecological momentary assessment study (n= 694 girls and n=477 boys aged 13-16) showed that boys reported an average of 31 minutes of 'sports and exercise' during the week, whereas girls reported an average of 18 minutes. These figures diverged even more on weekends (80 minutes vs 37 minutes). However, the first study to use accelerometers for examining gender and age differences in physical activity levels in the US, (n= 185 boys and 190 girls) found gender differences to be smaller than self-report methods implied (Trost et al., 2002). Trost et al. (2002) found girls overall to be less active than boys. However, their use of accelerometers was crucial for locating physical activity intensity: the gender gap for vigorous physical activity (VPA) was largest, at 45%, whilst the gender gap for moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) was modest at 11%, suggesting that girls' supposed inactivity may reflect their disengagement in VPA. Both the CLAN and HEAPS studies, discussed previously, with much larger sample sizes, also showed adolescent girls to be less active than boys at all ages (Arundell et al., 2013; Ridgers et al., 2011), and to have greater declines in light physical activity (LPA) compared to their male counterparts (Arundell et al., 2013).

The apparent relative inactivity of girls compared with boys has meant that other quantitative studies often focus on investigating solely girls' physical activity levels (Hardy et al., 2007; Pate et al., 2009). A cross-sectional sample of the TAAG (Trial of Activity in Adolescent Girls) data, which was a representative sample of the US population, showed a 4% annual decrease in MVPA between ages 11-13: an average of 24.27 minutes of MVPA per day at age 11 and 22.51 minutes per day at age 13 (Pate et al., 2009). A cluster analysis of self-report and accelerometry data from TAAG (Trial of Activity in Adolescent Girls) suggested that girls' participation in organised sports often decreases more than boys as they go through adolescence (Trilk et al., 2012). And yet, males reported a greater decline in the *number* of activities participated in between ages 13-23 in Kjønniksen et al.'s (2008) ten-year Norwegian longitudinal questionnaire-based study.

Quantitative studies, highlighting girls in particular as a 'problem', have prompted qualitative explorations of why their physical activity declines over the course of adolescence. Girls' avoidance of physical activity is said to be partly due to largely sedentary social life priorities taking precedence as girls age (Hardy et al., 2007). Whitehead & Biddle (2008) suggest, from analysis of focus groups with forty-seven 14-16-year-old girls from Leicestershire, that teenage girls had changing priorities in life. Girls' social lives were of great importance in the production of teenage identities, and physical activity was often incompatible with such identities. Hence, social support is said to be very important for encouraging young girls to engage in physical activity (Loman, 2008). Other research, such as a focus group study with low SES New Zealand European and Maori girls and boys (Hohepa et al., 2006), suggested that girls disliked performing in front of Physical Education (PE) classes due to self-perceived incompetence and others' judgements. More recently, a narrative interview study with fourteen 'low active girls' from secondary schools in Scotland (Knowles et al., 2013), discussed how the experience of body changes during puberty affected girls' motivations to participate in physical activities. They also argued that the different socio-cultural context of secondary school, in comparison to primary school, affected self-perceived levels of physical competence in girls, feelings of uncomfortableness, and embarrassment.

However useful, a lot of qualitative work does not connect young people's understandings to broader structural processes. For instance, Hohepa et al. (2006) did not link feelings of incompetence to gendered discourses surrounding physicalities and, although they stressed environmental influences on physical activity (for instance, the need for more recreational facilities), little attention was paid to how socioeconomic circumstances played out in young people's lives. Furthermore, neither Knowles et al. (2013) nor Whitehead and Biddle (2008) offered detailed understanding of what they called 'changes in motivations' and 'a lack of motivation', respectively. Girls in both studies perceived

themselves as lazy, 'not bothered', or conceptualised physical activity as not 'for them'. And yet neither study discussed how these subjectivities may be formed by local and global contexts where girls grow up. Despite their value in highlighting key themes, such analyses might be said to support rather than challenge girls' problematic status within public health arenas, where adolescents, and adolescent girls in particular, are presented as 'at risk' of making 'bad health choices' (Wright & Macdonald, 2010).

In response to these shortcomings, there is a relatively small collection of work that seeks to incorporate social theory and gender discourse into interpretations of girls' (and boys') experiences. In Lee and Abbott's (2009) study of rural Australian young people's perceptions of their environments, the young men expressed the importance of physical exertion through farming practices: traditional masculine roles, specific to their rural communities. Lee and Abbott contrastingly found that these 'masculine' physical activities were often not considered legitimate 'physical activities' for the young women (Lee & Abbott, 2009). By embedding these findings in the local context, and understanding how physical activity had meaning for the young people, Lee and Abbott (2009) were able to understand why the girls were restricted in their abilities to be active. Some authors have suggested that traditional notions of acceptable femininity clash with sporting identities, and that media culture reinforces female stereotypes, which are opposite to qualities prompted in school physical education (PE) (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). Cockburn and Clarke (2002) showed how some girls resisted dominant gender orders. Some girls from their study avoided engagement in sports and physical activity. Others "violated the expectations of femininity by participating in vigorous physical activity" (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002:656), lived with costs, such as teasing about being 'tom boys', and had "double identities": they made special care to reconstruct their "feminine" selves after their "sporty" practices (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002:660).

Critical scholars (e.g. Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012; Oliver et al., 2009; Oliver & Hamzeh, 2010) provide insightful alternative interpretations of girls' words and actions. They draw heavily on poststructuralist and feminist perspectives, note the intersection between class, gender, race, and sexuality, and explain how subjectivities regarding physical activity are formed along such lines. These authors can be situated within a critical sociocultural scholarship that I discuss in more detail in Section 2.7. Oliver et al. (2009) (see also Oliver & Hamzeh, 2010) combined ethnographic and participatory action methods in their work with economically disadvantaged 11-year-old Mexican-American and Hispanic girls in two border schools in a southwestern US area. They found that firstly, boys claimed spaces for physical activity and would not let the girls play, and secondly, that girls constructed the term 'girly girls' to explain their reasons for non-participation in physical activity (Oliver et al., 2009). However, "being (a) girly girl was a fluid, temporal, and partial embodiment",

and was enacted in ways often strategic for serving their mood or physical activity opportunities (Oliver et al., 2009:101). The authors recognised that gendered subjectivities can change through disrupting or using norms to establish new subjectivities. This recognition enabled the activist scholars to identify and help girls tackle self-identified barriers to physical activity by critically reflecting on and challenging their possibilities as 'girly girls'. Here, interpreting girls' words and actions through a critical poststructuralist lens was insightful academically and beneficial for the girls themselves.

In contrast to the relatively large literature on girls' physical (in)activity, far less has been written about boys, despite declines in boys' physical activity across adolescence also being observed. Although most research from the UK and the US finds that girls do less physical activity than boys overall, showing slightly sharper declines in adolescence, this is not necessarily universally the case. One Finnish longitudinal self-report study that spanned 21 years found greater physical activity reported in boys compared to girls, but showed steeper declines in boys' physical activity as they aged, with the steepest being between ages 12-15 (Telama & Yang, 2000). They also showed that, after age 18, young men's self-reported physical activity declined further but young women's increased as they reported engaging in more physical activities. Nonetheless, in a review of qualitative studies (n=24) that explored physical activity participation in young people, teenage girls were the sole focus of five studies, whilst boys as a group were largely absent, with the exception of two different studies focusing on gay men and disabled men, respectively (Allender et al., 2006:828).

Boys are expected to be physically active and good at sports, and male popularity in schools tends to follow sporting ability (Drummond, 2003). Drummond's (2003) Australian interview study showed that boys of school-age experienced social stigma if they did not have a 'successful body' and physical ability in sports. Drummond (2003:138) showed, that although many low-skilled boys had come to terms with their identities, they struggled with feeling inadequate or frustrated at not embodying specific forms of physicality they thought "should be natural to all young males". He argued that these feelings led to boys having negative perceptions of their bodies' abilities and others' attitudes towards their bodies. Similarly, despite the focus on girls and women regarding body image, Grogan & Richards (2002) discuss how two young men in their focus group study (with males from different age groups between 8-25 years old) experienced teasing due to their body sizes. Their Sheffield-based study found it was important for all boys to be "just a bit muscular" (Grogan & Richards, 2002:225). There were acceptable and non-acceptable degrees of muscularity that boys of different ages understood: acceptability depended on whether forms of muscularity were based on athleticism, narcissism, or avoidance of fatness.

This review argues that more research has been conducted with teenage girls than boys, yet it is arguably equally important to conduct research regarding physical activity with boys due to the different challenges they face. Moreover, Oliver and Hamzeh's (2010) work in the US border schools highlights how boys are part of shaping girls' experiences of physical activity. They found that boys excluded girls from playing certain games because they were girls or because they were better or worse at the game. Since boys and girls do not live in separate spheres, further understandings of how both genders interact with each other and form each other's subjectivities regarding physical activity is necessary.

2.5 Tackling young people's 'physical inactivity': campaigns and interventions

Due to concerns about childhood inactivity overall, and among girls and in low SES areas in particular, a range of youth physical activity and active travel campaigns exist. The UK government dedicates funds (£372m over three years: 2008/09 - 2010/11 towards tackling obesity) to policies, campaigns and national interventions to increase young people's physical activity levels (Department of Health, 2008). Physical activity interventions range from large-scale governmental promotional campaigns, such as Change4Life, to corporate social responsibility schemes, such as Coca-Cola ParkLives, youth organisations, such as Streetgames[3], and sustainable transport, walking, and cycling charities, such as Sustrans[4] and Living Streets[5].

Change4Life and Coca-Cola ParkLives had stalls at community events I attended during fieldwork. Change4Life is "a society wide movement that aims to prevent people from becoming overweight by encouraging them to eat well and move more" (Department of Health, 2008:6). Change4Life's initial focus, launched in 2009, was on children and its priority is children's weight. By 2020, Change4Life aims "to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to 2000 levels" (Department of Health, 2008:2), partly by promoting '60 active minutes' per day and less 'sitting down' activities through their social marketing campaign. Initiatives, such as ParkLives, work in coordination with local councils throughout the UK to bring various free activities to local parks (Coca-Cola, 2016; Lowe, 2016). The focus of the ParkLives website concerns providing fun for people of all

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[3] Streetgames is a UK charity that aims to bring sport to disadvantaged youth around the UK, through a national network of local providers.

[4] Sustrans is a UK charity that aims to make it easier for people to travel by foot, bicycle or public transport so as to benefit people's health and the environment. The charity builds and maintains cycle routes, runs sustainable travel campaigns, encourages children to cycle or scooter to school, and influences government policy.

[5] Living Streets is a UK charity that promotes everyday walking. The charity improves streets so that they are suitable for walking, run campaigns, such as the Walk to School campaign, reduces speed limits to 20mph in residential areas, and aims to create a 'walking nation'.

ages, for helping 'communities' "make the most of their parks". However, as ParkLives is Coca-cola's social corporate responsibility scheme, costing £20m between 2014-2020, it is viewed as a "small pledge" towards tackling obesity: a public health problem that their sugary drinks are seen as contributing to (McCartney, 2014).

Some research suggests that appropriate sports and organised activities are a good way of addressing childhood and youth inactivity; other research suggests that promoting active travel, especially to school, may be a more viable means of tackling childhood and youth *daily* physical inactivity. This is based on several studies showing that children and adolescents who walk or cycle to school are more active than those who do not (Faulkner et al., 2009; Jago & Baranowski, 2004; Mackett et al., 2005a; Roth et al., 2012). Total physical activity on the walk to school can also be twice that occurring in the playground (Cooper et al., 2010). As it has been suggested that daily journeys to school, friends' houses or shops can offer opportunities for cheap and routine forms of daily physical activity (Mackett et al., 2005b), active travel interventions have been conducted with children through schools.

A recent review of active school travel intervention studies with experimental designs in the US, UK, and Australia (n= 14), showed half of the studies reported "slight increases" in active travel to school following the intervention (Chillon et al., 2011). Six studies had small effect sizes, one study had a large effect size, whilst the others had trivial effect sizes, inappropriate outcome measures, or insufficient data (Chillion et al, 2011). Many school interventions employ individual behaviour-change methods that focus on parent and child 'choices' of travel modes. These bear some similarity to large-scale promotional health education and physical activity campaigns, such as, Change4Life or 'choosing activity: a physical activity action plan', which promote the awareness of physical activity recommendations and benefits.

However, a review of physical activity interventions showed little evidence that large-scale behaviour-change campaigns or interventions actually do increase physical activity levels in children and adolescents: most large campaigns result in recall of key messages yet produce limited or inconsistent changes in attitudes or behaviours (Marcus et al, 2006). One exception is the national US VERB campaign for youth, which incorporated paid advertisements in combination with community events, school promotions, and internet activities to target youth aged 9-13, specifically. The campaign, launched in 2002, promoted physical activity as fun, cool, and an opportunity for socialising with friends (Huhman et al., 2005). Huhman et al.'s (2005) study, which measured the effects of the VERB campaign after 1 year, used a sample of 3120 parent-child dyads, and showed a positive relationship between levels of awareness of the VERB campaign and self-reported levels of free-time physical activity. Its multi-level and youth-centred approach

may explain its success; however, the self-report method has limited accuracy, and whether this campaign had any influence after 1 year is unknown.

Marcus et al. (2006) explained that, in the few other intervention studies conducted with youth, no significant increases in physical activity were found. Research concerning localised efforts to increase physical activity have also shown inconsistent or limited results (Giles-Corti & Salmon, 2007) and where improvements have been achieved, they have been difficult to maintain (Salmon et al., 2007). A review of physical activity interventions with children and adolescents showed some evidence for marginal increases in activity: the interventions based in schools with multilevel components and involvement of the family and community were most effective, but there was little evidence that interventions targeting children from low SES areas were effective (van Sluijs et al., 2007).

In summary, as many behaviour-change interventions, especially large-scale promotional campaigns, show limited increases in young people's physical activity levels, it is necessary to conduct more in-depth research into where and why young people do engage in physical activity or not. The next two sections of this review address, respectively, environmental and sociocultural perspectives on young people's physical activity.

2.6 Geographic and environmental perspectives: young people's use of space

In recent years, the built and physical environments have come to the foreground in public health research (Davison & Lawson, 2006; Ding et al., 2011). Davison and Lawson's (2006) review of literature found thirty-three quantitative studies concerning the relationship between the physical environment and children's physical activity patterns. They noted associations between transport infrastructure (i.e. pavements and connectivity of streets), recreational infrastructure (i.e. playgrounds and sporting facilities), local conditions (i.e. neighbourhood safety and crime rates), and children's physical activity behaviours. Ding et al. (2011) also found that, for adolescents in particular, land use mix and urban density correlated with reported physical activity. Although some studies use survey tools such as the NEWS-Y (Neighbourhood environment and walkability survey-youth) questionnaire (Rosenberg et al., 2009), more objective methods have been developed to investigate associations between the environment and physical activity patterns. Several researchers have used accelerometers in combination with GPS devices, a method shown to be promising for spatially analysing physical activity (Krenn et al., 2011; Maddison & Ni Mhurchu, 2009) and travel behaviours (Duncan et al., 2009) in adults (Oliver et al., 2010) and children (Demant Klinker et al., 2015; Oreskovic et al., 2012).

Cooper et al. (2010) used GPS and accelerometry data from a sample of 1010 children (aged 10-11) from the Bristol-based PEACH (Personal and Environmental Associations with Children's Health) project to show that children are more likely to be active in outdoor spaces: physical activity was 2.5 times higher in outdoor locations than indoor locations. Wheeler et al.'s (2010) analysis of PEACH data also showed that 30% of activity time stemmed from outdoor time, yet outdoor time accounted for only 15% of children's daily time. Researchers have therefore continued to use and develop analyses of combined GPS and accelerometry methods to detect where outside young people are active or not, investigating different spaces, such as green space and streets.

Coombes et al.'s (2013) analysis of a sample of the Norfolk-based SPEEDY (Sport, Physical activity, and Eating behaviour: Environmental Determinants in Young People) study data (n= 100 children aged 9-10) found that streets and pavements were used for light physical activity (LPA) and green environments were used for vigorous physical activity (VPA). Likewise, those investigating effects of living in a 'smart growth' community in Chino, California (a community that contains features and infrastructures, such as green space and walkable streets, that are likely to increase active living), found that children (n= 208, aged 8-14 years old) who lived in the 'smart growth' community were more likely to be physically active than those in the eight conventional[6] communities (Jerrett et al., 2013). They also found that greenness exposure was positively associated with likelihood of MVPA (Almanza et al., 2012). Park use has been of particular interest as parks are often spaces designed for children. Survey data discussed by Grow et al. (2008) suggested that, at all ages (5-18-year-olds), living closer to parks increased children's likelihood of being active at parks. Tucker et al. (2009) found, in their study using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and self-report measures in London, Canada, that the presence of two or more recreational facilities (i.e. soccer fields, baseball ovals, playgrounds, bike paths) in one's local neighbourhood was associated with higher youth (11-13-year-olds) physical activity levels.

However, the importance of green spaces is being questioned. Collins et al. (2012) noted that rural youth (aged 13-14) in central England spent less time outside compared to suburban youth in the same region, despite being surrounded by greenspaces. Further analysis of additional PEACH project data by Lachowycz et al. (2012) highlighted the majority of MVPA in 902 English children (aged 11-12) occurred in non-green urban environments such as roads, pavements, and concrete areas. Lachowycz et al. (2012) showed that a low percentage of children's time was spent in green spaces. A recent objective study of adolescent (aged 11-14 from middle and Low-income urban areas of

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[6] Conventional communities recruited were within a 30-minute drive of the smart growth community, were similar in design and population, and shared similar variation in density of most postwar American communities on the edges of major metropolitan areas.

Boston) physical activity patterns showed that playgrounds, and moreover streets and sidewalks, were the most likely locations for physical activity (Oreskovic et al., 2015). These findings suggest that the accessibility, safety and meaning of green spaces, rather than their simple presence, need consideration. They also show that day-to-day areas such as streets are being used by young people for physical activity, prompting further questions about why this might be.

Much of the data from studies investigating where young people are active is based on children aged between 8-13. Age differences were noted by Quigg et al. (2010) in their GPS study in a low SES community in New Zealand (n= 184 children aged 5-10): they found that 7-8-year-olds were proportionally more active in parks when compared to 5-6 or 9-10-year-olds. Little attention is paid to older adolescents, with the exception of Maddison et al. (2010) and Rodríguez et al. (2012). Rodríguez et al. (2012) used GPS and accelerometers to investigate associations between the built environment and physical activity behaviours of adolescent girls (aged 15-18) living in Minneapolis and San Diego. In San Diego, they found that the presence of parks within 50 meters of their GPS locations was linked to increased likelihood of LPA, and that the presence of schools and high population density was associated with more chances of MVPA. Likewise, Maddison et al., (2010) investigated the influence of environmental perceptions, built environmental factors, and psychosocial factors in 12-17-year-olds in Auckland, New Zealand. However, they found that only environmental perceptions, not GIS measured environmental factors, were associated with self-reported physical activity levels.

The quantitative methodological approaches discussed are heavily utilised and make vital contributions to comprehending young people's physical activity patterns; however, it is also necessary to gain qualitative understandings of why young people use different spaces for physical activity. Evenson et al. (2013) recommended using qualitative work to provide greater understandings of *why* their participants chose to use certain parks. According to Tucker et al. (2009), the quality of parks and perceptions of them, rather than simply their presence, may be key to their utilisation by young people for physical activity. Other research also suggests a need to look beyond quantitative conceptions of physical space: social inclusion and feelings of integration have been shown to greatly affect park use in Glasgow (Seaman et al., 2010).

Broberg et al. (2013) argue that much built environment research focuses on spaces not necessarily noted by young people as particularly important. Their Finnish research (n= 901 children aged 11-14), which focused on 'independent mobility' and active travel as proxies for physical activity, used a soft-GIS internet platform for participant mapping of meaningful places, including how they travelled there and with whom. They found that urban structures comprising single family housing promoted independent mobility and

active travel. Broberg et al. (2013) state that, although technologies are crucial for quantifying physical activity, qualitative insights into young people's physical activity practices and mobility also require attention.

Wridt (2010), who follow this reasoning, conducted a participatory action research (PAR) project, using participatory GIS mapping with children aged 10-11 in a low-income community in Denver. They found that active travel and recreational physical activity were influenced by parental fears and approaches to "environmental-socialization". Although children were aware of risks in their neighbourhoods, they also negotiated risk through travelling with friends, siblings, or adults. Hence, Wridt (2010) argues that understanding how children perceive and attach importance to places is crucial if researchers are to comprehend the role of the environment (social and built combined) in children's health and wellbeing. Pearce et al. (2009) used focus groups, mapping exercises, and participant photography to explore how children in North London (n= 39 children aged 9-11) perceived environmental influences on physical activity. They found most photographs were taken in the playground at school (54%) and denoted informal activity, and that those children from deprived neighbourhoods took less photographs of physical activity in their neighbourhoods, compared to children from affluent neighbourhoods.

Research that connects the physical environment to sociocultural perspectives on physical activity and people's perceptions of place may be advantageous. For instance, Wridt's (2010) PAR project revealed that girls walk shorter distances than boys, and use different spaces in neighbourhoods for physical activity. Her discussions with the children suggested that perceived neighbourhood safety was connected to different types of environmental-socialisation for different sexes (Wridt, 2010). Similarly, Horton et al.'s (2014) ethnographic study of young people's (aged 9-16) walking practices, in the Milton Keynes/South Midlands urban area of England, revealed children's mobilities in their physical environments were connected to social circumstances and social norms: children's spatial ranges were limited by parents. Most children recalled and accepted the logic of parental rules regarding outside time restrictions because they were commonly connected to safety concerns (Horton et al., 2014).

In summary, whilst many studies discussed in the previous sections view socioeconomic status, gender, and geographic location as variables in analyses, other scholars, including Lee et al. (2009:59), provide "alternative readings of statistical patterns" by exploring how differences (variables) play out in young people's lives. I now turn to discuss further work that explores young people's physical activity from a sociocultural perspective. In this section I argue the need for more in-depth qualitative and ethnographic work in this area.

2.7 The contribution of critical sociocultural perspectives: highlighting life's complexities, and recognising healthism and obesity discourse

The "complexity and diversity of young people's lives"

The importance of sociality, family, and peer support is well documented as aiding physical activity participation (Hohepa et al., 2006; Jago et al., 2012; Kirby et al., 2011; Loman, 2008; Mendonça et al., 2014; Withall et al., 2011). Friendships are widely considered central for initiating and sustaining young people's involvement in physical activities (Casey et al., 2009; Hills, 2007). However, the ways in which friendships and sociality are enmeshed within other aspects of young people's lives and meanings about physical activity, are less well documented. Some scholars recognise how physical activity is enmeshed in a complex interplay of social, cultural, geographic, and economic factors that create the diverse contexts of daily life. For example, Lee and Abbott (2009), who explored rural Australian young people's perceptions of their environments, found that physical activity meanings were produced through social interactions with friends and family, which were attached to a 'sense of place' or belonging and embedded within traditional gender roles (Lee & Abbott, 2009).

To address the "complexity and diversity of young people's lives", often overlooked by other research, Wright and Macdonald and colleagues, formed the large scale multi-sited 'Life Activity Project' (Wright & Macdonald, 2010:1). The Life Activity Project incorporated sub-studies in different cultural, social, and geographic contexts across the Western world. Each sought to document how physical activity choices are made within specific contexts, and if and how physical activity has a place and meaning within different young people's lives. Wright and Laverty (2010) conducted longitudinal qualitative research with young people across their transitions from school to work in Australia, paying particular attention to the constraints that young people experienced regarding physical activity. The complex contexts in which the young people lived comprised of competing priorities in life, including, family, employment, and education, which all changed as they aged. For many of the young people in their study, physical activity was a pleasurable and satisfying experience, which contributed to their sense of wellbeing; however, the young people were not always able to achieve enjoyment from physical activity as their choices were limited upon leaving school. Incorporating physical activity into their daily lives was often challenging because unanticipated changes and uncertainties, such as new employment or unemployment, occurred post-school. Wright and Macdonald (2010) urge more researchers to considers physical activity within the complex lives of young people.

In this thesis (Chapter 7 in particular) I draw on a body of literature that has been called a "critical sociocultural perspective" (Wright & Macdonald, 2010:1): this research tends to centre around how school practices, health promotion, and government policies reproduce dominant healthism and obesity discourses, or 'truths' about health and obesity. An understanding of healthism and obesity discourse is vital for comprehending how young people consider physical activity.

The notion of the 'obesity epidemic' is said to be "one of the most powerful and pervasive discourses currently influencing ways of thinking about health and about bodies" (Wright, 2009:1). Dominant obesity discourse views the human body in a mechanistic manner: obesity is explained by a simple imbalance between energy intake (food) and expenditure (physical activity) (Gard & Wright, 2005). The discourse also implies that fat is inherently unhealthy, and the terms 'gluttony' and 'sloth', for example, found in a House of Commons Health Select Committee Report of Obesity, explicitly show the "moral readings of (fat) bodies" (Evans, 2006:261). Many critical scholars argue that the 'obesity epidemic' dominates governments' health agendas (Pike & Colquhoun, 2010) as it is posed as threatening a "global health catastrophe" (Gard & Wright, 2005:6). Gard and Wright (2005) explain that the type of knowledge and ideas central to the 'obesity epidemic' have become part of people's everyday talk and taken for granted as 'truth'.

'Healthism' is intimately related to the dominant obesity discourse and drives what Monaghan et al. (2013:251) call "the size-based approach to public health". 'Healthism' is "a dominant discourse in public health practice whereby individuals are held to be morally responsible for the prevention of illness by knowing and avoiding the risk factors associated with ill-health" (Wright et al., 2006:708). Healthism is said to be part of a system which suggests the "healthy body" signifies 'the morally worthy citizen– one who exercises discipline over his or her own body' (LeBesco, 2011:154). Burrows (2010), among other authors, argue that within capitalist, global, and neoliberal systems, physical activity has become commodified and transformed into a form of work that one conducts on oneself to maximize one's health and improve one's bodily appearance. Such individualism produces people as detached from the structural constraints in life, claiming individuals can and should prevent 'lifestyle diseases', such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension, through engaging in exercise and healthy eating practices alone (Atencio, 2010b; Rich et al., 2004).

My interest in works by critical scholars concerns their central arguments regarding the deleterious manner in which obesity discourse and healthism shape young people's subjectivities, understandings, and uses of physical activity. Authors argue that healthism

and obesity discourse have great bearing on young people's identities and participation in physical activities (Azzarito, 2009), and are not necessarily beneficial for young people's health and wellbeing (Burrows & McCormack, 2013; Evans, 2004; Gard & Wright, 2001; Rich et al., 2004). The first key problem concerns how 'health' is understood in corporeal terms (Rail, 2009). The second central issue concerns how health is presented as a self-responsibility and the creation of what Bernstein (2001) calls a 'totally pedagogized society': a society that urges individuals to evaluate, monitor, and survey their own bodies (Wright, 2009).

Critical scholars, including Monaghan et al. (2013:249), disagree with the emphasis on "body size/weight/fatness as a proxy for health" found in healthism and obesity discourse. The potentially negative ways in which these understandings can play out in young people are seen in these scholars' research. Burrows and McCormack (2013) showed how young people (aged 12-17 years old), from a High school serving a low-socioeconomic area with a high proportion of Maori and Pasifika students, worried about the correct 'dosage' of sport. The students often monitored the efficacy of physical activity for health by weight loss, and made harsh self-assessments and judgements of others based on body shape and size. Burrows and McCormack (2013) argue that the political context of New Zealand, where sport has explicitly become a tool for tackling (potential) ill-health and obesity, is hugely influential on young people's perceptions of, and engagement in, sport and physical activity. They suggest that harsh self-assessments and monitoring practices could lead to young people embodying "dysfunctional relationships to their bodies" (Burrows & McCormack, 2013:135).

Likewise, Rail (2009) showed that the majority of the young people (n=75 young men and 69 young women aged 13-15) from different socio-cultural locations in Ottawa and Toronto expressed constructions of health that were centred around not being fat and therefore lazy. They expressed a desire to engage in physical activity to change their bodies, which Rail (2009) suggested could also lead to the young people engaging in bodily practices that are not beneficial for wellbeing or physical health, including drug and supplement use in boys, and severe dieting or splurge exercising in girls. This fear of fatness has become widespread in UK society, which other authors argue is contributing to body dissatisfaction and eating disorders in young people (Rich et al., 2004). Rich et al. (2004) drew on the voices of 14-17-year-old young women suffering from anorexia, highlighting that anorexia must be understood as a public process, not just an individual pathology. Rich et al. (2004) further argue that the narrow perception of health as a corporeal condition, presented by healthism, is reinforced through schools in a manner that contributes to problematic body hierarchies, and girls' endeavours for bodily

perfection and value through morally virtuous modes of self-control (physical activity engagement and diet restrictions).

Several authors claim that the way in which health is presented as a moral self-responsibility can bring about senses of shame, guilt or exclusion. These feelings have been seen in mothers concerning their children's physical activity (O'Brien et al., 2014), and young people regarding their own physical activity participation and bodies (Atencio, 2006; Grogan, 2010; Johnson et al., 2013; Lee & Macdonald, 2010). Macdonald et al.'s (2010) analysis of the Life Activity projects' data set regarding anxieties and aspirations focused on data nodes such as 'health', 'I should', 'time management' and 'care'. They found when young women did not engage in what they considered to be 'enough' physical activity they made negative self-judgements regarding their perceived laziness, immorality, fatness, and appearances. They also expressed guilt at not measuring up to standards set by themselves in response to healthism and obesity discourse (Macdonald et al., 2010). Moreover, for those who are unable to achieve desirable idealised bodies or abilities in physical education, there is evidence of stigma (Beale, 2010) and exclusion (Hills, 2007).

Some critical scholars have used ethnographic methods to investigate how healthism and obesity discourse shape young people's understandings and practices of physical activity. As ethnography is a tool that allows long-term engagement with the lives of young people, I suggest that it may have distinct advantages for uncovering both the complex lives of young people, and understandings of how healthism and obesity discourse play out in young people's daily lives and practices. Below, I begin by reviewing some of the key ethnographic texts written on young people, before narrowing my discussion to authors focusing on physical activity.

2.8 Ethnographic research with young people: the need for critical ethnographic accounts of physical activity

Ethnography traditionally pays particular attention to local contexts and cultural practices, but is also able to connect these local understandings to global issues. Although some ethnographic work has been carried out with young people, few extended texts focus on physical activity in young people's lives. Key sociological ethnographic texts, include Paul Willis' (1977) *Learning to Labour* and Jay MacLeod's (1987) *Ain't no making it: Leveled aspirations in a low-income neighbourhood.* Although the topics of these texts differ from my research, they relate to my ethnography because of their engagement with young men and boys who are considered in some way problematic or 'at risk'. They both centre around theories of social reproduction and class cultures, connecting local lives to broader societal systems, whilst simultaneously providing insights into adolescent boys' daily lives.

Willis' (1977) ethnography discussed six different groups of boys from different secondary schools in the English Midlands, focusing predominantly on a group of 12 working class 'non-academic' boys, 'the lads', attending a working class urban school. His ethnographic text discusses the boys' creation of their own 'counter-school culture' before situating this culture within the broader context of working class culture regenerated through institutional forms. MacLeod's ethnography detailed the lives of the 'Brothers' (seven core predominantly black boys of different ethnic backgrounds) and the 'Hallway Hangers' (eight core boys predominantly of white Irish or Italian descent) from Clarendon Heights, a housing development in a working class area of a north east US city. His ethnography describes the time he spent hanging out in the local community with these young men (aged 16-19): he tells stories of the young men's daily lives and their lack of social mobility, explaining how poverty determines the futures that the young men may have. Like my study, MacLeod's ethnography shows that young people living in the same location are not homogenous: the 'Hallway Hangers' adopted a unique subculture opposed to mainstream American culture, whereas, the 'Brothers', although limited in their options post-school, strived to fulfil "socially approved roles" and "standards of behaviour" (MacLeod, 1987:42).

More recent ethnographic work with young people has explored youth street cultures (Pavis & Cunningham-Burley, 1999), gender relations in youth subcultures (Blackman, 1998, 2007; Mac an Ghaill, 1994), and youth transitions to adult citizenship (Hall et al., 1999). In a similar vein to my study, Pavis and Cunningham-Burley's (1999) ethnographic aspect of their larger study was conducted with a group of young people living in a deprived and declining community. The authors highlighted how the 'unhealthy' practices that the young people engaged in had meanings: their street culture, which included illicit drug and alcohol use, provided the group of young people, who were marginalised, with a source of excitement. Hall et al. (1999), who conducted a multi-sited ethnographic study with young people in youth centres (among other places) in the UK, discuss what they suggest is often missing in analyses of citizenship and young people's transition to adulthood: the importance of locality for young people's identity formation, and how young people meditate and negotiate their emerging adulthoods in local spaces.

Blackman (1998) conducted fieldwork with ten 'new wave girls' (16-17-year-olds), a high profile resistant cultural group in a Southern English secondary school. His arguments centred around the girls' actions in and out of school that formed ways of resisting dominant masculine control. Blackman's study is important methodologically: he theoretically questioned others' preconceived ideas about whether men can study female cultures, and reflected on his experience of studying the 'new wave girls' at the age of 22, explaining how sexuality, romance, and humour played a role in shaping his relations with

the girls (Blackman, 2007). Blackman's (2007) ethnography provides beneficial ways of thinking about femininities, masculinities, and positionality in ethnographic endeavours.

There is a small but increasing number of ethnographic works investigating young people's physical activity and physical culture. These studies are commonly conducted within schools (Azzarito, 2009; Burrows & McCormack, 2013; Fitzpatrick, 2011a; Hill & Azzarito, 2012; Oliver & Hamzeh, 2010) and crucially link the school context to local, national, and transnational socioeconomic and political contexts. For instance, Hills (2007) conducted ethnographic fieldwork for one year with girls (12-13 years old) in physical education classes in a mixed comprehensive school in a large city in Northern England. She explored girls' embodied physicality, focusing particularly on power relations between girls within PE classes, and showing how social capital and body competence were central to girls' relationships with their own physicalities. Importantly, Hills (2007) argued that girls' subjectivities formed around PE were filtered through practices and social relations within social institutions. She explained how choosing teams prior to playing sports could be seen as what Young (1990) calls 'scaling of bodies'. Young (1990) argued that women's oppression is partly structured by their experience of their bodies, which are shaped by broader practices and discourses. Young (1990) explained that the presence of an idealised physicality at the 'top' of the scale meant that certain bodies or bodily competencies were privileged, whilst others were marginalised and considered lacking in skill and competence.

Most of the ethnographic work in schools pivots around Physical Education (PE) because authors argue that school PE practices and 'biopedagogies' play an increasing role in reproducing healthism and obesity discourse (Evans, 2004; Fitzpatrick, 2011a; Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015). The critical ethnographic work by Fitzpatrick (2011a, 2011b) highlighted how young people's (aged 16-18) views of health and physical activity need to be considered within particular cultural, geographical, and political contexts. Her school-based ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in a deprived southern suburb of Auckland, New Zealand, where a high proportion of students were indigenous Maori and migrant Pasifika young people.

However, to gain a more holistic picture of how physical activity plays out in daily lives outside school, it is valuable to conduct ethnographic work in non-school settings: for years, Burrows' (2010) and Kirk (1997) have suggested that researchers should be exploring the place and meaning of physical activity outside of the school gates. Barron (2013) explored how children (aged 8-13) were active outside of the school environment by researching physically active play in housing estates in Ireland. She found that streets, alley ways, and greens (grassy areas) were important spaces for play. Atencio's PhD study (2006, 2010a, 2010b), a sub-study of the Life Activity Project, is most comparable to

my own: he used ethnographic methods in multiple spaces with his participants, who were recruited through schools and community centres. He lived in one of the neighbourhoods, spending time observing an ethnically diverse group of young people (eight young women and nine young men aged 13-18 years old), and observed local basketball tournaments, skateboarding on streets, and sports club sessions at High schools. Atencio (2006) examined the "multi-ethnic" young people's engagement in physical activity in a low-income urban neighbourhood in the US. In a similar vein to my work, his realisation, that popular and academic conceptualisations of health, sport, and physical activity position young people from 'deprived' neighbourhoods as 'at risk', or "in need of saving", led him to conduct his ethnographic research (Atencio, 2006:301).

Atencio's (2006:83) poststructuralist and critical ethnographic approach, that drew heavily on Foucault, viewed "young people's 'talk' … as 'texts' that provide windows into the ways they engage with discourses and constitute their subjectivities". Consequently, his central arguments pivoted around how health discourses shape young people's lives, and how young people simultaneously reject these discourses. He discussed young Black Haitian and African American women's resistance to 'healthy' exercise practices; young women's constructions of 'fat' bodies as lazy; young men's desires for fit bodies; and how young men's practices in basketball courts, where they took up positions of power, excluded others (often women) from playing. However, he also addressed neighbourhood spaces, delivering a picture of how the meanings of physical activity are also spatially constructed. He explored how 'social spaces' were gendered, 'open' (streets or 'free dance spaces') or 'closed' (spaces for organised activities). Antencio showed that 'free dance spaces' such as houses, parties, and night clubs enabled young women to dance without feeling marginalised or excluded, and thus acted as ways of disrupting discourses, institutional spaces and practices "that serve to 'other' and 'normalize' them" (Atencio, 2006:329).

Ethnographic work with young people dates as far back as 1977 with Willis' classic ethnography of working class male youth culture. The more recent contribution of critical ethnographic work to the study of young people's physical activity is noteworthy as the approach provides in-depth insights into the meanings of physical activity in young people's lives. The marked dearth of ethnographic research outside formal school settings represents a significant gap, which this thesis aims to address.

2.9 Concluding comments

This chapter has provided an academic context for this study by reviewing relevant literature, ranging from public health and epidemiological studies to critical ethnographic literature. It discussed how young people are conceptualised as a problem in public health

and how young people's physical activity levels are shown to decline across adolescence. Several key issues have also been addressed: that the rationales for researching low SES young people are complex and interlinking; that girls' participation in physical activity is a concern, but there is a need to explore boys' engagement too; and that physical activity promotional campaigns may have limited efficacy because they ignore the complexity of young people's lives. By reviewing research on the physical environment, important technological advances in the field have been discussed, and the role of qualitative research in understanding young people's perceptions of place in relation to physical activity has been highlighted. This review has introduced how healthism and obesity discourse are crucial for understanding young people's physical activity, and discussed the important contribution of critical scholars in the field of physical education in particular. Although many critical scholars heavily critique healthism, obesity discourse, and public health research and practice, this thesis stresses, in line with Lee and Macdonald (2009), that it is important to build bridges rather than divisions between the somewhat polarised perspectives of public health and critical public health literature.

My research aims to contribute to a developing body of work exploring the place of physical activity in young people's lives. In the following chapter, I explain how I specifically explored the informal and formal forms of physical activity in the lives of diverse groups of different young people living in a low-income urban area in Northern England.

Chapter 3: Conducting research at youth centres and with young people

> *"The way research is written up in academic journals often represents it as a linear, pristine, ordered process. Yet, in practice, most projects are actually more messy, frustrating, and complex."*

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(Valentine, 2001:43)

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Between May 2014 and September 2015 I conducted fieldwork with young people aged 13-21 in two youth centres: Space1 and HIDE2. Space1 and HIDE2 were located in two neighbouring wards, Willerton and Fairview, in a city in Northern England. As suggested by the quote above, the journey that led to the production of this thesis was not straight forward.

Billo and Hiemstra, (2013:320) explain that field sites are dynamic, comprising "numerous material components", such as people and organisations, which researchers have to negotiate. My negotiations with 'the field' began with Space1 in May 2014 in the form of a proposed Photovoice project. My relationship with Space1 emerged through contact with a community active travel officer for a cycling charity, with whom I had discussed planning a Photovoice intervention project regarding active travel, physical activity, and young people. This Photovoice project was my original proposal for my PhD. It incorporated mobile ethnography and participant observation and also had a focus on aiming to understand physical activity in the lives of young people; however, it also intended to act as an intervention, which hoped to increase young people's physical activity through self-reflection. The project began in June 2014, after initial participant observation at the youth centre, building rapport with the young people. Matt, the managing director and 'gatekeeper', was keen for the project to go ahead, and four preliminary project sessions ran in June 2014. However, a lack of resources from the cycling charity, inconsistent engagement from the young people, and the re-location of Space1 in July 2014 (to be discussed in due course) made the Photovoice project too difficult to negotiate as a lone PhD researcher. Although the Photovoice project did not continue as intended, it was the beginning of the fieldwork story: it provided access to the youth centre, acted as a way of building relationships with staff and some young people, and became a methodological learning experience.

Similar to the stories of Billo and Hiemstra (2013), who discuss the changes in their PhD projects from paper proposal to field research, I negotiated fundamental alterations of my project, changing the methodology and shifting the focus of my research. In response to the circumstances and experiences at Space1 in May-July 2014, I became less interested

in providing a physical activity 'intervention', and more interested in learning about the complexities of the young people's lives. I also felt it necessary to conduct my research using a more flexible methodology, one that could be attuned to the experiences of the young people. Combining a variety of ethnographic methods meant that the research could become responsive to the young people. Due to the uncertainty regarding contact with the young people from Space1 throughout the re-location period, and a desire to study a diverse sample of young people, I began engaging with an additional youth centre, HIDE2, which was located 1.3 miles away from Space1, closer to the city centre. I first visited HIDE2 at the end of June 2014, when the cycling charity started shaping a relationship with them. Throughout the research process, I continued to engage with the cycling charity as their relationship with HIDE2, and their presence in the local area, also changed during my fieldwork.

In this chapter, I describe the process of doing research and the research context. I begin by introducing the youth centres and the young people whom I worked with: I aim to provide the reader with a sense of the field site contexts and the heterogeneity of the young people. Following this, I present a methodological rationale, which outlines the benefits of using a combination of qualitative methods to study everyday physical activity with young people at youth centres. I then describe what I did in the field and with whom, and how the data were analysed. The final two sections are reflective considerations regarding the fieldwork experience, where I discuss methodological challenges and benefits, power dynamics, emotional difficulties concerning multiple identities in the field, and reflections on positionality.

3.1 SPACE1: the place and the people

> *"SPACE1 is a leisure thing, a hobby, and the young people are not here for any other reason other than that they want to be here- it is great that they attend."*

(Matt, Fieldnotes 10.07.2014)

Space1 is a community centre which has been operating for nearly three decades. Their aims are to provide a hub for people of different ages in the area who are on low incomes, to meet their needs, and reduce social isolation. The centre has traditionally engaged with White working class children and young people from low-income families. They had a 'seniors group' (young people aged 13-19 years old), whom I worked with, and a 'juniors group' (5-8 year olds) and 'inters group' (9-12 year olds), whom I also met and helped out with at times. Additionally, they host wider community events, elderly groups, and mothers and toddlers' sessions. A youth session tended to be a two-to-four-hour time period, where the youth workers were present to supervise activities. Some of these sessions

were called 'drop-ins' and some were called 'project nights'. During the time I conducted fieldwork, the majority of the sessions were 'drop-ins': there were no formally organised 'project nights' except my Photovoice sessions. During 'drop-in' sessions young people would come and go as they pleased. When I started volunteering and running the Photovoice project with some of the young people in May 2014, the seniors' group ran on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays evenings. These sessions were organised by the youth centre manager, Matt, and staffed by four part-time youth workers, who became colleagues, friends, and important informants and facilitators within my study.

Aside from Matt, who had managed the centre for many years, Ant was the longest standing youth worker. He was Eastern European, had worked at the organisation for the best part of a decade, and had spent years building relationships with many of the young people, some of whom he had known since they were 5 years old. Danny, another youth worker, had worked at Space1 for four years, and Daliah and Karen, two female staff, had been employed at the organisation for four and two years, respectively.

Space1 moved to a temporary building between July 2014-July 2015 due to building renovations. The new location for the youth project was 1.5 miles from its original location in Fairview ward, where the sessions had been held for the past two decades. To get there the young people had to walk or get a bus to the new area, which was further away from the city centre and a place they were relatively unfamiliar with. This move happened just as the summer programme started in July 2014, which only included two organised trips for the seniors' groups and no weekly sessions. The seniors' sessions resumed at the new location from September and were planned to continue until January when the building work was proposed to finish. This date was continually pushed back, and finally building work was completed by July 2015, extending their stay in the temporary location to one year.

In Winter 2014/5 there was talk that funding cuts would potentially lead to redundancies or closure. The beginning of 2015 was thus a period of great uncertainty and stress for the staff, and myself, as someone heavily involved with the young people and staff, and as a researcher with my own agenda and concerns. This time of financial instability was worsened by miscommunication between managerial staff, sessional staff and the young people themselves. The young people and session staff feared closure of the youth sessions altogether. However, Matt was able to secure funding for two youth workers' salaries. Daliah and Karen were made redundant in spring 2015, leaving Ant and Danny as the sole youth workers. The youth centre also gained some additional funding through a community fund. The community fund held an event where various applicants could present their project to local residents. On this day, residents voted for the projects they felt should be funded. On the day of these presentations, Ant said "I'm going to vote for

my project to keep my job, and have job for the summer". The changing and continually uncertain context of youth work provision and the precarious nature of funding had a dramatic effect on the nature of my project and the young people who took part.

When I first began fieldwork at Space1 in May 2014, Matt, the manager of the organisation explained that the youth sessions were attended by a diverse group of young people. Some young people were from low-income White British families, were experiencing a plethora of problems, engaging in 'risky' activities (such as drinking, drugs and unprotected sex), and had been excluded from school. Others came from families with slightly better incomes, with more opportunities, and were engaging in more 'positive' or at least less 'risky' activities. Most were girls because in Spring 2014 a group of boys were banned from using the Space1 facilities: they had been aggressive and abusive to the staff and vandalized the building.

The first group of young people I met were a group of girls, most of whom were in Year 9 (aged 13-14) at school at the time. These girls were easily identifiable as a group, through their similar style of dress, hair, and makeup. If they were not in their school uniforms, which included tight black trousers, trainers, a polo shirt, and a sweatshirt, they wore trainers, tracksuit bottoms or jeggings, and hoodies or strappy tops. At the drop-in sessions the group would primarily play music through the speakers whilst sitting in the corner chatting, making loom-band bracelets, painting nails, and messaging other friends on their phones. This group was informally called 'Becca's crew' by the youth workers and other young people. This 'crew' consisted of a group of between 6-8 girls who were friends from school, although one had been expelled and was now attending a special educational centre. These girls were what some of the other younger individuals called 'Raggies' or 'chavs'. They all often smoked cigarettes and drank alcohol on Friday nights in a secluded alleyway or in Hawthorne park, which was located between Space1 and HIDE2. They never attended any sessions at the temporary location. Other girls, who drank and smoked at points, but were not fully involved with 'Becca's crew' included Annie, Becca's older sister, and her cousin Nelly, who were in year 12 (aged 16-17) and year 10 (aged 15-16), respectively. Annie and Nelly only visited the temporary location a few times, mainly to see Ant and reminisce about old times at Space1.

The original Space1 seniors also included another group of young people, the majority of whom were in Year 8 (aged 12-13) (except Francis, who was in Year 9) in June 2014. They included, Hen, Francis, Amelia, and Alesha, who irregularly attended seniors' sessions when I first started. They had just moved, at different points during the year, from the inters to the seniors, as they each turned 13 years old. This group of young people generally did not drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes, and many were clearly intimidated by the older group of girls. Hen and her friend openly told me they did not like 'Becca's crew',

and Hen in particular acted considerably differently at the end of sessions after Becca and her 'crew' had left: Hen was more bubbly, more jokey when she was just with Francis and the youth workers, and even Ant explicitly said that she was more herself when the other girls were not around. Hen, Kalehsi, Francis, Alesha, and Amelia became key members of a new group that began regularly attending the temporary building approximately three-to-four months (December-January) after sessions started there in September 2014.

Other young people, who had not attended Space1 sessions before, began attending sessions at the new building. The first to attend were a group of boys from a secondary school nearby who lived near to the building. Out of curiosity they walked in the door on a cold November night, took parental consent forms home, returned them, and started hanging out in the building, playing xbox and getting to know the youth workers. Billy, Tony, and Haz were the main boys I got to know from this group: another two, Jonny and Cal, attended less regularly but took part in a focus group and an interview, respectively. The only attendee from the old group who came to the new building that autumn (2014) was Kalehsi. However, towards the end of the year a new group began to emerge as Kalehsi encouraged both the past inters members, and her friends from school, who lived nearby, (namely, Lana, Lilly, Jay, Mary, Mimi, Leonie, Liam, Jay, and Cathy) to attend. By late January, a large number of young people were attending the sessions three nights a week. During sessions some of the young people played darts, whilst others watched YouTube videos or played Xbox. Many intermittently messed around on the Soft play, which was present due to a toddlers group; went to Sycamore park; or made use of the toddlers' plastic Wendy house, chatting and eating snacks, such as sharer bag cookies and sweets that they bought from the shop around the corner. The atmosphere in the new building became fun, friendly, and jovial as this group became more and more present within the space.

3.2 HIDE2: the place and the people

> *I approached HIDE2 for the first time on my bike, as customary of a cycling charity volunteer. I pedalled down Gregory Street and after a hundred yards or so saw a handful of young people mainly with their backs to me, perched with their elbows on a red brick wall surrounding a yard at the back of an end terrace house. This wall created a boundary of what turned out to be the yard of the HIDE2. It was a sunny mid-afternoon in June and as I was rolling up to the gap in the wall, the entrance to the yard, I recognised two faces, Ted and Leonard, two of the cycling charity's staff, whom I had got to know relatively well over the past few months. They both greet me warmly with smiles on their faces. Upon entering the yard, I lean my bike against the building whilst saying my hellos to Leonard, Ted, and to the young boys surrounding*

them. I look around at the people and decor in the yard and instantly notice the wall that is red brick from outside, is white from inside, painted with black flowers and bird stencils around the perimeter of the wall, in what I can only describe as a 'street art' style. The rest of the yard comprises a few tubs for what seem like struggling shrubs or weeds, and railing to the door. Amongst the people here is a lady with grey hair holding a camera, talking to Leonard: it becomes apparent that this is the senior youth worker of HIDE2, Carla. There are also two older boys/young men who I think must be at least 18 or 19, if not older. I introduce myself to the senior youth worker and she introduces me to the young men: B-Hive and Koffee. B-Hive is about my height, of a strong sporty stature, wearing blue knee length shorts and a white T-shirt and is of mixed ethnicity (British-Jamaican). To my surprise, B-Hive greets me by shaking my hand and offers me a cup of tea. The warm, polite, and welcoming act surprises me and leads me to immediately question my assumptions about young people's actions based on experiences of others. B-Hive goes inside to make my tea when a much younger boy of around 13 or 14 years old approaches me with a broken bike. The boy seems to speak minimal English but I figure out from speech and gestures, and from assessing the bike itself, that he needs new brake levers, which coincidently we have on another bike that is beyond repair. As I struggle with getting the plastic bar ends off of the handlebar, B-Hive comes out of the building with the tea, sees me struggling, and comes over to help. He manages to get the stubborn bar ends off by pulling and twisting them with more strength than I could muster. He then talks to the senior youth worker and me, explaining that he has got a couple of jobs now and has signed off the dole.

(Fieldnotes 18.06.14)

My first visit to the HIDE2 as a cycling charity volunteer at one of the first bike maintenance sessions acted as a crucial moment for my fieldwork: it provided a means of gaining access to a new youth centre and to groups of young men and boys that were starkly different to those I had met at Space1, in terms of ethnicity, interests, and age. Those I met that day became pivotal participants and facilitators within my research, shaping the direction of the research in unanticipated ways. Carla, B-Hive, and the other volunteers, Koffee and Dew, played a crucial role in introducing me to other members of their peer group and assisted with ways of building rapport with the younger boys in the project.

HIDE2 was not solely a youth project, it had done advocacy work and adult projects in the past. Nonetheless, over the time I spent there, its primary project was a youth project. Carla, the senior youth worker, was passionate about the HIDE2 and how it provides "opportunities" for young people who are considered "difficult" by others. She explained:

"It's about challenging perceptions about what other people have of young people because (pauses) I get quite emotional (starts to cry) -

Because they get written off, and it annoys me because they get written off".

HIDE2 provided young people with opportunities to try new things that they would not usually be able to access. During fieldwork HIDE2 catered for young males aged 13-21, and inadvertently almost exclusively engaged with those who were 'BME' (Black and Minority Ethnic). Carla explained that the attraction of BME boys and young men was related to their interests in music, and the density of these minorities in the local areas. The changing population was very visible in the local area: when walking around the area Czech and Slovakian families were sat on chairs outside on the street, with children walking and hanging out on the streets. Carla also explained that as the HIDE2 had never advertised, its attendees had heard of HIDE2 through word-of-mouth and friendship groups, which often formed along ethnic and cultural lines. The organisation only worked with boys (except for studio recording) due to trouble in the past with mixed-sex sessions and girls' apparent disinterest in the activities provided. However, after my fieldwork ended Carla gained additional funding and began girls-only sessions on Tuesday nights. During fieldwork, HIDE2 had three different "streams": a social, a music stream, and an outdoor. These streams were described by Carla as meandering and intersecting at certain points, hence the 'stream' metaphor.

The social stream included 'drop-ins' on the ground floor, similar to Space1. The ground floor was usually set up as a space for socialising. The space consisted of Carla's office, which young people used freely to chat to her, a kitchen, that could be used by the young people under supervision, or with consent from staff, a main 'living' room, hallway and toilets. The 'living' room was furnished with school-like tables and chairs. The tables were used for the two PlayStations and three laptops, and the chairs were moved at will around the room. The primary opening hours for the drop-ins were three hours on Monday and Wednesday evenings, and six hours on Thursdays due to early afternoon opening. Additional hours were scheduled for music and outdoor sessions.

The music stream at HIDE2 was vast. The young people's reasons for attending HIDE2 usually centred around the music stream: they engaged with HIDE2 so they could record or play music. During my time with HIDE2 the music stream developed from studio recording sessions to creation of music videos, musical performances and formal music and art qualifications.

The outdoor stream was possible due to several partner organisations who could cover insurance for outdoor activities. Carla saw 'partnership working' as something useful, positive, and almost necessary for success in the current funding climate. The outdoor stream was conducted with a cycling charity and another organisation that ran youth sessions in National Parks. The cycling charity were essential in organising led bike rides

and hosting bike maintenance sessions. During my fieldwork three local (approximately 10-mile-long) bike rides were organised for the young boys, and a 3-day charity bike ride was organised with the young men as a fundraiser for HIDE2. The youth centre also made great use of the cycling hub that was in Hawthorne park nearby HIDE2, using it for outdoor cooking and bush craft sessions. However, risk assessments, health and safety procedures, and time and staffing constraints, restricted the frequency of these activities.

Similar to Space1, HIDE2 experienced some difficult financial circumstances. The building lacked a functioning boiler for the duration of my fieldwork, the building was in need of re-decorating due to holes remaining in walls from past vandalism. HIDE2 only had one paid member of staff, Carla, the senior youth worker: she relied on volunteers to manage the studio and ground floor with her. There were discussions concerning funding for additional paid staff members throughout the fieldwork period. Unfortunately, when I stopped attending sessions in late summer 2015, Carla received news that a crucial funding application for staff salaries had been rejected. This was a great disappointment for Carla, and for Koffee, a vital volunteer, who had been trained to fill one of the positions.

During fieldwork at HIDE2, I got to know two distinct groups of young people: an older group of mixed ethnicity young men and a younger group of predominantly Czech and Slovakian boys. Some of the Czech boys attending came from Bodham, which was a 15-minute-walk from HIDE2 and actually nearer to Space1. Others lived in Willerton (where HIDE2 was located), Fairview, and Ashmoor wards, which were geographically closer. Some of the boys were fluent in English, whereas others were not. Some had moved to the UK between the ages of two to six years old, whereas others had moved when they were as old as thirteen. Most of the boys attended the same school that many of the young men had moved to in Year 9; however, a couple attended a Pupil Referral Unit[7]. There were different smaller friendship groups within the group of boys. One group, who referred to themselves as the Fairview Bad Boys, attended HIDE2 during Autumn 2014; however, they then stopped attending for several months and only returned on a few occasions during 2015. Consequently, the group I got to know best, who spoke relatively good English and were willing to engage in group interviews or informal interviews, included Karel, Reggie, Dal, Ezzy, Miko, and Jaka. All of them, except Dal, had migrated from the same large city in the Czech Republic. They primarily spoke Czech with each other and their Czech identities were important aspects of their lives: they attended family parties with Czech music and dancing, most of their friends were Czech, friends and extended family remained in the Czech Republic, and as such they visited over the summer every few years. Some identified as Roma, although this identification was

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[7] A Pupil Referral Unit is a special educational centre for young people who have often been expelled from mainstream school and have behavioural problems.

dynamic, complex and rejected by some. For instance, Miko said, he was "kind of" Roma, "sometimes similar, something not". Upon questioning, he further explained that "I'm Czech. I don't say [I'm] like Roma. I don't really like them…like they are little bit tramps." This relationship between Czech and Roma and how they identified at different points in time as they spent more time in the UK was complex. I do not focus on this issue but I do discuss the connection between their ethnic identities and their parkour practices in Chapter 5.4.

The boys were between thirteen and fifteen years old and lived close to each other in Bodham. When they turned thirteen they joined HIDE2. They had previously been involved with another youth centre in Bodham, which they still sometimes attended on Tuesday nights when HIDE2 was closed. They all participated in the bike rides, and Karel, Reggie, Dal, Ezzy, and Miko were very engaged in producing hip hop music and their music was a large part of their identities. The opportunities to rap, produce, and record music were their primary reasons for attending HIDE2. By the time I finished fieldwork, their rap group had filmed several music videos and had performed at various local events.

The group of older mixed ethnicity young men defined themselves as the 'original' group who attended HIDE2, when it took on a youth music project in 2007. B-Hive, Koffee, Dew, Aari, Safal, Marcel, Geba, and K-Z had been key members of the youth project and continued to be in some way or form connected to HIDE2. Some of these young men hung out or volunteered at HIDE2 quite often, and had built good relationships with the younger boys, whereas others only came in on occasions to play computer games, record music, produce videos or pick up friends before heading to other places, for example, the gym. Consequently, some individuals participated in the research more heavily than others, as is common in ethnographic research: some of the young men were more willing than others to hang out, talk to me numerous times, and share details of their lives.

Most of the members of the young men's peer group turned twenty-one during the academic year 2014/2015. Some had attended primary school together and most had gone to the same secondary school for a period of time. They had loyalties to each other: memories of many shared experiences cemented their friendships. For many, their secondary school life had been dominated by violent incidents and experiences of racism. Their ethnic and migrant identities, which influenced their experiences growing up, varied significantly and included: Eritrean, Zambian, Black-Portuguese, Algerian, British-Bangladeshi, and British 'mixed-race' (White British and Jamaican parents). Some spoke other languages with their families and all spoke fluent English. The young men had often got into trouble with the police when they were younger for various reasons and some felt they were targeted because of their ethnicities. They often reminisced about how much

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time they spent at HIDE2 and how they grew up there, telling stories of mischievous, unpleasant, and even violent things they used to do at HIDE2 and elsewhere: fighting was common place during their teen years. Such stories became indicative of the necessity to employ a narrative approach in interviews and analyses that aimed to understand their lives. The senior youth worker claimed, "If I'd have told their teachers they were going to be people you could rely on, they would have laughed, but they really are great". She often spoke of how much the young men had changed, reminding them of frequent vandalism they committed at the HIDE2 in their younger years.

The young men explained that when they were in Year 9 (13/14 years old) riots broke out in their school. The young men said the cause was racism and friendship groups fighting each other, which got out of control, and apparently culminated in the school shutting down. The students were transferred to different segregated blocks within another larger secondary school. This tactic broke up the friendship groups so as to limit interactions whilst in school. Further measures included police officers at the school on guard at all times to prevent any further trouble, who remain in place until this day. During this upheaval, a couple of the young men were transferred to a different school in a wealthier part of the city. The others went to the policed school to complete GCSE's. After secondary school most of these boys, except Koffee, went to or are still enrolled in the local college completing higher education courses or GCSE's that they did not gain whilst at school. Aari was completing a degree at a University in a nearby city and worked part-time jobs whilst living at home. To my knowledge, only Aari and another young man within the core friendship group were at University. The friendship group was somewhat fluid: different extended members joined the group during different activities, such as drinking, going out or playing sports. Members of the peer group who never or rarely engaged with HIDE2 are absent from my discussions. One young man, C-Dog, was associated with the group primarily through Dew: they met in September 2014, before Dew stopped attending University. C-Dog, who was White British and originally from a nearby town, would often hang out with the other volunteers as he helped produce films at HIDE2. He also occasionally went out clubbing with the group in town.

Outside of HIDE2, during my fieldwork, most of the young men went clubbing in town, albeit some less frequently than others. Some drank alcohol and others did not, some smoked cannabis, whilst others did not. The group was therefore diverse in many ways. Overall, the boys were relatively physically active with all but Dew either attending the gym, playing sports or both: the young men were generally interested in sports and keeping fit. They also played sports informally as a friendship group, including football, boxing sparring, frisbee, and badminton on occasions. During the time that I knew the young men, a new low-cost gym opened in the area: many of them gained memberships

and went to the gym to lift weights more often than before. The two most prominent sports were boxing and football. Two of the boys, Geba and Marcel, were very keen football players, playing 7-aside for a local youth team in the area, whereas K-Z, Safal, Dew, and B-Hive all started boxing training between the ages of 15-17 for varying reasons.

3.3 Methods

My methodological approach follows James (2007) and others, who have challenged how adults have been used as proxies for children and youth in research (Cook & Hess, 2007); youth's voices have been commonly silenced, suppressed or ignored in their everyday lives (James, 2007); and children and adolescents have been typically viewed as 'incomplete adults', as becomings rather than beings (Greene & Hogan, 2005). In Chapter 5, I provide an in depth discussion of the research paradigm within the anthropology of childhood that recognises children as "articulate social actors" (James, 2007:261). Due to my decision to align my own research with this paradigm, I chose a combination of research methods that the young people were happy to engage with in different ways.

My ethnographic approach was partially able to overcome what Thomson et al. (2002:351) suggested their longitudinal qualitative research with young people was unable to resolve: a "methodological riddle" between a "life that is lived and a life that is told". My ethnographic approach was able to provide novel insights and contrasts between the "life that is lived" (participant observations, mobile ethnography) and "the life that is told" (group discussions and interviews). However, as Jachyra et al. (2015:244) state, ethnographic methodology does "not claim to arrive at a singular objective construction of truth and reality". A social constructivist understanding of the world means that my data are considered "multiple intersectional truths and meaning-making processes that were co-constructed" through my interactions with the young people (Jachyra, 2015: 244). According to Barker and Weller (2003:52), there is no "objective, universal truth" to be unveiled, just "partial glimpses that reflect in one form the complexity and diversity of children's lives". My ethnographic research is temporally, spatially, and context specific, and I recognise the role of my own subjectivity in the production of knowledge. To counter the limitations of individual methods, I used a combination of methods that could access different aspects of the young people's lives.

Following Irwin and Johnson (2005) and Darbyshire et al.'s (2005) insights regarding research with children, and my own experience in the field, that the youth centres and groups of young people were not homogenous, it became clear that flexibility was crucial. I developed a methodological approach that catered to these differences and was practical for working with young people in youth centre settings. I used a combination of

ethnographic methods at the youth centres with the young people: participant observation, interviewing, mobile ethnography, visual ethnography, and participant photography. I used a convenience sample with additional snowballing recruitment techniques because they enabled me to study group dynamics and were most appropriate and beneficial for the study setting: what can be considered a "hard-to-study" population (Bernard, 2011:148).

In this section, I discuss how I conducted research at the youth centres, whilst providing rationales for each of the methods used. Over fifty young people were included in the participant observation, and mobile and visual ethnographic elements of my study, which took place in and around the youth centres, at Sycamore park next to Space1, and when out on various activities. Thirty-four young people took part in at least one 'formal' individual, paired, or group interview, participant photography activity or mobile interview, in addition to informal chats. Due to preferences and personalities, some young people took part in several research activities and were keen to be asked questions and hang out, others took part in one formal activity, and some would only engage in informal interviewing when hanging out. Bernard (2011) explains that in ethnographic research this is to be expected and is part of the rationale for using a combination of different methods.

Participant observation and informal interviewing

"Participant observation fieldwork is the foundation of cultural anthropology" (Bernard, 2011:256). Physical activity and physical education researchers began using the method to understand young people's physical activity engagement, usually in school PE classes (Azzarito, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2011b; Hills, 2007). Others have more recently used participant observation to study children's experience of physically active play and play spaces in daily life (Barron, 2013). Jachyra et al. (2015:243) suggest that the rise in participant observation is a response to the moral panic surrounding childhood physical inactivity and obesity as the method can provide better understandings of the "socio-behavioural processes and lived contextual contingencies that mediate active participation, disengagement and/or withdrawal" from PE.

The flexibility of participant observation and its ability to include all kinds of data was invaluable for research with young people in youth centre settings. Taking fieldnotes includes detailing sounds, smells, the visual, and what people say, all of which cannot be addressed by any other method (Bernard, 2011). Bernard (2011) suggests that participating in daily life can help researchers ask sensible questions and illuminate unanticipated themes that may not considered by adults. The themes arising from participant observation are then discussed in interviews: asking questions about what young people actually did was helpful for comprehending physical activity from the young people's perspectives.

I conducted participant observation at the youth 'drop in' sessions and when additional activities were planned. These included community garden days, trips, and a weekend residential. During these periods, I took fieldnotes and photographs[8] to produce a description of what was going on. I also conducted participant observation with the young men outside of the youth centre settings: I spent time with them playing pool in the city, going to café's, and chatting at B-Hive's house. The youth sessions typically ran three or four nights per week. In return for conducting research, and as a means of building rapport with young people, I became a volunteer youth worker in each location so that I became part of the staff team and so that my presence could be utilised by the youth centres. My main roles concerned helping to set up and tidy up at the end of sessions and supervise and talk to the young people, which was also my main task as a researcher. Occasionally, I had to stay later or attend on certain days at one youth centre or another due to staff shortages, but most of the time I could change location when I wished. I alternated between youth centres in order to gain a picture of the young people's lives across a longer period of time. I spent half of the week at HIDE2 and the other half at Space1. During certain periods of time, such as over the summer and Autumn of 2014 and the summer of 2015, Space1 had fewer seniors' sessions; hence, I spent more time at HIDE2. This was then countered when more sessions occurred at Space1 during the Spring of 2015. As participant observation requires detachment from the 'everyday' in order to "intellectualize what you've seen and heard" (Bernard, 2011:258), I wrote up notes late at night after youth sessions at a tea house, or at home the following morning.

For participant observation, I followed Wolfinger's (2002:90) 'comprehensive' note-taking method. However, at moments in time when several young people were doing different things at the same time, I had to opt for the 'salience hierarchy' technique, where the researcher records what they are struck by as noteworthy. This method was necessary, as to watch, become part of, and take notes on a dozen occurrences within one time-frame was impossible. In being selective, I recognise that at points I focused on what Wolfinger (2002) calls the 'deviant', which he suggests is inevitable in ethnography. As physical activity was my interest, and I entered the youth centres with assumptions, based on literature, concerning notions of young people not engaging in physical activity, I acknowledge that at points I concentrated on the 'deviant' as this deviance was what I was particularly interested in. For instance, on occasions when some of the young people played Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) and another messed around on the Soft-play[9], I more often focused on listening, watching, and participating in the Soft-play. However, I did also play D&D (although I failed to fully understand the game). As my focus was to

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[8] All of the photographs found in this thesis were taken by me.

[9] Soft-play equipment consists of soft foam filled pieces of equipment that come in various shapes and sizes and are generally designed for children under the age of eight

document and understand the ways in which young people were active in their daily lives, not to quantify how active young people were, or to provide a generalizable understanding of all young people's experiences and desires for physical activity, I do not consider this issue a flaw.

Gaining trust was one of the main aims of the early stages of participant observation. Spending time building relationships with the young people and 'hanging out' at the youth centres was vital: I spent a lot of time building relationships with the young people at the youth centres so that they became comfortable with my presence and also became happy to talk to me. This was more difficult with some of the young people than others. For example, gaining the trust of Becca's crew was incredibly difficult: I spent weeks sitting making loom band bracelets or painting my nails with the girls in order to build enough rapport for them to talk to me and participate in my project. Karen explained that it had taken her over one year to gain the trust of this group of girls. I also found some of the HIDE2 boys difficult to engage with, primarily because many did not speak English well and were not talkative. I spent months hanging out and playing PlayStation games with them. After a few months of knowing me and what I was doing, some of the boys agreed to take part in a focus group and others in interviews. However, observations, and informal interviewing continued to make up the bulk of my data regarding this group.

Participant observation and informal interviewing was beneficially flexible and produced invaluable insights into the young people's lives. At Space1 I conducted informal interviews in various spaces, including whilst leaning up against a car, sitting on the tarmac outside, on a slide or climbing frame. Others were conducted when sat at the side of the main hall in Space1 whilst the TV blared in the background, or whilst the young people climbed over the Soft-play, describing their parkour moves. At HIDE2 I conducted informal interviews whilst the young people microwaved their £1 burgers and made cups of coffee in the kitchen; watched videos on Facebook in the main 'living room'; and edited their music in the recording studio upstairs. I disagree with Bernard's (2011) claim that informal interviewing is 'deceptive' as it involves finding moments to write down what people say without them often realising it. I wrote down what the young people did and said during the youth sessions on my smart phone, when they spoke to their friends or to me. This was the most appropriate way to take notes as all of the young people had phones and frequently used them in this way. As I discuss in Section 3.5, the young people were aware I was watching, listening, and writing down everything that happened in the youth centre; however, it is possible that over time some may have forgotten.

Young people's lives are often difficult to research, and research on mobility also presents challenges. Aspects, such as experiences of one's environment, can be better understood by researchers if researchers are able to share those experiences with participants. Mobile ethnography and 'go-along' interviews enable the researcher to explore the context of people's daily lives "with the participant in real time" (Garcia et al., 2012:1395) and observe people in "their natural milieu" (Christensen et al., 2011:232). Walking or cycling with young people is also said to produce a shared rhythm, which helps to build rapport (Carpiano, 2009), and is thought to encourage conversation as children, who may find making eye contact difficult, no longer need to avoid eye contact (Porter et al., 2010). Mobile ethnography and 'go along' interviewing can highlight notable features in the environment as the participant and researcher pass or manoeuvre obstacles (Porter et al., 2010), making the methods particularly valuable when researching people's spatial practices, biographies, social realms, and perceptions of the environment (Kusenbach, 2003).

Carpiano (2009) used 'go-along' interviews to research perspectives on health and place. More recently, mobile interviewing and ethnographic methods have been used to explore sexual health resources on college campuses in the US (Garcia et al., 2012); walking for transportation in elderly people (Van Cauwenberg et al., 2012); Danish children's everyday mobility (Christensen et al., 2011); and young people's experiences of anti-social behaviour and strategies for staying safe in Glasgow (Neary et al., 2013). Carpiano (2009:271) argues that the 'go-along' interview is a "powerful ally" to other epistemologically similar methods, including participant photography, static interviewing and participant observation.

Three guided tours around the local neighbourhoods and parks were conducted with three different pairs of young people. I conducted mobile ethnography and go-along interviews on five bike rides (two led-bike rides with the HIDE2 boys, one independent bike ride with Koffee and one with B-Hive, and a 3-day charity bike ride with B-Hive, Koffee, Marcel, Na, and C-Dog) and on runs and walks with a few of the young men. On the bike rides I used a handle bar mounted camera at points, which I re-watched and took notes on, transcribing speech where appropriate or where possible due to audio quality. Similar to the participant observation conducted in the youth centres, I conducted participant observation when mobile: I jotted down what people said and did during bike rides or walks on my smart phone when we stopped for breaks, and occasionally whilst cycling on traffic-free paths (not recommended in future as quite dangerous). Mobile ethnography was also conducted on numerous spontaneous walks around the streets, to Sycamore

park, other greenspaces, and local shops. On these outings I either recorded on a video camera and subsequently wrote notes when playing it back, or wrote fieldnotes and took photographs. The flexibility of mobile ethnography was invaluable: mobile ethnography allowed me to access the young people's use and meaning of Sycamore park by Space 1, the Box, and the streets surrounding the youth centres. Moreover, Geba and Safal wished to participate only in mobile interviews: they felt more comfortable going out in the local area, taking video footage and photographs of Hawthorne park nearby HIDE2, than sitting face-to-face at HIDE2 or elsewhere.

Static semi-structured interviews and focus groups

Working with young people requires flexibility, both on the part of the researcher and the method. Drever (1995:1) suggests that interviewing is a "flexible technique", suitable for a wide range of research purposes where multiple people can engage in the interview process. Semi-structured interviewing allows the researcher to uncover and explore unanticipated themes through the use of probing, whereas unstructured/informal interviewing helps to build rapport, is "truly versatile", and useful for uncovering the "lived experience" of a behaviour (Bernard, 2011:158). Irwin and Johnson (2005) suggest that timing and appropriate use of open ended questions is important, and yet also state that there are no 'golden rules' for interviewing children and young people as their dynamic personalities react differently in different circumstances.

In addition to unstructured/informal interviewing during participant observation, I conducted twenty-three individual semi-structured static interviews, and twelve paired semi-structured interviews with the young people. I also conducted three formal interviews with Carla, Matt, and Ant to gain an understanding of the youth centres and their relationships with the young people. The interviews followed flexible interview guides and lasted anywhere between twenty-minutes and two-hours, depending on how much the participants wanted to share. The guides differed for the different age and social groups due to the differences in their current circumstances and abilities to answer more in depth questions. I sometimes used a map of the local area (not in Appendix for anonymity reasons) and some photographic images of physical activities (See Appendix B) to help guide the conversation, depending on what direction the conversation went in. For the interviews with the young men, I took a more biographical approach as I was interested in discovering memories they had of their past engagements in physical activity and challenges they faced during adolescence, as well as how they felt about physical activity in the present, and what they planned for the future. The interview guides generally incorporated a section about the local area, a section about what they thought of when they heard the words physical activity, and a section about what they enjoyed doing with

their time (see Appendix B). As time progressed, additional questions/topic areas, based on what previous participants had told me, were added to the interview guides or discussed with different individuals. For instance, when I discovered that group conflict was occurring within the lives of the boys at HIDE2, I added additional questions regarding violence, crime, and fighting to the focus group guide. This proved particularly useful when a young person was not forthcoming with information when responding to questions.

All of the younger participants who agreed to interviews were interviewed in the youth centres, usually in a quiet room or office, whereas some of the young men were interviewed in café's. The interviews at the youth centres were sometimes planned at the time as one-to-one or paired interviews; however, others often spontaneously became paired or small-group interviews when an additional person entered the room and joined in the conversation for a period amount of time, or when a youth worker was present. This spontaneity has also been noted by Highet (2003) who conducted interviews in youth centre settings with adolescents.

Focus group style interviews are commonly used with young people as group interactions produce "rich experiential data" (Asbury, 1995:414). Several studies note that young people often opt to be interviewed in friendship pairs or small groups (Edwards & Alldred, 1999; Highet, 2003; Punch, 2002) and are comfortable and familiar discussing issues in groups (Darbyshire et al., 2005). Highet (2003) suggests that the paired or small group interviews are also a 'good fit' for the youth work setting. They are more relaxed; provide a more naturalistic setting; and are appropriate in readdressing the power imbalance usually found in the interview context. Highet (2003) also found prior friendships provided a "safe context" which allowed disclosure of personal experiences. Nonetheless, Punch (2002) explains that as young people are not homogeneous, asking young people what form of interview they prefer is good practice.

Five formal focus groups were organised with between four and six young people and lasted between 1-1.5 hours each. I bought food to share with the participants, as suggested by Asbury (1995). One focus group was conducted with Dew, C-Dog, B-Hive, and Koffee over dinner at my house. The other focus groups consisted of Hen, Kalehsi, Cathy, and Jemma; Tonny, Billy, Jonny, Alesha, Kalehsi, Hen; Reggie, Karel, Miko, Dal, Tommi; and Reggie, Karel, Dal, Miko, and Yan and were conducted at the youth centres. Parts of the discussion with the Czech boys was guided by the photographs of various physical activities (Appendix B). These prompted conversations or focused the group if they were going off track. I planned to do more focus groups; however, I found that smaller group or paired interviews were preferred by the young people, were more efficient, easier to manage, and less chaotic in the youth centre setting. During the focus

groups at Space1, additional young people joined in haphazardly for short periods of time, making the conversation difficult to manage.

Participant photography and photo-elicit interviews

Photography and photographs have been used in a myriad of ways in health and youth research. Recently, participant photography (photographs taken by participants) has been used to understand experiences of active commuting (Guell & Ogilvie, 2013), whereas photo-elicitation interviews (photographs provided by the researcher) have also been used to explore connections between place and migrant people's health and wellbeing (Ortega-Alcazar & Dyck, 2012). Some suggest that cameras can provide those who are unheard with a voice to explain their social reality (Chaudhury et al., 2012) and that "anybody can use a camera" (Wang & Burris, 1997:370). Photography is said to be quick, easy, and something young people enjoy doing, thus retaining young people's engagement and interest in the research (Cook & Hess, 2007). Photographs, when provided by the interviewer, have also been said to act as useful 'ice-breakers' when interviewing children (Epstein et al., 2006).

In addition to the initial Photovoice[10] project sessions in the early stages of the research, I conducted three formal group participant photography sessions, where I invited the young people to take cameras to Sycamore park or out on the streets and take images. Instructions were given to the young people verbally and in small paper hand-outs (see Appendix B). However, as I found the organised structure of Photovoice group sessions to be somewhat incompatible with the youth centre sessions, on our return I conducted single, paired or group interviews about the photographs, depending on the young people's preferences, and a small selection of the young people's favourite photographs were printed for them. However, I often found participant photography to be quite constraining in ways: some of the young people disengaged from such formal activities but opened up in informal interviewing, and some enjoyed printed photographs but others felt that they already took lots of photographs for posting on Instagram, Facebook or Snapchat[11]. Analysis was conducted on the fieldnotes or transcripts from the walks and photo-elicited discussions. I did not conduct a content analysis on the photographs themselves as Barron (2013) did in her photo-elicitation study with children concerning play in Irish housing estates. The reason for this was because many of the photographs

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[10] PhotoVoice is traditionally an innovative form of Participatory Action Research (PAR) developed by Wang and Burris (1997) for community needs assessments in rural China. It is based on the works of Freire and critical feminist theory, and is used as a "means of sharing expertise and knowledge" (Wang and Burris, 1997: 369).

[11] Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat are all forms of social media that the young people used. Instagram is a photo-sharing platform where followers 'like' others photographs. Snapchat is a smart phone app where users take an image and can draw on it, and then send it to their social network. The image is then only shown to recipients for up to 60 seconds before disappearing.

included friends posing and selfies, which were not related to the proposed activity, and were subsequently deleted for ethical reasons. I chose not to use the young people's photographs in this thesis; instead I use photographs from participant observation, which I have altered/filtered so as to ensure the subjects' anonymity. As mentioned earlier, I also used photographs in interviews to gain additional insights into what the young people thought of particular physical activities.

Data Analysis

The various forms of interviews were transcribed and fieldnotes were written up as soon as possible after being conducted. All forms of written qualitative data (fieldnotes and transcriptions) were analysed concurrently at stages throughout fieldwork, enabling emerging themes to be incorporated and explored in subsequent participant observation, interviews or focus groups. An inductive coding and grounded theory approach was employed and analysis remained flexible so as to explore unanticipated themes. Preliminary coding during fieldwork was conducted manually on transcripts and fieldnotes via annotating, highlighting, and indexing the data (Aronson, 1995). This labour intensive task continued as I re-read the data post-fieldwork: Nvivo was used to further organise, sort, and sift through the mass of data collected. Nvivo helped me to identify broader themes by sorting and collapsing multiple themes/nodes into parent nodes. However, as Thorne (2000:68) states, software can only do so much in analysis: "none are capable of the intellectual and conceptualising processes required to transform data into meaningful findings". My cognitive processes and thoughts were central to the data production and analysis and the process of moving from content-based descriptive themes to more conceptual themes that incorporated differences, similarities, inconsistencies, and contradictions in the data. The themes highlighted in the data were the first step in the analysis presented in this ethnography: my qualitative analysis presented in this thesis involved comprehending and synthesizing the data, theorising how the data appears as it does, and re-contextualising the new knowledge by discussing it in the context of others' understandings (Thorne, 2000).

The process of intertwining data with theory helped to further my interpretations, and produce overarching concepts, which explain what all the observations, words, and stories actually meant. Different theoretical ideas, that emerged from the data, helped to interpret and connect the key themes that concerned physical activity. Within the interpretation of the data, I underwent what is called, a "process of defamiliarization", in which the ethnographer takes a step back from the data and questions what is taken-for-granted (Thomas, 1993:3). As developing grounded theory is preferred in critical ethnography, the theoretical frameworks I have utilised emerged through the data. For example, the words

"better self", that I repeatedly heard from the young men in particular, led me to utilise Foucault's 'technologies of the self' in my analysis of themes, including, 'gendered understandings of physical activity', 'healthy bodies' and 'capability'. In addition to lone days and nights reading and thinking, and discussing with my supervisors, a formative experience in theorising these themes was my ESRC-funded Overseas Institutional Visit to Australia: discussions and presentations of my data and analyses with scholars, including Professor Jan Wright, who I cite heavily in this thesis, were insightful experiences in shaping my critical stance and application of Foucauldian theory.

Likewise, when comprehending that changes and transitions in physical activity were key features in most of young people's lives, I drew on Thomson et al.'s (2002) analytic tool, the 'critical moment', and read theories surrounding social constructions of childhood, transitions and life-phases to re-think how and why the changes in physical activity had occurred over time. Thomson et al.'s (2002) concept of the 'critical moment' seemed particularly valuable as it enabled me to look more closely at the individual narratives, piecing together moments of time that influenced changes in physical activity practices.

3.4 Methodological reflections and challenges

This section discusses some methodological reflections on using an ethnographic approach with young people in youth centres. I start by describing the constraints of the physical boundaries of 'the field' and how over time these became negotiable. Following this, I discuss issues regarding power dynamics, and the benefits and insights gained from using a combination of different methods.

Physical boundaries of 'the field'

According to Bernard (2011:257), participant observation involves "experiencing the lives of the people you are studying as much as you can". The words 'as much as you can' are particularly relevant for my study as the participant observation, and mobile and visual ethnographic aspects of my research, had distinct boundaries. Working with young people under 18 years old in youth centres involved physical boundaries that revolved around child-protection regulations and protocols for ethical reasons. These rules were made clear to me when I started volunteering and conducting my research. Firstly, there were restrictions regarding going outside in the local area on my own with the young people. When I began at HIDE2, I was not permitted to go out on my own in the local area with the boys, especially not with camera equipment. At least one of the young men or volunteers had to be in attendance when conducting neighbourhood tours and outdoor photography activities. The same applied at Space1, where neighbourhood tours had to be

accompanied by a youth worker. Space1's 'excursion' forms were to be used for each event of mobile research outside of the youth centre, in addition to my own consent forms. The 'excursion' forms had to be taken home by the young people, signed by parents, and returned to me, before conducting a guided tour interview. Guided tour interviews therefore had to be planned and additional staff had to be available to remain in the Space1 and HIDE2 buildings. At the beginning of fieldwork, being alone in Space1 with any one young person in a closed space (eg. a private office or room) without the presence of a youth worker was also prohibited. Moreover, contact outside of the youth centre settings was restricted at both Space1 and HIDE2. I was prohibited from contacting any of the young people independently, especially not on Facebook. The only medium of contacting the young people (under 18) was via Matt, the other Space1 youth workers, or Carla.

I became very aware of potentially crossing the boundaries set. The protocols at the start constrained my ability to freely conduct mobile ethnographic interviews in the local area, as getting forms signed and returned from parents, which they had already done for my overall research project, was an arduous task. I was also originally restricted in my ability to conduct one-to-one interviews in Space1, and constrained from being spontaneous, as the young people were.

However, after the move to the new Space1 building, and after the redundancies at Space1, the boundaries over what I could do whilst at Space1, and the ventures I could go on outside with the young people changed. My desires to move where the young people moved became more acceptable to the youth workers: their ethical practices in reality were dynamic. Over time, the youth workers at Space 1 became more relaxed regarding protocols, and the physical boundaries I had worried so much about, became negotiable and fluid. At this point in time, the research became more spontaneous and flexible. I was no longer seen as taking the young people out on excursions; instead, I was considered to be supervising them as they used the outside space, streets, and Sycamore park nearby. As I became one of the team, the other youth workers who supervised the sessions allowed me to go to Sycamore park with the young people; having me accompany the young people became beneficial and mutually advantageous. For instance, when Kalehsi's father came to Space1 to pick her up one evening in Spring 2015, he was concerned about the whereabouts of his daughter as it was closing time and she was not at the youth centre. Ant explained that she and her friends were in the park around the corner. In reply, Kalehsi's Dad asked if she had been drinking there. Ant was able to explain that this was not the case as I, in my volunteer youth worker role, was attending the park with them, supervising them. This assured Kalehsi's Dad that she was safe. The dual role of researcher and volunteer youth worker had advantages. Although

the physical boundaries became slightly blurred and negotiable, my study remained focused on the set groups of young people whilst at youth centres.

Power dynamics

When conducting any form of social research power dynamics are at play. When conducting research with young people and in youth centres a whole host of additional power dynamics become embedded in the research interactions and process, which must be negotiated and reflected on. Typically, the power dynamic between adult-researcher and child-participant is unbalanced, whereby the researcher has control over the research process and interactions. Many researchers working with children attempt to reduce the imbalance using various methodological strategies. Researchers such as Christensen (2004) frame their research with the children to emphasise the researcher's interest in the children's stories and experiences. Greene and Hogan suggest, another way of 'giving up' the researcher's power is to allow children to choose when and where they are interviewed. Christensen (2004) further explains that although size and hierarchy mean it is impossible for an adult ethnographer to pass as a child, some researchers adopt 'the least adult role' they can or become an adult 'friend' when working with children.

I took steps at the beginning of my research to ensure the young people knew I wanted to listen to them and hear their experiences and opinions. When I introduced myself to the young people and explained my research, I said that I was interested in what they thought about physical activity, the youth centres, and other activities they engaged in. I also said that I wanted to tell others about their experiences, and that I was interested in their past, present, and future lives. In my information sheets, I made it clear that I was interested in young people's perspectives. I included sentences such as, "this research aims to give a voice to young people and to share their real life experiences of living in the East End" (Information sheet, see Appendix A). I also considered the ethnographic methodology appropriate for shifting the dynamics of the unequal power balance between researcher and researched. I conducted my interviews whenever and wherever the young people wanted to have them. In interviews, I often let them talk freely around the questions and probed them on what they had said so that in part they led the interview. I diminished my adult-researcher role as much as I could by spending a lot of time hanging out at the youth centres with the young people, joining in with their activities, even PlayStation games, and never taking an authoritative position as the other youth workers did. The young people also shifted the power imbalance themselves, by showing me things that I had not asked about, by occasionally asking me questions in formal interviews, and by taking breaks or discontinuing interviews or focus groups when they pleased. These tactics meant that the research interactions were often just as much on the young

people's terms as they were mine. Nonetheless, as I acted as a volunteer youth worker, I did have some degree of authority, despite never telling the young people off as the other youth workers did on occasions. Moreover, as a cycling charity volunteer, on the led-bike rides I was expected to act as a leader and discipline the young people, if they were not abiding by the ride rules. Hence, despite all efforts to reduce the power imbalance, my multiple roles meant that this task was often difficult.

Nonetheless, control over the research direction and presentation was always firmly in my hands. My research questions, data analysis, and presentation of the young people's words were all designed, conducted, and decided by myself. I felt uneasy reflecting on how I had reduced the power imbalance between adult and child, and researcher and participant, by hanging out with the young people, and yet I simultaneously reaffirmed the traditional power imbalance in my analysis and writing. With regards to ethnographic methods and writing, Bourgois (2003:13) states that,

> *"Although the literary quality and emotional force of this book depends entirely on the articulate words of the main characters, I have always had the final say in how- and if- they would be conveyed in the final product."*

Buckler (2007:36) explained that the consequences of writing a book alone, or in my case a thesis, is that one runs the risk of "co-opting and misrepresenting people's voices and constructing a picture of them they would neither recognize nor feel comfortable with if they did recognize it". I am aware of this issue in my own work: although I told some of the older and younger participants what I was writing about, I have not shared the developing writing or final product with the young people due to fears they would be uncomfortable with the style and content necessary for an academic thesis. Moreover, despite Bourgois' struggle with this contradictory nature of the ethnographic approach, Bourgois' (2003) passionate and uncensored ethnography utilises the power of the ethnographer to provide an alternative reading of social marginalisation by presenting the "individual experience of social structural oppression" (Bourgois, 2003:15). Similarly, this thesis aims to harness my position as a researcher to challenge common assumptions about young people: I provide a more nuanced picture of young people, and of physical activity as a diverse set of practices within daily life, a set of practices that shape and are shaped by space, time, and discourses.

Different methods: 'more insight or just more?'

Darbyshire et al. (2005) questions whether using different methods with children produce 'more insight or just more?' Using this question as a starting point, I discuss how the

different methods used created different types of interactions, how the young people responded to the different methods, and how different methods were suited to different aspects of my research and produced different or contradictory insights.

What young people shared was very dependent on who was present in the research interaction. Participant observation uncovered that, for the boys at HIDE2, the ideas they expressed differed depending on the audience present. For example, Carla and I talked to Reggie in the office about why he did not go to school during the week of an anti-immigration march in Spring 2015 (discussed further in Chapter 5.3). He explained that he was scared and described a situation that occurred when he had walked through The Box (a caged football area). He claimed that he had put his phone in his pocket and looked downwards as two English boys approached saying 'You bullying Nick?!' in an aggressive manner[12]. He explained that he said, "no I don't even know the kid", and carried on his way, scared he would be beaten up. To contrast, he told a different version of the same story when Dal, Ezzy, and Karel arrived at HIDE2 a short while later. He explained to the others that the boys had approached him and said "Want a fight?!". He then said that he replied, "c'mon, I'm not scared!". The differing audiences created starkly different versions of events, which raises the importance of ethnographic methods. Not only did participant observation with one individual in two social circumstances uncover two different sides of a story, it helped shed light on the boys' fearless self-presentations that will be discussed further in Chapter 5.3.

Furthermore, the focus group style interviews captured the ways in which they performed for the video camera and voice recorder, and how they interacted with their friends over the topics at hand. However, in some cases they produced what Bernard calls 'deference effect': where "people tell you what they think you want to know, so as not to offend" the researcher. For instance, in one focus group, Karel, who was particularly loud and expressive generally, walked up to the video camera in a 'gangsta style', holding his arm out by his sides, stood directly in front of the camera and shouted, "She understands us Bruv! And I is telling you we is not good kids". Although these kinds of actions were partly connected to the personalities of the young people, in organised group or individual research activities some of the young people played up to their roles as participants. Karel and the others knew that the project was about 'understanding young people's lives'; hence, Karel performed in the focus group.

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[12] Nick was at school with the boys who attended. He was tragically hit by a bus on the main road outside of school at the end of the school day in early 2015. There was uproar about this accident as Nick was bullied at school. The White British boys at the school blamed the Czech boys for his death claiming they were bullying him. The Czech boys said this was not true and that the White British boys bullied him. After he died, there was even more conflict between many of the Czech and White British boys at the school, which was further worsened by the anti-immigrant march shortly after.

Participant observation and mobile ethnography were useful for uncovering aspects of daily physical activity because they provided a way of seeing and describing the kinds of movement the young people engaged in in real life that the young people may not have considered worthy of discussion. In contrast, interviews were beneficial for unpicking the young people's perceptions and experiences of various forms of physical activity. Kusenbach (2003:462) explains that static interviews can miss out the "trivial details of day-to-day" life. Hence, it is unsurprising that participant observation in and outside of the youth centres was the most beneficial method for uncovering how young people engaged in everyday physical activity. Participant observation and interview data often contradicted each other in interesting ways. For instance, in an interview Annie explained that she did not walk around the local area due to threats of violence that made her feel unsafe. However, through participation observation I found out that she walked with Nelly to the youth centre on the day of the interview; that she often walked her younger siblings to the shops and play sessions at the local Church; and that she walked to the bus stop and chip shop. This did not discredit her feelings and responses to violence but shed light on how the data should be interpreted: that daily practices are not always consciously reflected on, and that Annie had no other option than to walk.

Accessing experiences of daily and often quite trivial practices was challenging in interviews. Bernard (2011:160) explains that, in informal interviews, the interviewer should "get people into a topic of interest and get out of the way" to gain rich data. For the young people who enjoyed sports, exercise or training in the gym, talking freely about their routines, or their much loved sport, was enjoyable and a conscious part of their daily life. However, it was difficult to focus many unstructured interviews on everyday physical activity practices because physical activity was, for some, just not that interesting, and everyday physical activity was just something they did, it was not conscious. For some, the meaning of physical activity was also considered obvious. When I asked the young men in a focus group what the word fitness meant, Dew said "that's an easy question, just fitness innit" followed by, "I'm sure you can just look this up on google". Due to the challenge of studying the triviality of daily life in interviews, participant observation data was beneficial in complementing and furthering interpretations of interview data.

3.5 Ethics, positionality, and the emotion of ethnography

Ethics procedures

This study gained approval from the Durham University ethics committee in April 2014. I conducted my research in accordance to the ASA ethical guidelines, gaining informed written and verbal consent from participants at various stages of the project. I produced

several different information sheets for parents, youth centre managers, and the different groups of young people, in English and in Czech. For those under 18-years old, consent was required from the young person and their parent/guardian. I explained the research to the young people and provided information sheets and consent forms, which they signed if they were over 18, or they and their parents signed and returned if they were under 18 (see Appendix A). The information sheets for the younger participants were produced with Fargas-Malet et al. (2010) suggestions in mind: they included pictures and diagrams, short sentences and sections, and were written in a question and answer format. I produced different information sheets for the young men, parents, and the youth centres. All information sheets included my contact details so that parents or the young people could contact me directly.

The managers of the youth centres put up a copy of the information sheet on their walls, introduced me and my research to the young people, and allowed me to conduct participant observation in the youth centres. As a volunteer youth worker and a researcher, I had a Criminal Record Bureau check (CRB) and was briefed on abiding by the youth centres own child protection policies, which I discussed previously. In addition, at HIDE2, I was trained as a 'responsible adult', attending a training session one evening.

I consulted the Durham ethics committee regarding consent for participant observation from immigrant parents and proceeded as advised. Ethics, and in particular consent, remained constant throughout the research process to ensure that participants were aware of my role and not caused any harm: "Consent in ethnographic research is a process, not a one-off event, due to its long-term and open-ended qualities" (ASA, 2011:5). For example, for each organised bike ride I produced additional consent forms that parents and young people signed and returned alongside Carla's consent forms so that they were aware of my involvement in additional activities. I also explained each time that I was using cameras and asking questions as we cycled for my research project.

Consent to be photographed was included in the consent forms; however, due to the need for anonymity I do not include any photographs of recognisable faces or places in this thesis or in any other publications. An ethics training session was also part of the Photovoice preliminary sessions, where ethical considerations of photography were discussed. Instructions were given regarding when participants needed to gain consent from subjects and how to conduct their photography with respect and people's dignity and privacy in mind (Walsh et al., 2008). A photo-release 'tick box' was also included in the consent form so that the young people could allow me to use their photographs in publications. The same ethical issues were mentioned when briefing the young people on the participant photography exercises later on in the research process; however, I did not

run a full training session as the photographs were only taken in the confines of the youth centre and surrounding areas under my supervision.

I wrote all fieldnotes on a Durham University smart phone when at the youth centres and confirmed that the young people were OK with me doing this on numerous occasions throughout the research. In response, the young people would often say, "yeh, do your thing" or make jokes about me being rude because I was on my phone whilst they were talking to me, even though they knew I was writing down what they were saying. Other ethical issues are mentioned in the later reflective sections of this chapter. In line with the ASA ethical guidelines, this thesis uses pseudonyms for all of my participants, youth workers, youth centres, and locations, so as to protect the anonymity of the people and organisations involved in the research. Some of these names were chosen by the young people and others were assigned.

Multiple identities of the ethnographer: emotional and ethical challenges

The multiple identities of volunteer youth worker, cycling charity volunteer, researcher, confidante, and friend changed over time and had to be carefully negotiated. My roles when working with the younger individuals were largely bounded by time and space and therefore were somewhat defined for us: I was a volunteer youth worker who was a PhD student conducting research at the youth centre. And yet, whilst being a volunteer-researcher at Space 1, at times I became a confidante for some of the girls when they were experiencing problems or conflicts with their parents, friends or teachers. As Bourgois (2003:13) states, "ethnographers violate the canons of positivist research; we become intimately involved with the people we study". Although my methods meant I became part of the younger participants' daily lives at the youth centre, my multiple identities were more difficult to negotiate when they were spatially and emotionally 'blurred', as was the case with my friendships with some of the young men.

The boundaries of the researcher-participant friendships forged, and the uneasy entanglement of life and work in ethnography, were emotionally challenging. My friendships with the young men were mainly based in the youth centres; however, they also extended to other more personal spaces. I accompanied the young men to B-Hive's house, visited cafés in town, played pool at a snooker club, and hung out elsewhere. Our friendships were therefore not completely bound to the youth centres as my relationships with the younger participants were. On one occasion, Koffee explained: "You are probably the only girl friend I have who is actually a friend like who I would talk to and just chill with. I have girl-friends but they never just wanna be friends they always want something more." In reply I said: "Well, I guess you are participating in my project so I want that", to which he said, "yeh, but that we could just chill and there's nothing more". The only girls in

the young men's daily lives tended to be family members or girls that they were 'dating' or had 'got with'. Some of the relationships I built were therefore a significant aspect of the fieldwork experience for both the participants and researcher, and shaped the research process.

The interactive nature of ethnographic research has been discussed by others (Bourgois, 2003; Buckler, 2007), and yet, Billo and Hiemstra (2013) suggest that researchers, and women in particular, steer away from writing about the personal and emotional difficulties experienced in fieldwork due to concerns that they may appear weak, non-serious, or that personal reflections detract from the 'results': the emotional aspects of ethnography continue to remain "hidden" (Blackman, 2007:701). Blackman (2007:701) suggests that "unless the hidden ethnography is made more transparent, a more realistic account of fieldwork will not be forthcoming."

At moments in time, I felt torn between my simultaneous friend and researcher roles or identities. As I said goodbye to C-Dog one night when leaving the late night Café with some of the young men, he asked me if I was at the Café because I was friends with them or because I was doing research. I replied, saying I was there for both reasons, and yet deep down his comment made me feel uncomfortable. Bernard (2011:256) claims that participant observation involves "deception and impression management" as becoming close to participants is necessary for accessing and recording aspects of their daily lives. The participants almost 'forget' that you are in a place conducting research as you become 'part of the furniture'. I felt as though I had become 'part of the furniture' at points, and yet Koffee and C-Dog had questioned the furniture's position and purpose, leaving me feeling unsure of the ethics of my research.

Moreover, a few days before Halloween in October 2014, Dew, B-Hive, and Koffee asked me what I was doing at the weekend. I told them that my house mates and I were having a house party, to which B-Hive replied, "are we not invited?!" and the others followed with similar comments. Although I sensed they were half joking, I could tell they were also serious. I did not know how my friends (mainly PhD students all in their late twenties) would react to these young men who could not have been more different to them, and so I was hesitant in inviting them. Flustered in the moment, I said that they could come but that it would be "boring" and "full of PhD students". For days I debated with myself, and my housemates, feeling torn and confused about what to do. My friends thought it was odd to invite the young people I was working with to our party, and were very against the idea, whereas I felt rude not inviting them because they wished to attend and had welcomed me into their lives. I hoped that they would forget, but when Koffee got in touch with me on the day of the party to ask what was happening I felt trapped, and instead of being honest and explaining the uneasy situation, I said that we were no longer having a big party as most

of our friends had dropped out. The following week, I sensed tensions and apologised for my actions.

Billo and Hiemstra (2013:322) point out that, "the field is constructed through social relationships, combining personal, political and professional needs" and that these relationships are not static. When conducting research so close to home, the blurred researcher-friend relationships with the young men presented additional challenges at certain moments in time, as described. I also wrestled with the notion that I was forging friendships in order to gain something specific in return: insight into the young men's lives. I felt uncomfortable at the thought that these friendships would fade when I could no longer hang out until after midnight in town or in the East End, or spend my evenings at the youth centres. Simpson's (2006:126) statement, that "ethnographic fieldwork is a messy business", could not be more apt.

Consequently, Simpson (2006:126) states that "all ethnographers are, to some degree or other, 'done' by their fieldwork". Simpson (2006) discusses the changeable ethnographic self throughout a life-course of conducting ethnographic research, and yet in a comparably short period of time my ethnographic fieldwork changed me, as a researcher and personally. Becoming an insider at the youth centres, and building friendships with the core group of young men in particular, meant that I would often join in with the young men's rude jokes and banter. The extent to which was illuminated when Koffee said to me, "you are like one of the lads". I enjoyed the young men's company, for the most part, because in their company I acted differently compared from when I was with other friends, most of whom were PhD students or University graduates. The young men were more spontaneous, shared hilarious stories, and simply spent more time 'chilling' out than I or any of my friends did. All of the young people, although they may be unaware of it, taught me that time did not always have to be 'productive', that having fun spontaneously, having a laugh, and hanging out with friends for several hours was a really important part of everyday life. In contrast, in my 'other' life, as I had grown older, spending time with friends and having fun was something one organised, often well in advance; due to my friends' busy work lives, relationships, and families, spontaneity was rarely on my radar.

Self-reflections on positionality

Considering the methods used and the relationships built with the young people, I recognise my own role in the data collection and analytic processes. As Morris et al. (1998:218) state, "the researcher cannot avoid bringing his or her own cultural identities, perceptions and preconceptions" to the research process. According to Berger (2013), these elements of the self must be critically reflected on because they play a role in the research process and the knowledge produced. Hence, in the following paragraphs I

consider positionality. I reflect on my gender, embodiment, age, socioeconomic status, and education; how I was viewed and treated; and how I dealt with positionality in the research process.

My gender was in some ways advantageous and in other ways limiting or difficult to negotiate. When working with the HIDE2 boys in particular my gender was sometimes the brunt of jokes and ridicule, and made discussing topics seriously with the boys challenging. One example of sexual jokes occurred just outside of HIDE2. Karel walked outside of the building to where Reggie was. Reggie then said jokingly to Karel, 'don't touch my dick' as he approached him. Reggie then turned to me and said, 'You wanna touch?'. These kinds of comments happened frequently. In my diary that day I wrote the following:

> *"I just said 'no, I don't', but continued to smile and gave him a look of 'oh yeh very funny'. I feel I have to take this approach because I feel if I don't, why would they talk to me? If I can't take their sexist rude jokes, then yes, they may respect me more as an authority figure like Carla, as another youth worker, but that is not really what I want. I sometimes feel so torn."*

> *(Research diary, 01.05.15)*

These kinds of comments made me feel uncomfortable and made it very difficult to get to know the boys well. My discomfort regarding sexual jokes, and discussions regarding sex with the boys and young men meant that I did not delve into the topic of sex and its connection to physical activity in my research, although muscularity was connected with perceived sexual attractiveness (discussed in Section 6.3.2).

With the young men, my gender was also tied up with my status as a young[13] single heterosexual woman. Although Koffee considered me to be 'one of the lads', I also had to negotiate how 'hanging out' and contacting the young men was considered. A few of the young men joked that, when I was interviewing them, we were going on our first or second dates. Likewise, during an interview, Dew attempted to set me up with one of his friends, saying, "I should hook you up with a date cos he's your age. He's fucking big as hunk. You will like him, he's a good lad man", to which I replied, "No, I'm not going on a blind date- it's weird." Dew nonetheless continued talking about who this very good friend was, why he should go out with me, and why he should set me up on a date. On most of these occasions, I played along but also made it clear that I was not interested in anything more than friendship and research. However, it was important not to shut down jokes and take offense. Joking, humour, and fun were crucial elements of the young people's social

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[13] I was 26 for the majority of the fieldwork; however, at the start of fieldwork several of the young people thought I was approximately 23.

groups, and contributed to the young men's willingness to help me with engaging younger participants, hang out, and be interviewed.

Moreover, when conducting research about physical activity, one's own embodiment is important to acknowledge. In Chapter 6, I discuss the interconnections between the body, physical activity and health: healthism discourse implies that a slim, toned body is healthy and achieved through exercise (Wright et al., 2006). Dominant healthism and obesity discourse implies that my own body looks 'fit' and 'healthy' as I am 178cm tall, weigh 67kg, am quite 'toned', and do not have much fat on my upper body. During fieldwork I was a member of a cycling club, and of a gym, where I swam and attended gym classes regularly. The young men and boys I went on bike rides with saw that I was physically capable. The young people at Space 1 also knew I enjoyed cycling and physical activity. Although I did not wear sports clothes to the youth centres, my primary means of transport was my bicycle, which I often rode to the youth centres. A few of the young people at Space1 questioned my travel practices because they knew that I lived 5 miles away and that I owned a car. Moreover, at Space1, when the young people would frequently buy chips and kebabs, I would often go with them to the chip shop but not buy anything myself. Although I often shared pizzas and cookies at my focus groups, I also brought grapes and strawberries to offer a range of foods. On one occasion, the following scene unravelled, which made me realise the extent to which I was viewed as 'healthy' by the other youth workers and the young people:

> *Hen, Ant, and some others had been to the chip shop around the corner. When we returned Hen said, "Want any Steph?" as she lifted the box of chips towards me. In response, I said that "I've already had dinner so probably shouldn't." Then Hen says, "Disappointed in you" and Ant comments, "She belongs to the healthy group". They laugh and Hen says, "That's not you" to Ant, who replies, "I know that".*

(Fieldnotes, 11.05.15)

My embodiment, as a visibly active person and part of the 'healthy group', affected how the data regarding physical activity was produced. It is possible that knowing I was 'active' or physically capable influenced how some of the young people articulated their own understandings of physical activity and its place in their lives. However, my use of multiple methods in immersive fieldwork helped to deal with such issues.

Positionality remained at the forefront of my mind throughout the research as my data was co-constructed through interactions. I recognise that my appearance, including clothes, and my southern accent, made my socioeconomic background quite visible. There were key differences between myself and most of the young people I knew. I am a middle class White British young woman: I grew up in a coastal town in South Devon, where I lived in a

house with a garden in a safe area that was a two-minute walk from the beach. I have two married parents who had professional occupations and never experienced unemployment. In contrast, the young people lived in a densely populated urban area with small gardens or yards and little access to 'natural' landscapes. Some of the parents of those attending Space1 were employed in low wage jobs including cleaning, caring, teaching assistant, and labouring jobs. Others were in middle-income jobs or were self-employed, whilst others were unemployed or claiming disability allowances. During fieldwork, I also owned a car, albeit a very old scruffy one with some major body work issues, which I occasionally drove to the youth centres. In contrast, only one of the young men had access to a car and several of the young people's parents' did not own cars. I also received a regular income due to my studentship stipend. In contrast, many of the young men were either studying, engaging in additional training, working low paid jobs or were unemployed. One night in October 2014, when I was hanging out with a few of the young men, it dawned on me how divergent our situations and backgrounds were, both in the present and in the past.

> *When leaning up against the wall smoking a cigarette, Dew turns to B-Hive and me. He laughs and says "I bet Steph is wondering where on earth she met us three!". B-Hive sarcastically says "…at HIDE2" in his silly voice that he often puts on when he is joking around. B-Hive then says: "yeh, we are like totally gangsta". He laughs but then continues to explain that 5 years ago I "wouldn't have liked them at all". I suggest that I think I would have still liked them. B-Hive then sputters through laughter saying, "but 5 years ago I was more immature than I am now!". Koffee comes out of HIDE2 having just locked up, and B-Hive says to him, "wouldn't Steph not have not liked us 4/5 years ago?". Koffee looks at us with a deadly seriously face and replies confidently with, "she would have liked me, everybody liked me" before grinning and bursting into laughter. We all laugh and then B-Hive says with a look of disbelief, "Hanging out with a PhD student man!" in a tone that suggests the whole situation is completely unfathomable, ridiculous, and the least likely thing ever to have happened to these young men.*

> *(Fieldnotes, 21.10.14)*

Our divergent pasts, practices, and education were stark, and recognised by both parties. And yet, between these differences we found similarities, in our senses of humour (sometimes), through telling stories and playing games. In a similar way to Buckler (2007: 17), I became interested in their lives, not because they were alien to me, but because we were "both the same and different".

Nonetheless, our differences remain prominent in this research. The financial situations of some of the young men, and the young people's families, were particularly difficult. Some felt the impact of their family's or their own financial situations more than others. Kalehsi

and Koffee in particular explained the effects of their families' and their own financial situations:

> *"My mum works so hard but I'm poor let's face it. We've not enough money to put food on the table. Can't have cousins or nephews up cos no money to buy them food. She works so hard and is really a nurse but gets paid nothing -minimum wage working Christmas day."* (Kalehsi)

> *"I don't want to leave (HIDE2) but I might have to cos I need the money. £1 is profit for me at the moment. I can't buy stuff when I'm out. If I want to eat, I have to go home."* (Koffee)

Due to the differences in financial circumstances, I had to negotiate money and gifts carefully. I did not pay anyone for their involvement in my research; however, I often bought food and drinks to share during focus groups and interview sessions as a 'thank you' or incentive for/to taking part. I bought drinks for the young men when I interviewed them in cafés; however, I found it difficult to negotiate my role when I was out playing pool or visiting cafés with the young men when I was not 'officially' interviewing them. There was a fine line between being generous and being patronising when it came to money. I did not want to offend the young men, as I knew they did not like taking money off of others, and yet I felt indebted to them as they gave up time for my research and welcomed me into their lives. This idea of being indebted and needing to give something in return was discussed by Bourgois (2003) in his ethnography of the underground economy of East Harlem. Bourgois (2003) discussed how his participants felt it was completely legitimate for him to use their stories to write a book to further his career, and desired little in return. Although most of the young people enjoyed sharing their stories with me, and seemed to like being interviewed and feeling interested in, I felt and still feel indebted to these young people because without their interest, and their words, this research would not have happened. Hence, despite the need to re-think issues of positionality within the research process, it seems to me that, as Blackman (2007:701) states, "reflexivity is not unquestionably a positive undertaking and puts incredible strain on the research relationship".

3.6 Concluding Comments

The process of doing research was worlds apart from the linear plan proposed in the first year of this PhD project. The challenges faced at the start of fieldwork had to be negotiated flexibly, often in serendipitous ways. When working with young people, I discovered that flexibility was crucial and as such my methodology became attuned to the young people and their desires. Participant observation, in combination with a variety of

mobile, visual, and static interview techniques, was particularly beneficial for exploring daily physical activity and young people's lives. Different methods, used in different settings or with different audiences, produced different insights. Due to my engagement with the young people, I recognise my "own situatedness within the research" and the effects I had on the young people, the research process, and knowledge produced (Berger, 2013:2). I have discussed power dynamics in the research, my multiple roles within the youth centres, my positionality, and the emotionally demanding nature of building relationships with young people in ethnographic research.

The contrasting groups and individual young people I have introduced in this chapter take centre stage in the following three discussion chapters where the complexities and contingencies of their lives are explored. The next chapter situates these young people within moments of time, focusing on life-phases and their changes in physical activity practices.

Chapter 4: Temporalities and life-phases in young people's lives: re-thinking changes in physical activity

Chapter Overview

This chapter argues that changes in the young people's lives, including changes in physical activity, and the experiences of those changes, are rooted in socially constructed life-phases and life-phase expectations, which interact with socioeconomic circumstance. I suggest that these changes can be contingent, complex, and fluid, and not always as linear as suggested by life-phase transition approaches. By exploring particular 'time-spaces' in the young people's lives, I connect individual biographies with social processes and show how young people negotiate age expectations and circumstances at certain moments, with particular people, and in specific places.

B-Hive was a key individual whom I met on my first visit to HIDE2. His story below introduces ideas that will be discussed in this chapter: what it can be like growing up in the East End, how physical activity fits into changing lives, and ideas regarding transitions. Following B-Hive's narrative, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first part (4.1) situates the themes from B-Hive's narrative in a context of anthropological theories of childhood and adulthood, and different conceptualisations of life transitions. The second part (4.2) addresses young people's experiences of changes in physical activity, drawing on the theories presented in the first part, and highlighting aspects of physical activity 'trajectories' that are often overlooked.

Narrative1: B-Hive

I first met B-Hive at a HIDE2 bike maintenance session on a sunny afternoon in June 2014. He seemed friendly and helpful and had a genuine interest and care for others at HIDE2, a place he had grown up with. B-hive had lived in the East End, in the same house, his whole life. He said he was born there and he will probably die there. This place is his home, a community that was central to his identity. B-Hive was twenty-one at the time and lived with his mother on a terrace street just around the corner from the HIDE2. Although he sometimes talked about moving to a flat in the city with friends, he continued to stay at home. He said he wanted to stay at home to look after his mum and dog, and recognised he would only be able to afford to live somewhere very cheap. He said he would only move to settle with a girl or because his mum asked him to move out, but his opinion often changed when he heard of cheap rentals with friends.

In the living room of his small terraced house is a professional family photograph of B-Hive, his mother, and his brother when B-Hive was a teenager. His mother is White

British, whereas his father, who is Jamaican, and absent from the photograph, lived elsewhere with his other family. B-Hive's relationship with his Dad was therefore somewhat distant compared to his relationship with his mother. He explained:

> *"I've not been raised with my Dad and I'm scared of him cos I don't wanna let him down and stuff like that but he doesn't even know that I've been arrested, he thinks that I'm a good boy and that [laughs]."*

B-Hive and his mother had a very close and supportive relationship: she helped sustain his engagement in a variety of different sports clubs throughout his life. B-Hive frequently talked to his mum about most aspects of his life, including funny stories from nights out with friends: he said he could simply sit and chat to his mum for hours. B-Hive's older brother lived a few streets away with his partner and three small children, and most of B-Hive's friends also lived within walking distance of his house. This proximity of his family and friends was important to him, enjoyed, and appreciated.

When I met B-hive, he was volunteering at the HIDE2 most evenings, and had been doing so for approximately 8 months. He was also working a zero-hours casual job at a catering establishment on the East Road as a member of the service team, as well as doing 'freelance' part-time cheap personal training sessions for friends and friends of friends. In late summer 2014, when we were walking home from a bike maintenance course, he revealed that he had just been informally fired from his paid job at the catering business. He had fallen off his bike down a steep hill a few days previously, hurting himself badly, bruising his hip, and scraping his arm and elbow. Walking slowly and with a slight limp up the hill on the way back to HIDE2, he explained that in the process of his fall he had completely broken his phone. He was due to be working that day, but as he was injured and unable to easily contact the catering establishment to call in, he did not show up to work and thus was no longer given any shifts.

When B-Hive and his best friend Koffee, who will be properly introduced later in this thesis, originally began regularly volunteering at HIDE2, the senior youth worker had suggested that she would apply for funding to take on two paid youth workers, and train them up in-house with accredited qualifications. However, as time progressed, the potential of paid work at HIDE2 became more distant. B-Hive began looking at other employment and training opportunities. His understanding of the linear relationship between training and future employment was most stark when B-Hive asked me about what I taught at the University. He asked what job he could get if he did the course that I taught. I explained that there were several potential career pathways one could take but no direct career trajectories upon graduating. My response resulted in the course appearing to him as less useful or somewhat pointless, when compared to more vocational training.

B-Hive, like many of the other young men, left secondary school with a handful of poorly graded GCSEs[14]. His school experience can be characterised as disruptive, made more challenging by peer conflict and the school closure during Year 9. He achieved a D in GCSE mathematics and after college did not have enough UCAS[15] points to do sport studies at a local University. Sports were his primary interest. His school grades restricted

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[14] A GCSE, General Certificate of Secondary Education, is an internationally recognised qualification that young people study for, usually over a two year period, Year 10 and 11 (aged 15-16) of secondary school.

[15] UCAS, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, operates the application process for British Universities and Higher Education colleges. A certain number of points are required for various higher education courses.

his access to University even though he had completed a number of short courses in fitness and sports coaching at the college, was a regional Champion in boxing, and had set up his own personal training business at one point. On occasions he joked about his academic achievements, laughing and saying: "I would get A*'s in knowledge about boxing".

When B-Hive was thirteen, he was arrested and charged for grievous bodily harm (GBH). He said that he had been sticking up for himself as the person who pressed charges had been saying things about him that were offensive. Nonetheless, he stated that he should not have physically hurt him. Fighting was common and continued throughout his teens: he and his friends told stories of group conflicts, commonly mimicking their bodily actions, by moving aggressively and throwing punches whilst re-telling events. Some of these fights culminated in injuries and arrests, whereas others were diverted and underlying tensions remained.

On one occasion, B-Hive described a scene dating back to when the boys were fifteen years old. B-Hive and his friends were inside a takeaway 'chilling' with some girls when they claimed that approximately thirty White British young men arrived in an attempt to start a fight. B-Hive said that the group included older siblings and cousins of the people B-Hive and his friends were in conflict with. They were much bigger than B-Hive and Koffee and had strength in numbers: B-hive and his friends were intimidated and did not want to venture outside. On this occasion, B-Hive and his friends had a lucky escape: the police turned up and everybody scattered.

However, during the following week, B-Hive described how he was circled by five of the young men when he was walking down a street with his girlfriend at the time. He explained how two of them were going to "jump" him, shouting, "Come on then, you Black bastard!". He said that his girlfriend pleaded with him and the others not to fight. He said that his pride was shattered as he walked away because his girlfriend begged him not to retaliate. Instead, the following week a fight was arranged where B-Hive had support from his friends and their older brothers. He described fists flying but also laughed about the scene saying it "felt like a pump man with all the 24-year-olds".

There were other violent occurrences in his teen years. B-Hive was charged for arson when he and his friends set light to a band stand in the local park (Hawthorne park). Although he claims that he was just always the one who got caught, he also admitted that he needed "something to focus on" because he lacked a channel for his energy and anger. Carla said that she had been intimated by B-Hive when he was younger, partly due to his size (he is 5'11'' and weighed approximately 15 stones) and his anger. Five years later, B-Hive did not seem angry: he said he had "calmed down" a lot and felt "more at peace now".

One critical point in B-Hive's life was when a police officer suggested B-Hive try boxing due to the amount of trouble he was getting into with the police. B-Hive took his advice and began boxing when he was sixteen and started competing at seventeen. B-Hive was renowned amongst his friends for being physically fit, strong, physically able in most sports, and very competitive. Although B-Hive had to stop boxing competitively when he was nineteen, due to a chronic wrist injury, he still trained when he could and enjoyed doing pad work on occasions in the summer months with the younger boys attending HIDE2. B-Hive said that boxing provided a challenge, discipline, competition, and channeled his energy, all of which he greatly enjoyed. These aspects of physical activity

have remained a key feature of his life since his teenage years. I saw his competitive impulses come alive whilst participating in activities, such as badminton, and when running a 10km assault course event with him in March 2015. He also did kick boxing one evening a week for a while at a club in town, and in Spring 2015 he began Jujitsu training on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. During the summer of 2014, he trained to run a marathon but could not attend the race. He also trained and lifted weights in the gym a few times a week, which increased when the new low cost 24-hour gym opened in the area in 2015. B-Hive felt he needed physical challenges to focus on and that sports played an important role in his life.

B-Hive had other realisations during his late teens that brought about significant changes in his life. He converted to Islam when he was seventeen as he had always believed in a God but had wanted to join his Muslim friends, become a practicing Muslim, and regularly attend mosque. When he was nineteen he stopped drinking alcohol and taking recreational drugs. Alcohol and drugs had been a part of his life since aged thirteen: he explained that, he "did bad stuff but learnt from it, innit".

In October 2014, B-Hive began a 24-week long apprenticeship which combined this passion for sport and exercise with working with young people. The apprenticeship was with a nationwide youth program and paid £250 per month to cover expenses. Whilst he was working for this organisation, he frequently mentioned another young man, who had just become employed as a youth worker after completing the apprenticeship the previous year. He saw the apprenticeship as his training route into employment and hoped for a similar trajectory. Although the apprenticeship was supposed to be flexible, unfortunately he had to stop volunteering at HIDE2 in order to attend the sessions. Nevertheless, B-Hive often came to HIDE2 near closing time, after his youth sessions, to chill and chat with the senior youth worker, his friends, and the younger project members. After the programme's completion, he returned to HIDE2 to volunteer more often and helped on one-off events whilst continuing his youth work training: the apprenticeship organisation funded his Level 2 Youth Work qualification.

However, after finishing the apprenticeship, the organisation only offered him haphazard sessional work, which was to B-Hive's annoyance sometimes unpaid without warning. This was a great source of frustration and not what he had expected after gaining more training and working for 6 months on a low wage. In June 2015, B-Hive completed a security course and during this time reflected more on what job he wanted to aspire to, deciding he wanted to become a police officer. I was surprised by this desire but realised his choice was connected to the positive role he felt police officers could have within his "community". He saw youth and security work as key skills one needs to be a good community-based police officer and wished to make his "community" a nicer place to live.

B-Hive's story invites us to think about changes that occurred in the young people's lives. Elements of his story are unique, and yet his experiences of education, training, employment, and conflict are in no way extraordinary when compared to the other young men and young boys from HIDE2. One of the key turning points in B-Hive's narrative, what I will call a "critical moment" (Thomson et al., 2002), was when a police officer suggested he try boxing. It was 'critical' in that it changed his trajectory from what it could

have been. It was also a 'moment' in time that was based on the chance of engaging with a police officer who recommended he join the boxing club nearby. Boxing was a sport that many of the other young men also engaged in at certain moments of time. For B-Hive, and for some of the others, it provided a means for channelling energy and anger, and a sense of purpose, competence, direction, and control over their lives. I will revisit B-Hive's narrative in the latter sections of this chapter when I analyse the young men's experiences of 'transitions' and their changing physical activity patterns.

4.1 Young people, 'childhood', 'adolescence' and 'adulthood': re-thinking 'transitions' in young lives

This part of the chapter (4.1) introduces how young people have been and are currently understood in academic social science disciplines. It discusses how young people are socially constructed as 'children', 'adolescents' or 'youth', and outlines normative models of 'transitions' to 'adulthood'. Subsequently, I show how recent theoretical re-conceptualisations of the life-course can be useful for understanding young people's lives. The re-conceptualisations I discuss, 'critical moments' (Thomson et al., 2002) and 'vital conjunctures' (Johnson-Hanks, 2002), pay attention to particular life events and highlight how life-course changes are not always linear and uni-directional. As analytic tools, they provide insights into how individual biographies connect to meso and macro social institutions and structures. This part of the chapter shows that 'transitions' from childhood to adolescence and adulthood are socially constructed, complex, haphazard, fragmented, non-linear, and reversible in parts. Recognising the influence of life-phase categories and the complexities of young people's lives is important for comprehending the key changes in the young people's lives, and the connected changes in physical activity patterns, that I discuss in section 4.2.

4.1.1 Conceptualising childhood, adolescence and adulthood: How have life-phases been understood and what are the problems with life-phase categories?

A brief history of 'childhood' in Anthropology

Psychological research dating back to the late 1920s and 1930s claimed that childhood, adolescence, and adulthood were universal conditions of the human life-course. Early ethnographic works, namely those of Mead (1928) and Malinowski (1929), questioned these claims, showing that childhood was "sensitive to population specific contexts" and incomprehensible "without detailed knowledge of the socially and culturally organized contexts that give them meaning" (Levine, 2007:247). A few decades later, the French

historian, Philippe Ariès, also suggested that childhood was socially and historically constructed (Montgomery, 2008): his archaeological work *Centuries of Childhood* (Ariès, 1962) claimed that the concept of childhood did not exist before the 15th century. James et al. (1998) praised Ariès for analysing childhood in social contexts rather than viewing it as a purely biological phenomenon, and yet they also critiqued Ariès' work, arguing that he failed to abandon his own modern concept of what childhood was, of what distinguishes children from adults. In this respect, James et al. (1998) suggested that it was perhaps 'our concept' of childhood that was lacking before the 15th century.

According to Montgomery (2008), 'our concept' of childhood is *a* Western concept of childhood, which recognises children as notably different from adults due to different roles and expectations placed upon them. Skelton and Valentine (1998) claim that this concept of childhood developed in the middle classes alongside the advancement of mass schooling in Western societies: schooling set children apart from the adult world of work and responsibilities. Childhood is therefore said to be socially constructed as a time of innocence, incompetency, and immaturity (Skelton & Valentine, 1998). Anthropological understandings tell us that what constitutes a 'good' or 'proper' childhood in Western thought may not apply in other societies. Indeed, concepts of a 'good' or 'proper' childhood may also differ even within societies, and across different socioeconomic, migrant, and minority ethnic groups. Nonetheless, the Western construction of the 'universal child' produces beliefs about what a 'proper childhood' should be and influences how children's lives are interpreted and understood (James & James, 2004).

By the late 1970s, a gradual shift within anthropological studies of childhood was occurring: children were beginning to be viewed as social actors and agents within societies and cultures, rather than passive or unshaped cultural beings (Montgomery, 2008). The pre-1970s was considered an era of what Uprichard (2008) calls the 'becoming' child discourse. The 'becoming' child, as she writes, "is seen as an 'adult in the making', who is lacking universal skills and features of the adult" they will become (Uprichard, 2008:303). By challenging this competency or 'becoming' discourse, and emphasising the importance of social context, anthropologists, including key figures, Allison James and Pia Christensen, to name a few, highlight that adults and children are competent based on what they are faced with (Uprichard, 2008). Uprichard (2008) uses recent examples of the new technological skills that children embody, and older generations often lack, to support this argument. However, as children's experiences of looking forward, to 'becoming' an adult or older child, are also part of 'being' a child (Uprichard, 2008), overlooking the notion of 'becoming' can risk ignoring key experiences of childhood.

By the late 1990s, considering other developments in social theory, James et al. (1998) argued for a re-examination of how childhood was theorised. A new perspective, a cultural politics of childhood emerged (James & James, 2004), as they argued that social constructionism treated children as a product of discourse rather than an interaction between 'culture' and 'nature'. James and James (2004) developed their theories, suggesting that children, as a collective, shape general ideas about childhood and social expectations of children. Childhood began to be viewed as a product of adult-child relationships, "relationships that are themselves located within the broader social, political and economic frameworks that structure societies and which give shape to the institutional arrangements- work, schools, families, churches- through which children's daily lives unfold" (James & James, 2004:27). Children are now understood within this paradigm as social actors within institutions, such as schools or youth groups, who shape the formation of childhood.

Western social constructions of age: 'child', 'youth', 'teenager'

> *"What it might mean to be a child must be situated against the backdrop of the particular ways in which cultural conceptions of age and status are entwined and embedded in the particular structural arrangements of a society."*
>
> *(James et al., 1998:63)*

Present sociological and anthropological thought recognises that in Western contexts people are commonly understood through concepts of age (Hopkins, 2010). Skelton and Valentine (1998) explain that in contemporary Western societies people's age defines their identity and helps give meaning to their actions, simultaneously creating temporal distinctions between socially constructed categories: childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Hence, James et al. (1998:62) state that "'the child' is a product of the ways in which the process of aging is qualitatively, rather than simply quantitatively, accounted for". There are social values, attitudes, and beliefs that are assumed to connect up with the number of years one has been alive. These social values may differ from society to society. For instance, Skelton and Valentine (1998) suggest that, in the UK and USA, adolescence is viewed as a time of irrational and undisciplined behaviour. In contrast, in Japan, adolescents have adopted the word 'teenager' but have not adopted the same expectations of bad behaviour prevalent in the USA (Montgomery, 2008). Therefore, as James (1986) suggests, the 'universal' irrational behaviours characteristic of 'adolescence' may instead reflect the confusion of the "inbetweenness" of adolescence in Britain.

Adolescence belongs to neither categories of adulthood nor childhood: 'adolescence' was "invented to create a breathing space between the golden age of 'innocent' childhood and the realities of adulthood" (Skelton & Valentine, 1998:4). Skelton (2000:81) talks of the 'binaries' constructed in Western cultural meanings, which "tend to imply discrete and separate spaces or identities, and as such they can act as boundaries". The child/adult binary leaves adolescents in a liminal in-between space. Adolescents are seen to have neither the innocence of children nor the maturity of adults. Skelton and Valentine (1998) highlight how adolescence is socially constructed: adolescents are denied access to the adult world as they cannot vote or legally drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, have sexual intercourse, gain paid work or drive until reaching specific ages. James (1986:156) says that this shows adolescence is framed as a time of "being nothing", defined by exclusions rather than inclusions.

Terms such as 'youth', 'teenager' or 'child' also "invoke a particular set of associations" (Hall & Montgomery, 2000:13). The term 'teenager' was created in 1950's Britain within a time of relative economic affluence and consumerism, where the new niche market were young people (Skelton & Valentine, 1998). In contrast, 'youth' is associated with troublesome, unruly, and undisciplined young people, a notion born from criminology and framed within moral panics around juvenile crime, gangs, and violence (Skelton & Valentine, 1998). According to Hall and Montgomery (2000), the term 'youth' was used to describe young people in Britain in the 1990's who were homeless, many of whom were under 18: 'youth homelessness'. Contrastingly, the term 'child prostitution' was used to describe young people of a similar age involved in sex tourism in Thailand. They explain that these terms have consequences: being labelled a 'child' invites sympathy due to the Western view of children as innocent, pure, and to be protected at all costs, whereas being labelled 'youth' suggests a more ambiguous phase, one beyond childhood that comprises some of the agency, maturity, and self-responsibility associated with adulthood. Montgomery and Hall (2000) therefore suggest that the 'youth' who were homeless may be conceptualised as *troublesome* rather than *in trouble,* as was the case with the 'children' in Thailand.

Terminologies influence how people of certain ages are viewed by others and by themselves. The development of childhood studies in anthropology has shaped research aims and methods to include children's perspectives. This literature has been essential in shaping my own research, both theoretically and methodologically. I now continue to outline more recent developments in theoretical understandings of young lives and the utility of these ideas for my own data.

4.1.2 (Re-)conceptualising transitional approaches for understanding young people's lives

This chapter was prefaced by B-Hive's story, which detailed moments of change, his past experiences, present realities, and hopes for the future. The changes in his life can be seen as part of his 'transition' to 'adulthood'. The term 'transition' is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as "a change from one form or type to another, or the process by which this happens". Anthropological understandings generally challenge models and approaches that "assume a universal progression from childhood through adulthood, from incompetency to competency and from immaturity to maturity" (Bluebond-Langner & Korbin, 2007:242); the divide between social age categories, childhood and adulthood, is seen as more permeable and complex in nature (Montgomery, 2008). As evidenced by B-Hive's narrative, the 'transition' from childhood to adulthood is often not a simple linear process of change from one distinct form to another as the word 'transition' implies. Hence, recent scholarship in anthropology and sociology has re-conceptualised transitional approaches to the life-course, and to life-phase changes: particular attention is being paid to life *events* (Johnson-Hanks, 2002; Thomson et al., 2002), which are often shaped by institutional and labour market structures (Hopkins, 2010). The following sections discuss how these transitions are shaped, and how the recent re-conceptualisations of the life-course can aid analyses of young people's lives.

The creation of uncertain, nonlinear, nonsynchronous transitions to adulthood

According to Johnson-Hanks, "relatively coherent life stages exist when and where social institutions construct them" (Johnson-Hanks, 2002:869). At the start of Johnson-Hanks' article, *On the limits of life stages in ethnography*, she shares a story about a US boy, who has just turned 18. She describes how he is now able to vote and be responsible for his own debts and is simultaneously leaving home and going to college. This is often the reality of many middle class young people in the UK and is a collective set of changes that commonly mark an unquestioned transition to 'adult' independence. Such a transition is often deemed a natural phase of life; however, Johnson-Hanks (2002) notes that this transition to adulthood is constructed or 'authorised' by involvement in state and other institutions.

Transitions from childhood to adulthood differ depending on societal infrastructural context, including labour market opportunities and the approaches held by particular places, institutions, and infrastructures that young people inhabit (Hopkins, 2010). Much of the sociological literature concerning youth transitions in the Global North now discusses what are often called 'extended youth transitions' (Higgins & Nairn, 2006; MacDonald,

1998) or 'emerging adulthoods' (Bynner, 2005). Since the early 1980s, many Western governments have responded to economic changes by introducing a variety of financial and labour market programmes and educational reforms (Wyn & Dwyer, 2000). For example, Higgins and Nairn (2006) explain that New Zealand's "transition infrastructure" has created an extended period of "childhood dependency", which comprises additional training, primarily paid for by the young person, or their legal guardians or parents, not employers (Higgins & Nairn, 2006:208). If young people attend University, parents are now responsible for their 'adult' children up until the age of 25. This prolonged period of education and training is also evident in the UK; however, in the UK the lack of state benefits for the 16-18 age group, and youth unemployment, has led to even greater familial dependency during youth (Valentine, 2003).

According to Wyn and Dwyer (2000:147) and Jeffrey (2010), labour market and educational reforms, and international media, place an emphasis on the "economic importance of educational qualifications" and professional employment. Young people are positioned as being able to exert an increasing degree of agency over their lives, and yet there is simultaneously significant uncertainty regarding secure and predictable futures from educational qualifications (Wyn & Dwyer, 2000). According to Bynner (2005), extended participation in education, and consequent occupational achievement, is highly concentrated in the most advantaged sections of British society, thus creating a widening gap between the wealthiest and the poorest. As Britain's modern labour market has few opportunities for unskilled unqualified workers, those who struggle the most in terms of achieving occupational success are, and will continue to be, "the young people at the bottom end of the social scale" (Bynner, 2005:375). These young people's extended period of 'youth' may consequently consist of working low-wage jobs or 'internships', volunteering part-time, living at home, and/or attending free or low cost short educational courses, which in turn may have little outcome for achieving occupational success.

Scholars, including Brannen and Nilsen (2002:514), suggest that within Western Societies the life course is "undergoing a process of destandardization": the life-phase order is becoming less uniform and less linear and not a "one-off or one-way process" (Valentine, 2003:48). Wyn and Dwyer (2000) also suggest that life markers, which have been traditionally associated with adulthood, such as getting a job, leaving school or becoming a parent, have in recent years become less certain markers of adulthood: they "may occur simultaneously, serially or not at all" (Valentine, 2003:48). The transition to adulthood is no longer marked by a transition from school to work, as many young people simultaneously work and study, become unemployed, or gain paid work before returning to college (Wyn & Dwyer, 2000). All of these changes have led to scholars questioning traditional analyses of young people's lives.

Johnson-Hanks (2002:865) draws on her fieldwork in rural Cameroon to explain how different elements of 'adulthood' occur at varying times in flexible manners. She describes adulthood as "an articulated composite" and as "nonsynchronous": comprising separate parts that collectively allow some kind of flexibility. Different aspects of life associated with adulthood may thus be experienced by different young people at different times. Youth studies research has therefore started focusing on the connections between what Thomson et al. (2002:336) describe as "a range of transitional strands": education and training; relationships and family life; income and employment; and housing. By exploring different strands, researchers are able to understand how young people may be independent or 'adult-like' in some but not other spheres of their lives.

'Critical moments' and 'vital conjunctures': connecting contingent lives and biographies to social processes

As the life-course is recognised as having become increasingly contingent, scholars from various disciplines are re-conceptualising and analysing the life-course in new innovative ways. The theoretical notions I discuss here include Johnson-Hanks' (2002) theory of 'vital conjunctures" and Thomson et al.'s (2002) analytic tool, "critical moments".

In Johnson-Hanks' (2002) theory of 'vital conjunctures', the term 'vital', an event in demographic theory, is combined with Bourdieu's term, 'conjuncture', which expresses the notion that "structures contingently combine to shape action in particular spaces of time" (Jeffrey, 2010:498). A 'vital conjuncture' is a "socially structured zone of possibility that emerges around specific periods of potential transformation in a life or lives" (Johnson-Hanks, 2002:870). Johnson-Hanks (2002, 2005) researches vital life events, namely marriage and child-birth, in Beti women's lives in Cameroon. She shows that these life events occurring in a context of uncertainty are "rarely coherent, clear in direction, or fixed in outcome", which she suggests "dramatically limits the usefulness of the life cycle model" (Johnson-Hanks, 2002:865). The Beti women did not make "a once-and-for-all transition either to motherhood or to adulthood" after child-birth (Johnson-Hanks, 2002:876).; instead, women could be adult in one sphere of life and youthful in another, which may be partly due to the uncertainty of futures in Cameroon. I suggest that some of the future uncertainties evident in the lives of Beti women in Cameroon bear similarities to the uncertainties in the lives of young people growing up in relatively deprived areas of the Global North, including Northern England.

Thomson et al. (2002) provide another new analytic tool for understanding young lives, which allows for an exploration of the relationships between "individual agency, circumstance and social structure" (Thomson et al., 2002:336). In their research on young people's lives in the UK, they address the interconnections between timing,

circumstances, opportunities, and young people's identities, by exploring 'critical moments' in biographies. The term 'critical moments' refers to certain events in the young people's lives that were important in themselves or had crucial consequences for the young persons' narrative, their future actions, and self-identity. These 'critical moments' were either explicitly narrated as turning points or points of reflection from the young person's point of view, or interpreted as such by the researcher (Thomson et al., 2002). The 'critical moments' were categorised into themes, which the authors placed onto a continuum of degrees of agency. For instance, an event such as one's parents splitting up would be at the 'fate' end of the agency scale, whilst an event such as getting a car would be at the 'choice' end of the spectrum. This spectrum was useful for investigating the relationship between the individual and social structures, which, in turn, illuminated issues such as, social inequality and social exclusion.

Jeffrey (2010) suggests that 'vital conjunctures' and 'critical moments' may be particularly useful for analysing geographies of childhood and youth. He says that 'vital conjunctures' appear frequently in young people lives: being expelled from, dropping out of, or leaving school, are "precisely the type of key time-space[s] that Johnson-Hanks has in mind when describing vital conjunctures" (Jeffrey, 2010:500). Thinking in 'time-spaces' urges an understanding of young lives in "the context of both temporal and spatial contingencies" (Hörschelmann, 2011:378). Analysing 'critical moments' or 'vital conjunctures' enables us to pay attention to how young people live through their own and other people's decisions, and various contingent circumstances. In the second part of this chapter, I do this by focusing particularly on how physical activity fits, or does not fit, into the contingent lives of the young people as they unravel across socially constructed life-phases in often unanticipated ways.

4.2. Re-conceptualising changes in physical activity as young people grow up: understanding physical activity changes within life-phases, and as 'critical moments' or 'vital conjunctures'

Changes in young people's physical activity patterns are commonly investigated topics within physical activity literature (as reviewed in Chapter 2) (Brodersen et al., 2007; Jago et al., 2008; Kimm et al., 2002; Nader et al., 2008). However, such studies rarely map physical activity patterns onto other changes ongoing in young people's lives, with the exception of the transition between primary and secondary school. In the second half of this chapter, I begin to address this crucial gap by exploring *how* physical activity practices change within certain life circumstances and across particular life-phases, drawing on and elaborating Johnson-Hanks' (2002) concept of 'vital conjunctures' and Thomson et al.'s (2002) 'critical moments'. We will see that changes in physical activity were often

contingent, haphazard, non-linear, and shaped by, and experienced through, social institutions and life-phase expectations. They were dependent on friendships and opportunities (or lack thereof) in particular places and during specific times, which altered potential physical activity pathways at 'critical moments'.

This section begins by exploring the lives of those at Space1 by focusing on 'critical moments' in physical activity changes which corresponded to structural life-phase changes, including dropping sports, and the transition from primary to secondary school. Subsequently, I address how the "temporal and spatial contingencies" (Hörschelmann, 2011:378) of 'emerging adulthood' (Bynner, 2005) played out in the physical activity practices of the young men from HIDE2 in different ways. I compare B-Hive's narrative, that prefaced this chapter, with aspects of the other young men's narratives to show how 'choices' regarding physical activities were often shaped by contingent and socioeconomic circumstances during their 'emerging adulthoods'. I then describe the circumstantial physical activity changes and discuss how they were embedded within the socioeconomic realities that shaped the young people's lives from Space1 and HIDE2. These included gaining access to youth resources, and having one's bike stolen or broken.

In Section 4.2.2, I explore the concept of 'age-appropriate' practices, namely playfulness, that arose in my thematic analysis. These ideas are rarely considered in relation to age expectations in other physical activity research, and instead are often viewed in isolation as individual behaviours. I discuss how the young people from HIDE2 and Space1 were sometimes nostalgic over childhood, or subverted and negotiated the life-phase expectations of adolescence by re-living their childhoods through play in specific 'time-spaces' (Hörschelmann, 2011:378).

4.2.1 'Critical moments' of change in physical activity patterns

The transition from primary to secondary school at Space 1: PE and other physical activities

The move from primary to secondary school (Year 6-7), what I will call 'the school transition' from this point onwards, has become the focus of many quantitative (Bray, 2007; Cooper et al., 2012; De Meester et al., 2014; Harrison et al., 2016; Jago et al., 2012; Kipping et al., 2012; Rutten et al., 2014; Taylor et al., 2014), and a few qualitative (Knowles et al., 2011, 2013), studies. The school transition is positioned as a key moment in time where physical activity declines. Some argue this is due to declines in active travel behaviours because the typically greater distances between home and secondary school mean that fewer children walk or cycle to school (Cooper et al., 2012). Some suggest that there are stark changes in leisure-time activity choices as young people traverse

adolescence, including a movement towards engaging in less organised physical activities (Aaron et al., 2002) and more sedentary activities (Hardy et al., 2007; Nelson et al., 2006). Others argue that the declines seen in girls are connected to experiences of changing bodies that are difficult to negotiate in school PE contexts (Azzarito, 2009; Casey et al., 2009; Knowles et al., 2013; Yungblut et al., 2012).

Many of the young people from Space1 in particular felt that the move to and progress through secondary school was synonymous with changing thoughts about their futures. These included pressures to achieve academically so they could gain employment in the future, and/or a sense that one had to be 'good' or competent at formal sports in PE. Both of these set of expectations influenced how the young people felt about 'physical activity', and what types of physical activity they engaged in after moving school. For some, the experience of the school transition reinforced a sense that one should detach from engaging in play as play was positioned as part of childhood. Francis' story below is one example that illustrates these ideas well.

Francis, who was in Year 10 at the time (14-15 years old), reflects on his move from primary to secondary school as a key moment in time when his physical activity behaviours changed. He remembers primary school as a time of carefree "fun", a period when life was "simple". He tells tales about running to the clock tower in the school yard and running around the edges of the grounds playing tag "trying to find people, pure like ninja... crawling along the floor". He remembers primary school as a time when he was active even though he did not participate in after-school sports clubs. Instead he remembers being "the typical kid" and walking home after school to "play out in the street and kick a ball around". He liked how "simple" things were in primary school and explains that he feels now he has less and less time for physical activity. He says:

"I look at school now and I'm like ahhhhh I've gotta- It's just getting so complicated and so many things that I've gotta do. But at primary school I wasn't really that worried by it, it was more, I understood things better and I could just do them and then there would be nothing to really worry about".

He remembers how he stopped playing out and kicking a ball around with his friends at the end of year 6[16], during the summer before year 7[17], as he experienced a shift in perceived expectations relating to school and a new phase of life.

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[16] Year 6 is the last year of primary school in the English education system.

[17] Year 7 is the first year of secondary school in the English education system.

The move to a large school of over 2,500 pupils was a significant change that Francis dealt with in his own way even before he arrived at the school. It was over the summer that he "just kind of drifted out of the whole football thing and mainly going out and doing like running and sports and everything" and began focusing on academic work and making sure to spend his time on his homework. This was when he started staying inside more. He felt that as a 'child' the options were to "either stay inside and be bored out ya mind or go outside and kick a ball around". He claims that as he grew up and attended secondary school he found other matters to occupy his mind. He reads or does his homework and plays games that he was never really "into" before. He developed a liking for indoor sedentary activities, claiming, 'most of my generation are insidey people', and stating he does not like being outdoors and is not an 'outdoorsy person'. Instead he enjoys playing games on his tablet, consoles or reading and going on YouTube. Francis explained, "I got more devices, more games and I just kind of lost all desire to go outside".

However, there were many contradictions in how Francis discussed physical activity and himself. He claims his disinterest in engaging in physical activities at Space1 was "because I'm lazy…. from these five years I've just became more and more lazy and I just can't be bothered to go out and do things". Although Francis claimed he was "inactive" and not an "outdoorsy person", he said that he found informal physical activities with his friends "fun", and enjoyed organised physical activities, especially the outdoor activities he took part in whilst on a residential visit with Space1 a couple of years previously. He explained:

"there was an obstacle course. I love obstacle courses! There was a midnight walk, I absolutely loved it because it was kind of like secluded from my techno things and it was with people that I really liked and that from Space1."

Although Francis reflects on his time at secondary school as inactive, Francis explained that he had enjoyed physical activities at secondary school. He had engaged in numerous school clubs at secondary school throughout the last few years, including dodge ball, judo, golf, and tennis, which ran at specific points during the year, after school or during lunch breaks. However, he often only continued participating in certain sports clubs at school because he found he was 'good' at them.

During and after the school transition, Francis considered the type of person he wanted to be and the type of future he wanted to have; however, he made these decisions within a set of social circumstances structured by changing school. The movement from primary to secondary school seemed to mark the end of his childhood and therefore the end of playing outside in an unstructured way and being a 'typical kid'. Although he had fond and fun memories of active play, he felt that he and his peers had become 'insidey' people (discussed further in Section 4.2.2). He understood secondary school as a step towards

adulthood, towards a period where he needed to consider his future, and be responsible and productive. Francis felt pressured to succeed academically because the notion of academic success is positioned as necessary for gaining a career and shaping one's own biography (Wyn & Dwyer, 2000).

For others, similar worries occurred when moving through secondary school. For instance, Hen explained how the lack of help she received for her severe dyslexia worried her:

> *"if you don't get the help at school, you don't do good in your GCSEs,*
> *and if you don't do good in your GCSE's, you don't get a proper job, and*
> *if you don't get a proper job, you're fucked, basically."*

For others, such as Jay, the school transition created different realisations about the future. Jay explained that he felt he had become more active since leaving primary school:

> *"To be honest, in [primary] school I always felt that I was that little emo*
> *kid that just sat in the corner, didn't want to do anything at all… So when*
> *I first joined Year 7, I thought, you know what, I should make a change*
> *and this is where I am now, doing parkour you know. I enjoy my life the*
> *way it should be, not sitting in the house playing on games"*

He explained how he had changed from being a "house hermit" when he was younger to realising he needed to "make the most of it". One can suggest that Jay's ideas concerning how his life 'should be' are connected to discourses around what constitutes a 'proper childhood', and the 'moral panic' surrounding apparent 'couch kids' who engage in sedentary activities, such as video games (Biddle et al., 2004) (discussed further in the following section); however, Jay stressed his own agency over his decisions. Jay started considering his future in a different way to Francis. Since primary school, he had become more interested in riding his bike and had hopes to improve on hill climbs so that he could do mountain biking. He had also become increasingly interested in cage fighting and parkour and one day wanted to join the army. Jay's experience is a stark contrast to the way in which Francis claims he "drifted out" of engaging in particular activities, and how he worries about school.

The 'critical moment' of moving schools in Francis' life may appear to be more on the 'fate' than 'choice' end on the continuum of agency described by Thomson et al. (2002). Francis' ability to make 'choices' regarding physical activity can be understood as *bounded* within the school transition. Evans (2002, 2007) developed an empirically grounded concept of 'bounded agency' based on research with young people (aged 16-25) in England and Germany. 'Bounded agency' acknowledges that young people have pasts and imagined futures, and perceptions of structure or social landscapes, that

influence how they act in the present (Evans, 2007). 'Bounded agency' is understood as a "socially situated process" that recognises how "a number of boundaries or barriers … circumscribe and sometimes prevent the expression of agency" (Evans, 2002:262). Using Evans' (2002) 'bounded agency' enables one to view young people as agents making decisions about their actions, albeit within the changing contexts (boundaries) of their daily lives, which are in turn shaped by institutions.

One key institution 'bounding' the young people's agency was school Physical Education (PE). Cox et al., (2008) suggest that experiences of school PE may be central to young adolescents' desires to engage in leisure-time physical activities: their longitudinal US based questionnaire study (n=344 aged 11-13) suggested that physical competence, perceptions of choice, and feelings of belonging were connected to motivation in and enjoyment of PE, which in turn influenced their motivations to engage in leisure-time physical activities.

The transition from primary to secondary included a changing structure of school PE. This change appeared to influence how physical activity was conceptualised by the young people. Some of the young people from Space 1 felt PE at secondary school was fun, whether they identified as 'sporty' or not, whereas others felt that the structure of PE had changed in negative ways between primary and secondary school. For the latter young people, memories of primary school PE consisted of more free, unstructured, and fun forms of physical activity, whereas secondary school PE was about 'being good' at sports. Over time, physical activity changed from fun free-play to competency-based activities. Many of the girls and some boys from Space 1 re-told experiences of secondary school PE lessons that centred around competence and skill: they were streamed by ability. Lilly explained that in secondary school PE, you have "gotta be good at it". Some enjoyed this, whereas others did not. For instance, Leonie explained that in primary school "we used to have the climbing frame out and do things like Boxercise and Rounders a lot, or just be allowed to do whatever we want as long as we getting exercise". In contrast, at High school, she explained that they had fewer PE lessons, only three times a fortnight, and she felt unable to choose activities, saying others "make fun of you" in PE class.

There was a stark contrast between tales of PE and my observations of unstructured physical activity in and around Space 1. Informal ways of moving were important sources of fun, joy, and building friendships for the young people I knew at Space1 and HIDE2. I illustrate this point using an example involving Alesha, who frequently made up small dances and engaged others in them:

> *As I sit with Kalehsi and Leonie outside, I see Alesha and Amelia come out of the building. They start doing some kind of dance. Alesha says to Amelia, 'let's do a circle', and they start moving around in a circle on the*

tarmac. They walk around in one direction, each at opposite ends of a small invisible circle: it is as if there is an imaginary point at polar sides of the circle that they are each stuck to. While walking they also clap their hands and move in time as they sing. As they move, Alesha says: 'shut up and dance is the name of the song as well'. She says to Jay, who appears from inside the building looking as though he doesn't know what is going on, "we're doing a dance". She says "like this" as they stomp a little more and go around in the circle. At one point they run a little bit and then I realise they are doing a medley of sorts. They sing as they go around in the circle and each song has different moves that they act out with their hands or whole bodies and a different pace or style of walking. It begins with 'shake it off' by Taylor swift, where they sing the chorus and move their arms. This then brakes out into the words, 'in a sky full of stars' followed by 'I want to fly like a chandelier, a chandelier'. At this point, they drop their upper torsos down towards the floor and swing their arms back up. Each song has a slightly different arm movement. As they start the next song by singing, their arm movements shortly follow in time. On occasion they continue these movements or sometimes they act as a start of a 'lap', so to speak. At the completion of the next full circle, the following song is started with, "clap along if you feel like happiness is a truth", which they clap and stamp along to. As they move and sing they smile and seem really happy in making their own fun.

<div align="right">

(Fieldnotes, 18.06.15)

</div>

When I talked to Alesha in an interview about her dances, the following conversation ensued:

> *Me: Do you like dancing like that?*
>
> *Alesha: Yeh, for fun but not for actual routine for school or in PE or something. When I do Dance (at school), I don't really like it- not really very keen.*
>
> *Me: So what is it about that kind of thing that makes it fun rather than doing it in a PE class?*
>
> *Alesha: Cos you can just kind of like put your own moves like into it and stuff cos it's really fun. Cos it's not really a set thing to do and you don't have any teachers saying you are doing it wrong, you just doing it.*
>
> *Me: Is it, like, would you do that on your own or do you do it with friends or…?*
>
> *Alesha: Friends. I wouldn't do it on my own. I am quite confident, but not like that.*

<div align="center">

(Joint interview with Haz and Alesha)

</div>

The way in which PE and other organised physical activities were structured appeared to contrast with the enjoyed self-directed informal physical activities of daily life. For instance, when I asked Lilly how she felt about physical activity in the present, she said

"hate it". However, I realised that this dislike stemmed from her dislike of PE at school: she explained, "I don't mind if I voluntarily do it, but in PE I'm getting told what to do"... "If I'm joking and running around, like I do, I don't mind it".

Contrastingly, Fitzpatrick's (2011a) critical ethnographic study in a New Zealand school context noted that students enjoyed PE lessons because they were playful, not overly "serious", and provided "comic relief". A lack of fun has been shown to be connected to perceptions of incompetence (Martins et al., 2015). A "profound sense of not being good enough" was abundant in the girls' experiences of PE (aged 15-17) in a Canadian high school (van Daalen, 2005: 117): girls only found PE fun when they were 'good' at it. This has been echoed by other authors who found worries about not being 'good enough' was prominent in girls' voices during early adolescence (Brown, 2000; Casey et al., 2009; Yungblut et al., 2012) and late adolescence (Sleap & Wormald, 2001).

My findings strongly resonate with insights from Clark et al.'s (2011) interview study with adolescent girls from a small suburban Canadian town. They found that informal and unstructured activities, including but not restricted to dance, were enjoyed by adolescent girls as they provided opportunities for self-expression and creativity. The girls enjoyed making up games and playing spy and adventures games in the park (Clark et al., 2011). As my findings also suggest that fun was a huge aspect of self-directed spontaneous creative physical activity, allowing young people freedom and space to make up their own games, dances, and activities, may be helpful in promoting physical activity enjoyment.

The young people's understandings of physical activity and health were dynamic because they accessed new information over time, and yet generally when asked what the words 'physical activity' meant, the young people (with the exception of B-Hive, Koffee, and Francis, who said any movement was 'physical activity') would often recite organised activities and sports, including football, rugby, swimming or running. Several did not 'count' walking as 'physical activity'; it was 'just' something they did.

An understanding of physical activity as structured activities or sport sometimes delegitimised informal forms of physical activity in the young people's lives, which rendered some identifying as "inactive", disliking 'physical activity', or perceiving themselves as "lazy". For example, many of the young people from Space 1, namely, Hen, Lana, Billy, Francis, Leonie, Mimi, and Lilly, formed relatively inactive identities. Most of these individuals (except Francis) held negative perceptions of physical activity, and expressed disinterest in engaging in physical activities in the present. Others, such as Mimi, identified as "inactive" and "lazy", after quitting a regular regime of swimming training (discussed in the following section).

My observations and conversations also highlighted contradictions in what physical activities the young people said they did and what they actually did. For instance, one warm sunny day in summer of 2015, Lana and Leonie came into the youth centre red faced, a little out of breath, and visibly warm. They explained that they had been walking around the large wooded area near the youth centre for the past forty-five minutes. However, when I asked Lana later on about her views on physical activity she explained that she was not an 'active person', hated physical activity, did not do any physical activity, and did not remember doing any physical activity when she was younger. Despite all this overt dislike for 'physical activity', she enjoyed walking around the woodland park nearby on many occasions. Likewise, Lilly explained she strongly disliked 'physical activity', and yet on another occasion she explained that she liked walking: she shared stories of walking for miles around Lochs in Scotland with her family. This dislike of 'physical activity' was also not restricted to girls as Billy often explained that he was "not the sort of person that does that [physical activity]", despite enjoying Sycamore park, the woodland park, bike riding at points in time, and other unstructured physical activities.

Similar findings have been documented in other studies that explore young people's perceptions and meanings of physical activity (Hohepa et al., 2006; Lee & Macdonald, 2009; Sleap & Wormald, 2001). Burrows (2010) showed that the 10-11-year-old children in New Zealand considered 'physical activity' and 'exercise' adult terms; hence, they did not recognise 'play' as 'physical activity'. Sleap and Wormald's (2001) focus group study with 16-17-year-old White British girls in North Yorkshire, found that girls did not consider their walking or informal physical activity practices 'physical activity', and thus largely considered themselves 'inactive'. Lee and Macdonald (2008) explored understandings of physical activities in a rural Australian setting, showing how gender constructions delegitimised physical farm work as a 'physical activity' for young women. Although physical labour appeared in many of the young women's descriptions of their free-time, it was not discussed by the young women as time spent 'active', whereas it was for young men.

The ways in which the young people from Space 1 defined and thought about physical activity appeared connected to their experiences of Physical Education in secondary school and the age expectations around physical activity that alter between 'childhood' and 'adolescence', a transition that is partly constructed during the school transition. Consequently, although many of the young people were physically active in informal ways, several held negative views regarding 'physical activity' and/or considered themselves 'inactive'. I suggest that promoting physical activity as a wide range of daily practices may change young people's view of physical activity as a practice that can or does fit into their day-to-day lives.

Similar to much of the literature surrounding adolescent physical activity changes (Brooke et al., 2014; Kjønniksen et al., 2008; Knowles et al., 2013), 'quitting' or 'dropping' sports and formal activities was evident from conversations with many young people from Space1, although less so with those from HIDE2, whose experiences I report in more detail in Chapter 5 and 6. Dropping a sport can be seen as a 'critical moment', which was not necessary a one-off uni-directional event: some young people dropped some activities but took up others at certain points in time. This section discusses how these moments were experienced by the young people and how adolescent subjectivities were shaped in relation to this change in physical activity, and begins with Mimi's story.

Mimi, who was in Year 9 (aged 14) at the time, explained that she quit her swimming club when she was about 11 or 12 years old. She explained that she used to train five or six times per week: she swam for nearly two hours in the mornings before school, and competed at galas on the weekends too. She started swimming competitively at 8 years old and only had Tuesdays and Thursdays off each week. As she got older she explained that the routine became too tiring, she "got sick of it" because her "Mum used to make" her go, and that she had "grown out of it". She stopped swimmingly competitively in Year 8, choosing to do what she called 'normal' swimming for a while until she 'got bored' of it and stopped altogether. She claims that physical activity is "boring" and "tiring" and believes that young people do not do physical activity because "the majority of people are just lazy and can't be bothered". And yet she says: "I used to love PE and everything like that, but now I prefer sitting on the side and stuff; it's just tiring". Mimi's reasons for stopping swimming were related to new priorities in life: she explained that 'I had no time for myself', that swimming so frequently was so tiring, and that she wanted to be able to go out with her friends. Although she sometimes missed swimming, as she had always wanted to do club swimming from a young age, the majority of the time she recognised that her swimming would prevent her from coming to Space1 to hang out with her friends.

In spring 2015, Mimi still occasionally went to the swimming pool, because her mother worked there as a lifeguard, and Mimi also participated in rounders' club after school on Mondays and Thursdays. She laughed at how she would spend a normal weekend watching TV, eating pizza or going out into town with friends: a stark contrast to the year before.

When Mimi was playing on the Soft-play in Space1 one afternoon, performing cartwheels and forward rolls, I asked her what she was doing. She explained, "I'm trying to do some exercise cos I'm a really

inactive person". As she no longer swam frequently, she said she was
"just trying to do a bit of exercise every now and again". After Mimi quit
swimming she positioned herself as 'inactive' and "quite lazy". However,
she negotiated these positions by saying that "as long as sometimes
you do do proper bits of activity, being lazy is alright, as long as you're
not unfit and that." Mimi attempted to negotiate ways to fit physical
activity into her changing daily life, by engaging in rounders, informal
activity at Space1 or football games on the field by her house with her
brother. Nonetheless, she continued to position herself as "lazy".

Mimi's 'choice' to quit swimming was made during a 'time-space' where her priorities were changing. She was transcending the boundaries of 'childhood' and 'adolescence', two different phases of life that are constructed to embody different social expectations of how to be. If we consider this a 'critical moment' in her physical activity narrative, and follow Thomson et al.'s (2002) approach, the 'critical moment' experienced by Mimi can be placed at the 'choice' end of the agency spectrum. However, this notion of 'choice' is questioned when analysed in the context of age expectations, and at a temporality when young people's identities are formed through group identities (Brown et al., 1986). One can suggest that Mimi's 'choice' to quit swimming is 'bounded' in her life circumstances where the necessity to create a social life was vital. If she had not chosen to quit swimming, she may have experienced levels of exclusion from her friendship group, and experienced other threats to her identity.

The details of Mimi's physical activities may be unique but the themes that arose in the re-telling of her choice to quit swimming are not; they are found in many other young people's stories of dropping sports. The young people provided various explanations for their reduced engagement in formal physical activities, such as, prioritising friendships, feeling uncomfortable performing, changing interests, clubs ceasing to run, and taking up of different sports. And yet the notions of laziness and not being bothered, and self-perceived inactivity, continually reappeared. For instance, Hen re-told on occasions how she had quit swimming because she no longer enjoyed it after the girls she knew at the club stopped attending. She said, "I felt awkward there, cos it was quiet and I didn't know anyone except for Mr Cross's daughter." She also explained that she did not like being escorted by her mum and would go swimming if she did not have to go with her younger brothers and mum. Nonetheless, Hen also continually said she "couldn't be bothered" to do exercise, claiming, "I don't like it where you put in effort".

I also found that the ways in which organised activities changed was contingent on new routines, new friendships, new interests, and new realisations. Such patterns were not

linear, they were circular and haphazard, changing as young people tried new activities or moved more or less for different reasons. For instance, Lee explained,

> *"I liked football since 5 until now. Then I had didn't like it for 'bout a month, then got into it, then went to a different thing, Cadets, left that, went to boxing, left that, and I'm back at football."*

Other young people explained that they took up clubs during adolescence, due to social relations or changing club provision. For instance, Kalehsi began doing parkour when she was 11, after feeling excluded from dance classes. She engaged in parkour for a short while before stopping, and yet three years later she began parkour again, attending a session on a Sunday with Jay. Her attendance was dependent upon her being able to get the £4 for the class fee, and on her physical and mental state: she was often unwell, suffered from insomnia, and frequently complained she had not slept for days at a time. Francis was also part of dodgeball club for two years at secondary school. He explained how he stopped playing dodgeball over the Christmas holiday as the club did not run, subsequently fell ill, did not go out much or socialise, and consequently lost motivation and confidence to re-attend the club in the New Year. In summer of 2015, he claimed he no longer wanted to play dodgeball, as he felt tired and wanted to rest by the end of the school day. There were differing circumstantial and life-phase changes influencing engagement and re-engagement in, or disengagement from, forms of physical activity and sedentary activities: dropping a sport was not always a linear process, and did not mean that re-engagement in other sports or activities failed to occur.

Self-assessed laziness, notions of not being bothered and self-perceived inactivity tended to reappear in the narratives of those who had dropped sports clubs or did not engage in 'exercise'. Mary rationalised her quitting of swimming club when she was 9 or 10 years old as, "I think it was just that I started to become a bit lazy". Kalehsi explained in November 2014 that, "I would like to do free running but I'm too lazy", and yet the next Spring she began re-attending parkour sessions. I suggest that these explanations were in part due to their positioning of themselves as inactive adolescents, and the comparison of their present selves to their past child-selves. Some of the young people who considered themselves inactive had, at some point in time, been told by others that they were not as active as they should be. For instance, Alesha and Hen explained that their parents often said they were not active enough. Hen commented that she had considered starting swimming again "cos it would stop me mum like banging on about us, about that I don't do enough exercise". Likewise, Lee explained that his mum would say things such as, "you've never been off that tablet, why don't you go out and play… you are a young lad …you need to keep yourself fit". Even some of the young men considered the generation below them to be lazy. Geba explained that young people and children 'today' spend too

much time indoors. He explained that if he could, he would tell them to "get out the house, stop being lazy, you enjoy it more when you do it in real life than when people go play FIFA, and you can just do it outside".

Self-perceived and parental-perceived laziness was often connected to sedentary activities. The young people from Space 1 reported spending most of their time at home watching Netflix, YouTube, playing video games on their mobile phones, tablets or laptops. Many had engaged in these types of activities since before moving to secondary school, but their importance in daily life had increased as they traversed adolescence. Such activities had become part of their social worlds, for expressing themselves, keeping up-to-date with on-goings, sharing photographs on Instagram, reading and commented on books, and forging friendships. Hen and Kalehsi explained that when they moved to secondary school they only had a few friends. Hen explained how she formed friendships:

> *"I discovered other YouTubers and then I became obsessed with them, and then it formed friendships with people. Yay!... like, this is what my mum doesn't understand. She says 'Hen, why do you waste your time on these videos?' -I make friends! (says with frustrated tone)"*

Hen appeared frustrated by her mother's lack of understanding that these activities were essential aspects of the young people's social worlds, ways that enabled them to feel safe from the "force field of bullies" (Kalehsi) and "more judgemental people" (Hen) they felt presented with when starting secondary school. Nonetheless, some of the young people felt it was 'bad' to spend a lot of time on computers and devices.

The moral accounts of physical activity, and the understandings of sedentary activities such as YouTube, or video gaming as immoral (seen in Jay's account previously), are similar to the young people's understandings of healthy eating discussed by Leahy and Wright (2016). They argued that the young people comprehended health messages as forms of "moral guidance" regarding what they 'should' be eating: some of the young people morally scrutinised others' food practices, suggesting that they needed to be "managed" and "improved" in order to become "good" practices. In a similar manner to food, one can suggest that physical or sedentary activities are "saturated with moral meanings and judgements about acceptable citizens" and bodies (Leahy & Wright, 2016:13).

One rationale for condemning sedentary activities such as YouTube, video games, and TV watching is their connection to the 'obesity epidemic'. Obesity discourse positions these sedentary practices as replacements for physical activities ("displacement hypothesis"), which have increased children's weight, and produced a nation of 'coach

potatoes' (Gard & Wright, 2005). Biddle et al. (2004:31) show, through a meta-analysis of 24 studies, that there may be little clinical or practical significance of the so-called "displacement hypothesis"; nonetheless, the young people reproduced these discourses:

> *"cos like with phones you are just sitting down not doing anything. I*
> *mean I do it a lot but you are not doing anything, you are just sitting on*
> *your phone and if like most people, who are addicted to computer*
> *games and stuff, they are the ones who are not doing physical exercise.*
> *So it just, I think, prevents people from doing it" (Lilly)*

Hörschelmann and Colls (2010) suggest that the fat child's body has become a marker that represents the loss of childhood play and physical activity. As many technology based-activities are sedentary, they are often condemned for making children's bodies 'fat'. Discourses that create oppositions between physically active and sedentary practices are continually reinforced by numerous studies with children. For example, a focus group study with children (n=55 10-11-year-olds) from Bristol, claimed that children were open to reducing their screen-viewing, especially those types of screen-viewing that they felt were "pointless" or "lazy" (Sebire et al., 2011).

The young people also often spoke about technological devices and activities referring to the word 'addiction'. For example, Kalehsi explained that, "it's like technology is too addicting- I play Minecraft for about five hours on end", and Jay stated that, "Me and Liam, we get addicted to the tablet so much". This language of addiction, that is commonly found in news media and some academic literature, is said to reduce "a set of frequent or unusually excessive activities to a single form or cause, relegating the object that is utilised compulsively to a danger, an unknown or moral concern" (Cover, 1999:112).

Although many of the young people reported using devices for several hours a day, and had quit sports clubs, some rejected or negotiated claims of laziness. For instance, Annie, who was 17 years old at the time, explained that a friend of hers had called her lazy. Her body language and tone of voice expressed a great offense at her friend's comments. She explained that she did not do any sport or PE but was not lazy because she walked everywhere. Jemma explained she did not like to be lazy, which was part of her rationale for attending the gym. Jemma had quit several sports during secondary school and instead used the treadmills and bikes at the school gym, which she considered to be "better exercise". This idea of 'better' exercise can be understood through its connection to the fitness industry and healthism discourses discussed in Chapter 6.2. A few of other girls, who considered themselves quite inactive in the present, envisaged a different physical activity routine in the future. For example, Lilly, who had dropped sports and dance classes, explained, "I wanna go to the gym and that when I turn 18. I wanna be

going to the gym three times a week if possible." Her claim suggested that she felt when she reached 18 years old, she would not be lazy, and would want to engage in a gym routine, a more 'adult' form of physical activity.

The 'critical moment' of dropping a physical activity club was crucial for how young people negotiated their subjectivities. Although dropping a sport was not necessarily a one-off linear trajectory, and some young people rejected claims of laziness, self-assessed laziness was often a normative response when questioned about disengagement from formal physical activities. My analysis shows how these responses were connected to connotations and discourses surrounding adolescent 'laziness' and the moral worth of physical and sedentary activities.

The nonsynchronous experience of 'emerging adulthood': a critical moment for the young men's physical activity

Kwan et al. (2016:2) suggest that 'emerging adulthood' is "particularly high-risk" phase "for becoming less active". Much research exploring changes in physical activity in 'emerging adulthood' (Bray, 2007; Van Dyck et al., 2015) tends to focus on individual level factors influencing physical activity patterns of University students, whose 'emerging adulthoods' will be institutionally structured in similar ways. In contrast, I address experiences of 'emerging adulthood' in less affluent contexts.

Challenging educational contexts, insecure training opportunities, marginal jobs and cyclical patterns of employment or unemployment are common for young people living in Northern England (MacDonald, 1996). Macdonald's (1996) ethnographic study with unemployed voluntary workers in Teesside during the 1990's, discussed young people's engagement in voluntary work. He suggested that claiming the dole whilst doing voluntary work was an innovative way of finding a rewarding purpose and a structure to daily life. Insights from other contexts of deprivation, detailed in Valentine (2003), show how a young person's socioeconomic situation can play into when, how or even whether they experience 'aspects of adulthood'. In her discussion of how socioeconomic influences affect 'transitions' to 'adulthood', she draws on work by Campbell (1993) who wrote about the 1991 riots in the UK and young men growing up in impoverished communities in North Tyneside, Oxfordshire, and Cardiff. The young people living in these "dangerous places" had few opportunities other than to sign on to the dole and eke out opportunities in casual jobs, petty enterprise, and quasi-criminal activities after the fall of industry in the 1980s (Campbell, 1993). According to Valentine (2003), none of the traditional markers of 'adulthood' were available to these young people living in deprived neighbourhoods, which rendered them unable to become fully 'adult' and instead experience what one could call an 'extended childhood'.

The types of challenges many of the young men at HIDE2 faced growing up ranged from poor and inconsistent schooling, to dealing with migration, from struggling with the death or absence of a parent, to experiencing domestic abuse, and from dealing with bullying and group conflict at school, to experiencing racial abuse within the community. In the young men's lives, educational trajectories, patterns of employment, and living situations were contingent, and changed due to circumstances at specific moments in time that were largely out of their direct control.

Educational resources available, and educational 'choices', greatly influenced their experiences of growing up. Aari, a young British-Bangladeshi man, achieved good grades at GCSE and A-Level from a school in a more affluent area in the north of the city, and gained a place at University. B-Hive and many of the other young men left secondary school with few GCSE grades. Most of the young men spoke negatively about their school experiences. For example, Dew explained:

> *"school was fucking tough man. Like my mum was kicking off at me being like, "why the fuck didn't you do well at school?" I was like, "mum you trying to tell me it was my own fault?". Know what I mean yeh… I was like, "did you see what school you sent me too?" Like even Koffee got some shit grades and he is smart as fuck. B-Hive got the shittest out of anybody, Marcel got no grades. It's the school innit, can't do nought about it."*

Dew gained no GCSEs from school as he was expelled in year 11 for punching a teacher, after a previous 4-month expulsion for stealing. Those who left school with few qualifications had extended periods of secondary education: many completed GCSEs and additional courses at the local college in between bouts of part-time employment or unemployment whilst living with family members. For instance, Geba finished school with what he called, "not shit but not decent -between shit and decent" GCSEs, and subsequently enrolled with the local college to redo some GCSEs. He gained better grades in a short period of time, proving his ability to succeed academically in a different environment. Geba's move to college and Dew's expulsion can be seen as a 'critical moments' in their educational trajectories (Thomson et al., 2002).

"Transitional strands" (Thomson et al., 2002), socially constructed as markers of 'adulthood', did not often follow the linear directions expected by young men: they were highly contingent and connected to socioeconomic circumstances. Training and employment did not always follow a linear pattern. B-Hive, whose story prefaces this chapter, became somewhat frustrated by his insecure employment circumstances after having completed a youth work internship that he believed would lead to regular paid work. He had embarked on the youth work internship because he became disappointed

regarding the lack of paid work on the horizon at HIDE2. Both B-Hive and Koffee volunteered a lot of their time for HIDE2 with the "promise" that they would "get a job at the end". The reality of their experiences differed from their original expectations: Koffee in particular began to feel that he was "volunteering for no reason". Eventually, after a funding application for staff costs was rejected at the end of my fieldwork, eighteen months after he began volunteering, Koffee decided to resign from his voluntary responsibilities at HIDE2 so that he could find paid employment.

Other contingencies in the young men's lives centred around familial circumstances. For example, the death of K-Z's mother, when he was 14 years old, was a significant event in his life that was emotionally disruptive and had consequences for K-Z's possible futures: he described how he felt a lack of direction and "didn't care about anything" after his mother passed away. Ruth Evans' (2014) understanding of parental death in Senegal as a 'vital conjuncture' highlights the way in which parental death, associated with drastic change and emotional disruption in young people's lives, can create or destroy multiple imagined futures. According to Thomson et al. (2002:338), young people's abilities to respond to disruptive experiences are "shaped by the social and cultural resources that they have to hand". K-Z detailed how HIDE2 "saved" him, which brings us to consider how, for K-Z, one such social or cultural resource was HIDE2. Jeffrey (2010) suggests that "challenges facing children and youth do not typically manifest themselves in an even manner but rather become evident during idiosyncratically organised critical durations and within certain areas" (Jeffrey, 2010:502), and that "vital conjunctures move us beyond the vague idea of 'context' to examine the particular and temporary configuration of structures that becomes relevant in specific situations" (Jeffrey, 2010:502).

'Critical moments' or 'vital conjunctures' where physical activities changed were embedded within life changes, other priorities in life, and understandings of what it means to be a 'successful adult' or 'emerging' towards 'adulthood'. These changes included moving from school to college, from college to work, and from work to (un)employment, and vice versa. These "vital conjunctures can be understood as "experiential knots during which potential futures are under debate and up for grabs" (Johnson-Hanks, 2002:872).

In B-Hive's story, the 'time-space' that led to B-Hive's engagement in boxing, acted as a 'vital conjuncture' or 'critical moment' in his physical activity narrative, in which HIDE2, his mother, and the boxing club became key resources that helped him reflect on his behaviours and his health. Aari also explained that he had engaged in violent conflicts and confrontations until he "got a brain cell and thought, let's go for a run" to calm down. He saw A-Levels as the period in time when he grew out of his violent mentality, feeling like he was too old for that kind of behaviour: in early 2015 he said he had not fought in over a year and a half, since he started University. He felt his Asian culture, education,

and family background influenced his actions, and saw himself as slightly different from his friends: he described his home life, having a stable father figure and strong family values in relation to education, as contrasting to most of his friends. He had more familial resources to draw on and, as such, HIDE2 was not a crucial resource for him. Aari also felt that he would continue to be active in his future because he had signed up to the royal marine reserves in early 2015: this became his primary rationale for engaging in physical activity. As he became part of a squadron and trained with the other reserves to increase his fitness levels, his potential future career kept him focused on his fitness goals.

Dew, who migrated from Algeria thirteen years ago, had experienced difficult financial circumstances throughout his life, from childhood to adulthood. During 'emerging adulthood' he had moved in and out of his parents' three-bedroom flat where he slept on the couch, to private rentals that he struggled to afford. Dew used to play football with Marcel until about 2 years ago. He says he used to play 'shit loads of football' but regrets stopping and he does not really know why he stopped. When probed further about why he stopped playing football, he explained: "Can't be arsed and that. See thing is I only do things for money (laughs)". He explained that when he and Marcel got into a Newcastle football team he realised it was going to take years and years to get good and actually earn any money from football. He also engaged in boxing between ages 17-19 but stopped after a year and a half. He says:

> *"That's when I start seeing too much money in my eyes… Yeh cos I start proper chasing the money ... Yo, we are broke out here yeh. As soon as I started making money yeh, I quit everything. I was like money money money money money money, that's what my mind was saying to me... cos it came to a point yeh I'd be like, yo I could be boxing for an hour yeh but then I could be making this much money for an hour, which is better? An hour boxing a bag or earning this much money and go blowing it on more money?"*

Dew's priorities in life, namely a desire to make money, were connected to his experiences of poverty and migration and expectations of adulthood. Such priorities, which are intertwined with his circumstances, directly intersected with his views on physical activity and how it fitted into his daily life. The potential futures that appeared on "the horizons of the conjuncture" were time specific, and also historically constructed (Johnson-Hanks, 2002:872). Johnson-Hanks (2002:872) explains that "what looks like a hopeful prospect now may be closed down without warning tomorrow, and another potential future may open up". This was the case regarding Dew's choice to stop investing in football. In contrast to Aari and B-Hive, for Dew, as his potential future career no longer

involved football, investing in other routes to financial success took precedent over most forms of physical activity, with the exception of thrill seeking activities.

During their teenage years Dew, K-Z, and B-Hive all turned to boxing to channel their "energy" in some way, and yet how they responded and used boxing was very different. For B-Hive, engaging in boxing acted as a turning point in his life, where he had realisations regarding his health and capability. For Dew, after a year and a half, the benefits of engaging in the sport became less important for him. For K-Z, boxing helped him deal with bullying and losing weight, which became important for his identity as a hip-hop singer. After B-Hive took up boxing, he continued to fight until he badly injured his hand, at which point he switched to other martial arts. For B-Hive, investing in boxing and other sports became part of who he was, part of how he shaped his present and future self. All these meanings for engaging in physical activity are discussed further in Chapter 7.

The young men's responses at 'vital conjunctures' or 'critical moments' in life, and their imagined futures, can be viewed as "specific to a perspective or agent position": not only do different social actors have access to different kinds of knowledge about a situation, but they also interpret that knowledge differently" (Johnson-Hanks, 2002:872). The changes in the young men's 'choices' regarding physical activity can be explained by contemplating what counts as a 'respectable' path to adulthood. According to Jeffrey (2010), a 'successful adulthood' in the West is positioned by neoliberal governmentality as a time of individual and financial independence and autonomy. In Dew's case, one can suggest that by dropping sports, and instead engaging in paid work, he is asserting his resourcefulness, etching out the most plausible path to a "respectable manhood" (Esson, 2013:88). Within the contingencies of 'emerging adulthood', the sports inadequately contributed towards his desired sense of autonomy and (financial) independence.

Other studies have shown how young men use sport to reach a 'successful adulthood'. Esson (2013), who conducted ethnographic fieldwork with young men and boys in Ghanaian football clubs, explained that, in Ghana, young people attend school with the premise that afterwards they will gain formal paid employment. However, due to young men feeling emasculated when attending classes with younger children in schools (Esson, 2013:87), and the economic devaluation of education (increasing numbers of educated young people mean fewer employment opportunities), young men are choosing a different path of "respectable manhood", asserting their masculinities and resourcefulness through dropping out of school to pursue football careers (Esson, 2013:88). Similarly, Coakley and White (1992), who conducted interviews with young people in South East London, found that decisions about sports participation were made in connection to the young person's

reflections on their transition to adulthood. Participation was based on whether activities were considered useful for preparing them for adult roles or adult-like opportunities.

The young men faced numerous challenges growing up. Certain moments in these young men's lives can be interpreted as "vital conjunctures" or "critical moments", including the death of K-Z's mother, Aari's move to University, Dew's quitting of football, and B-Hive's engagement in boxing. At these moments, we can interpret how individual biographies connect with social circumstances, and how the young men responded to events in different ways, depending on their optional pathways to 'respectable adulthoods' and the resources available to them. The socioeconomic, educational, and family circumstances of emerging adulthood played a large role in their unexpected nonlinear experiences of the 'transition' to 'adulthood', and in turn influenced non-linear patterns of physical activity.

Unanticipated 'critical moments': Circumstantial context dependent changes in daily physical activity

Engagement in physical activities changed in unanticipated and circumstantial ways that are often missed in other studies. Mac an Ghaill (1994:2) explains that there are key moments in ethnographic fieldwork in which you "begin to reconceptualize 'what's going on' in the research arena". The happenings on one Wednesday afternoon at a HIDE2 drop-in session in early July 2015 cemented for me how contingency and non-linearity were fundamental to understanding how physical activity fitted into the young people's daily lives.

Whilst hanging out in the HIDE2 office, the senior youth worker says to me "it's really interesting because they've been going out and about on bikes, going to St Andrew's park and using the ramps". She continues by explaining that some of the boys (Karel, Ezzy, Reggie, Miko, and Dal) had posted photos on Facebook, and detailed how excited they were that she had seen and 'liked' their photos and videos. She sits at her desk on her laptop and opens Facebook and looks on Ezzy's timeline. She scrolls down clicking on the pictures from the previous Saturday, which show the group of boys posing with their BMX bikes on the bridge in town, followed by a video of them at the skate park riding their BMX's on the ramps.

At first I was somewhat surprised by these images because during my conversations with this group of boys they had repeatedly suggested that they do not have bikes or that their bikes are broken or were stolen, and that they simply were not interested in bikes. These included a focus group two months ago; short interviews approximately one month ago, after they participated in an organised 10-mile led bike ride; and informal chats the previous week when I'd been talking to a couple of

the boys about the local area. For instance, at the end of March, Karel had told me a story about when he used to have a BMX about two or three years ago. He said he would sometimes go to St Andrew's skate park with his 'black friends' who he hung out with back then. On one occasion, he had attempted a trick on the road on his way there, had fallen off, and 'fucked' the bike: it had been hit by a car after he fell off. This was the instance he remembered as the last time he cycled as he left the broken bike by the side of the road. Ezzy had also ridden a bike to HIDE2 just a few weeks previously in early June, for the first time since I had known him. However, having almost immediately punctured a tyre after only a few days of cycling to and from HIDE2, he returned to walking. Although I urged him to take the unmistakable lime green and bright pink BMX to one of the bike maintenance sessions run by the bike charity in the nearby Hawthorne park, he did not venture to the relatively unknown bike hub.

Although the boys told tales of times in past years when they cycled to places or crashed their bikes, they explicitly concluded that they do not cycle around anymore, and that they walk everywhere instead. Despite hearing these kinds of narratives up until just a couple of weeks beforehand, this weekend they were cycling to a skate park, doing tricks on the ramps, and enjoying the sunshine, whilst documenting the events with images and film, and posting these on Facebook. Ezzy had even changed his Facebook cover photo to the image of the four of them on their BMX bikes. It was interesting that all of a sudden they were apparently 'into' bikes again. When I explained this to the senior youth worker, she turned to me with a look that implied something equivalent to, "come on, that was last week" before saying "but time is…" whilst putting her hands out in front of her, and moving them around in circles as if to suggest it is rapidly changing in unanticipated ways. I then perhaps over ambitiously filled the silence, by asking, "time is quick?". She continued by explaining, "yeh, it's their latest thing", "this is obviously the thing… they didn't have these [bikes] and all of a sudden they have acquired them".

Less than a week later Reggie informed me that on his third visit to St Andrew's skate park he did a trick and broke his bike so had not been since. He said it was unfixable: the back wheel had ripped. Crashing and breaking bikes was a common theme that emerged amongst this group of boys. It also became evident that interests developed and resurged at various points in time, and that these changes collided with haphazard occurrences in life such as friendship group dynamics, being able to get hold of bikes through friends, or breaking bikes. It was Carla who eventually took Ezzy's bike to be fixed at the local bike hub: she explained that Ezzy was uncomfortable going alone to the place he did not know. Hence, changes in physical activity were connected to access to resources, which were also dependent upon social relations (with peers and adults) and group dynamics.

Other circumstantial changes occurred in the lives of those from Space 1: these changes can be recognised as 'critical moments' in their physical activity narratives. Billy's story illustrates this point best. Billy used to cycle everywhere on his bike but in year 8 it was stolen. He explained:

> *"when it got nicked I was proper gutted. I wanted to cycle up to me nana's the day the bike was nicked but me ma said "no", but when I got back the door (to the shed) was open and me bike was gone."*

He used to cycle his bike to his grandmother's house every Sunday, which was three miles away. He explained that after the point in time, when his bike was stolen from the shed, his physical activity patterns changed significantly. He says, things "*just changed when I got me bike nicked. I used to bike everywhere".* In April 2015 he got a new bike; however, it was being stored at his grandmother's because his family were moving house again (he moved in February and in June) so he could not ride it. When I asked him if he had ridden it, he said:

> *"I did to me nana's, but two or three weeks ago cos we couldn't keep it in the house cos there's not enough space so I cycled it up there. And obviously we don't want it around the kids."*

Moving house, having little room in their current house, and having one toddler and one baby around contributed to the change in cycling. The circumstances meant that it was more difficult for Billy to cycle his new bike to his grandmother's. However, in other conversations, Billy's attitudes towards cycling appeared to change over time too. He explained:

> *"Well I don't really like bikes anymore. I used to like scooters as well but then I went off that for about a month. I used to love skateboards as well, I used to do that for about 3 months and then stopped cos my skateboard broke cos when I went down the hill one of the wheels fell off… I can't think of anything that I've liked and done for absolutely ages, apart from PlayStation, but I don't really play it anymore."*

The young people's interests commonly fluctuated between different sports, media, and social activities. When combined with other 'critical moments' in their lives, such as a stolen bike in Billy's case, substantial changes in physical activity occurred.

These examples show that certain spatial and temporal contingencies give rise to possibilities for dis-engagement and re-engagement in different activities. Practices that the young people engaged in changed within short periods of time and were often revisited in non-linear ways. Certain events or peers would spark engagement in particular physical activities, and yet simultaneously events such as theft would alter engagement.

When resources, such as bike fixing facilities, are made accessible to young people through trusting adult-relationships the ability to alter physical activity patterns emerges. However, in deprived contexts there are likely to be more obstacles, such as resources and thefts, that restrict physical activity possibilities.

This section has discussed central moments in young people's lives where changes in physical activity occurred: the school transition, dropping (or re-engaging) sport clubs, and the life stage of 'emerging adulthood'. I have also noted that there were important contingent and haphazard 'critical moments' that emerged as moments of change in physical activity practices. By looking at these as 'time-spaces' and discussing the young people's experiences through the lens of the 'critical moment' or 'vital conjuncture', I have been able to show how physical activity practices are embedded within institutional changes (social expectations of secondary school), social expectations of age (laziness and financial independence), the socioeconomic circumstances of 'emerging adulthood', and contingent occurrences embedded into the socioeconomic contexts of daily life (bikes being stolen or crashed). The following section concentrates more closely on 'age-appropriate' practices, and how young people negotiate or resist these.

4.2.2 'Age-appropriate' practices, re-living childhoods, and subverting 'transitions'

Drawing on Bruner (1987), Thomson et al. (2002) explained that a life told is different to a life led; they suggested that young people have an ability to tell stories about their pasts and their presents. Young people's stories are likely to incorporate ideas, albeit perhaps subconsciously, regarding which kinds of activities are deemed 'appropriate' for which life-phases. For instance, in Coakley and White's (1992:24) study, the British young people rejected certain adult-organised sports programmes, rendering the activities "babyish" because they felt positioned as 'children' or 'students'. This section discusses the role of the youth centres in reproducing 'age-appropriate' practices; the young people's playful practices and memories of childhood play; and the ways the young people subverted socially constructed 'age-appropriate' practices at specific 'time-spaces'.

Youth centre age groups and 'aged' practices

This section addresses how the youth centres, albeit unintentionally, reproduced understandings of age appropriate activities for the young people. The quote below from Annie, who had grown up with Space1, illustrates this theme that was important for understanding changes in physical activity.

Me: Some of these kids say they miss childish things they used to do. Is that the same for you or not?

Annie: Yeh, like I'm too old to do some of the stuff that we used to do.

Me: What kind of things did you used to do?

Annie: Like some of the activities. Like we used to go to the farms, like it was a laugh but I'm too old.

Me: When you say too old, is it you that has decided you are too old or other people or…?

Annie: I think it's the whole like, I think they think we are too old to do them kind of stuff.

Me: So, you think the staff think you are too old?

Annie: Yeh

Me: And would you like to do that kind of stuff?

Annie: I don't know, I wouldn't mind 'cos it's still something to do to get out of here.

(Interview, 17.05.15)

In life, in school, and within the youth centres, young people are expected to "display certain forms of behaviour, use specific places and possess particular values, beliefs and attitudes" at certain ages (Hopkins, 2010:2). Johnson-Hanks (2002:869) explains that, "relatively coherent life stages exist when and where social institutions construct them". Social constructions of age and age expectations were embedded within the youth centres' terminology and practice.

Firstly, different terminologies that defined certain age groups (juniors, inters, and seniors), excluded and included young people based on age (see Hen and Kalehsi's narrative that prefaces Chapter 5). The use of terms and age-inclusion criteria were not limited to Space1. At the time, HIDE2 provided services for boys 13-22 years old, and Carla was considering raising the age-limit to 25. Although Carla explained this was "down to capacity", many young boys (under age 13) and girls hung around outside the building: they were not allowed in due to the age and sex inclusion criteria.

Secondly, Space1's advertising material used the term 'children' for those under 13 years old and 'young people' rather than 'youth' or 'children' or 'teenager' for the seniors group (13-19 year olds). HIDE2 called their project a 'youth' project in written material, personal correspondence and conversation; however, when they talked about who accessed the 'youth' project they use the term 'young people'. This use of language can be seen as having two purposes. It becomes a way of blurring the boundaries between 'childhood'

and 'adulthood', reaffirming young people's status as transitory, no longer children. It also appeared to act as an attempt to avoid connotations attached to the terms, 'teenager', 'youth' and 'adolescent', discussed earlier.

Nonetheless, in the youth centres age still remained, albeit subconsciously, in their understandings of the young people. For example, after one of the sessions where the young people were messing around on the Soft-play at Space1, I talked to Ant about the move back to the old renovated Space1 building in Fairview.

> *Me: Will you have Soft-play back at Space1?*
>
> *Ant: I hope so*
>
> *Me: It's good*
>
> *Ant: You wouldn't think it but this group they love it, and it's good for them to be active and mess around, good for them to play like kids again and interact. [We] will have something because [we] will have toddlers still.*
>
> <div align="right">*(Fieldnotes, 14.05.15)*</div>

Ant's words showed how he felt the young people's enjoyment of the Soft-play was somewhat unorthodox. Ant explained that the young people were "always missing Soft-play and things. I miss Soft-play. Adults do not do enough play[ing]" (Fieldnotes, 20.03.2015). His words also illustrated how young people were seen as more adult-like in some spheres and more child-like in others. If the young people at Space 1 were playing in the Sycamore park or messing around on the Soft-play, Ant and Danny thought it was nice that the young people could act like "kids" again. However, when others, namely Becca's crew, were engaging in under-age drinking, he and the other youth workers considered them to be 'youth' 'at risk' of endangering themselves and doing things they may regret. Although there were social age expectations, in daily life the young people were considered more 'adult' or 'child'-like based on what they were doing, which follows Valentine's (2003) claim that young people grow or shrink in terms of adultness or childishness through actions and events.

Furthermore, although Ant recognised the benefits of Soft-play for the young people (see Figure 4.1), there appeared to be age-expectations embedded in the organisation that were unchallengeable. Firstly, the youth centre had certain equipment for certain ages, based on social expectations of age. If Space 1 did not host a toddler group, the seniors would not have had access to the Soft-play. Secondly, the management had age-based assumptions regarding the new group of young people's potential interests. These assumptions, albeit based on extensive prior experience, seemed to limit the scope of activities offered. At a staff meeting in March 2015, the forthcoming half-term holiday

Figure 4.1: Young people at Space1 using the SoftPlay

activities were discussed. When Ant and I suggested doing a bike ride, Matt, the manager, said, 'with juniors?' in an inquisitive manner. In response Ant said, 'and seniors'. At this moment, Sarah (the coordinator of the young people's network based at Space 1) and Matt looked at us from across the table in a confused and shocked manner. Their reaction spurred Ant to say: 'they are a completely different group, trust me'. Although Space1 prized itself on running activities that the young people wanted (which they often did) and understood young people as diverse and heterogeneous, their implicit age-based assumptions regarding activities was evident: the seniors were not given the opportunity to engage in a led bike ride.

Remembering or re-living 'childhood' through playful practices

There were multiple ways in which playfulness occurred during the young people's lives, despite the young people generally considering play as a practice associated with childhood. Van Vleet and Feeney (2015) stated that play is difficult to define as there are varying forms of play. Nonetheless, they view play as "a behavior or activity that is carried out with the goal of amusement, enjoyment, and fun" (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015:631) and playful behaviours are generally said to be "freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated, spontaneous and pleasurable" (Brockman et al., 2011:2). Playfulness has also been characterised as "not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and

delight" (Lugones', 1994:636 in Fitzpatrick, 2011b:183). 'Play' is often seen as a key aspect of 'childhood' as it is considered important for "social, emotional and cognitive development" (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015:630). Play is also considered a binary opposite to 'work' (Barron, 2013) and being playful is perceived as inappropriate for 'adults'. 'Adults' are expected to be productive with their time, and responsible for themselves and others (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015).

In the policy arena, Play England, part of the National Children's Bureau charity, was set up with the view that all children and young people in England should have regular and free access to play spaces in their local neighbourhoods (Lester & Russell, 2008). This is said to have "led to a rather romanticized view of playing", whereas ethnographic studies suggest that adolescents and children engage in forms of play that are less linear, less causal, and not always considered 'positive' (Lester & Russell, 2008:13). Parkour, skateboarding, and other risk taking activities, which are often considered dangerous and antisocial, can be considered forms of play. Risk was an important pleasurable aspect of play for 7-11 year olds in an urban area of Montreal (Alexander et al., 2014) and will be discussed in Section 5.4.2.

I observed countless playful practices in the young people's present lives, and yet many of the young people talked about 'play' as a practice of the past; most had fond memories of childhood and playful practices. Playful practices were bound up in life-phase expectations, and yet they were also connected to 'critical moments' in the young people's lives, such as joining a youth centre. Each night, for the course of approximately three months, during the spring of 2015, the newly formed group of friends from Space1 would leave the youth centre and venture to Sycamore park where they would play on the slide, run and walk around, sit on the round-about, chat, "mess around", and have fun (See Figure 4.2). Each time I would go with them for forty-five minutes to an hour, to a point where my fingers would go numb with cold as I tried to write fieldnotes on my phone or take photographs.

In the park, the young people (Alesha, Billy, Kalehsi, Tony, Haz, Liam, Hen, and Cathy) are playing on the roundabout. Some of the girls shout, "it's too fast!" Alesha says something else I barely hear, but through the intermittent screaming, shrieking, and bouts of laughter I hear her say "I feel five!". Billy tells her, "put your feet down on the floor" but she replies, "I'm having so much fun, I don't wanna do that". As I sit on the roundabout with the young people, Billy pushes us around and around. I feel excited, energetic, and tired from constantly trying not to fall backwards. Within a flash, Haz has run off chasing Tony around the park. Before I know it, Tony is running towards us and falls on the floor

*next to the roundabout. Billy then runs over to the slide shouting, 'slide!'.
In response, everyone runs over to the slide, even Hen, to which I am
slightly surprised considering how much she says she dislikes
'exercise'. They all play on the slide, running up and sliding down it in
little groups. After enjoying the slide for a short while, Liam runs back to
the mini roundabout, where Alesha and Haz are. Alesha then skips over
to the climbing frame before running back to the roundabout. She had
gone to see Tony, who was shouting, "I'm the king of the castle" from
the very top of the high climbing frame.*

(Fieldnotes, 11.03.15)

Figure 4.2: The young people on the roundabout at the park (left), and Tony at
the top of the climbing frame (right).

Playful scenes such as this one, and the words "I feel five again" and "I'm the King of the
castle", show that the young people understood play as practices connected to their
'childhoods'. These playful practices were recognised as 'child-like', but they acted as a
form of fun that was acceptable within the peer group at that time and place. There were
nuanced differences in how the young people felt about their 'childhood practices' in the
present. Some felt that the time of childhood had passed: they felt they had grown up and
entered a new phase in life, where they wished to be treated like 'adults'. Others, including
Billy who I discuss below, felt torn between childhood and adolescence, or wished to
retain aspects of their childhood. In interviews, these scenarios were rarely discussed as
'play'. For instance, Amelia and Alesha explicitly rejected my suggestions that they were

engaging in 'play', claiming they had grown out of playing. In some situations, such as at Sycamore park, the young people mediated being playful by acknowledging it as re-living their childhoods. In other ways playful practices became forms of flirting, play fighting, and sociability, which were considered "just messing around" or "having a laugh". Reformulating playfulness in such a way meant that 'play' could occur in their lives in ways that were 'age-appropriate'.

For some, these activities in Sycamore park brought nostalgia and explicit memories of childhood play, which they saw as a past phase in life, one that they missed immensely, and yet had to leave in a particular 'time-space'. The following excerpt, concerning Billy (and corresponding photographs in Figure 4.3), illustrates these themes of nostalgia, memory, and a perceived loss of childhood.

On a cold dark evening in early March 2015, Billy, who was 14 years old at the time, and had been attending Space1 since December, headed to the park nearby the youth centre with several of the other boys and girls. The park, which is home to a small unorthodox wonky round-about, a netted climbing frame, some balance beams and a slide, is just over a five-minute walk from Space1 and just a few minutes further from Billy's previous house. To get there we would walk, or sometimes run, around the corner into a car park and across a field to reach a narrow tarmac footpath, which led to the park. 'Going park' had become a regular occurrence with this group of young people. However, whilst sitting up in the high ropes of the climbing frame I discovered more about how 'going park' was temporal and an activity embedded within memories of childhood. In the darkness, Billy reached the top of the climbing frame and explained:

"I used to do this all the time. Used to have races up it all the time. Used to just sit in the park and whenever someone shouted 'go!' you had to run up and see how quickly you could go. I used to go every single day."

He also explained how he used to go on the tyre swing, of which only the dull metal frame remains after being taken down by the local council a few years previously. He loved the tyre swing and remembers how he Jonny and Loz (friends from primary school whom he still knows) used to push each other to go fast on the swing. As he talks of such memories, the tone of his voice fluctuates between what I interpret as happiness and sadness. He explains how he used to come here every day until the end of Year 6, the last year of Primary School. When I ask why this was the case, he explains that his friends now play Call of Duty[18] in their homes and became "boring and have no life". He misses the fun they had at the park and shares memories of how he and his

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[18] Call of Duty is a first-person shooter video game.

friends messed around outside, and would "play out, play hide and seek, blocky and stuff". He "used to play tag and hide and seek", but on other occasions I discovered that now his physical activity comes from "just like walking to and from the bus stop and stuff like that". He says that he "would love to" play those games in the present but he feels he cannot, "cos everyone grows up". "They expect you to be grown up", he says. As we walked back from the park that evening in March, one sentence took particular hold of me and stood out in my memory. He said sulkily as we walked on the damp grass back to Space 1: "I don't like being grown up…I'm supposed to be grown up and adult, but to me, I'm just an old boy". I sensed he felt trapped between others' expectations and his own feelings of how he should be, how he should act, and what he should do at his age.

Figure 4.3: Billy in on the climbing frame (left) and the Kalehsi and Hen on the slide in the park (right).

In Billy's retelling of childhood memories of play and physical activity changes, there was a sense that childhood play had been lost. Billy did not reflect on his present park excursions as part of a day-to-day way in which he was still active, playing outside, and being an 'old boy'. Billy saw the end of year 6, the last year of primary school, as the end of his time playing in Sycamore park and as a "critical moment" in his decline in 'playing out'. However, nearly three years later, a new 'critical moment' emerged in his physical activity and mobility patterns: joining Space1 produced a non-linear change in his

trajectory away from 'playing out'. The activities Billy used to engage in at Sycamore park had reappeared, only this time with a different social group. Billy and his friends (including Tony) had happened upon the youth centre whilst walking to the shop one night in December 2014. They were from a different school to the other young people (Alesha, Amelia, Kalehsi, Hen etc) so had not known the others beforehand. 'Going park', an activity that incorporated forms of physical activity, was also dependent upon Space1 being close to a park. The young people's abilities to mess around or 'play' were therefore contingent on time, space, and social group.

Subverting 'transitions': rejecting and re-living the boundaries of childhood

Some of the young people from Space 1, Billy, Kalehsi, and Hen in particular, often talked about retaining their 'childhoods' and fought against a projection that "they [other peers] think it's [play] like really childish" (Kalehsi). They therefore 'relived' aspects of their childhoods through play and rejected practices such as drinking and smoking that Becca's crew engaged in. Moreover, they attempted to defy the institutional shaping of the transitional phase of life. Hen and Kalehsi explained how they greatly missed Wacky Warehouse (a fun house with slides, Soft-play pits etc where they used to go with parents and Space1). They could no longer go into the Wacky Warehouse play area because they are too old: it is for children up to 12 years of age and they would get asked to leave if they went in on their own. The two girls discussed means of gaining access to Wacky Warehouse:

> *Hen explains: "You know what I'm going to do, I'm going to get Jon and Dalia to come here and we are gonna take them to Wacky Warehouse. There is our excuse!"*
>
> *Kalehsi shouts: That's what I do!*
>
> *Hen says, excitedly: There is our excuse!*
>
> *Kalehsi continues: "Like the only reason I get to go to Wacky Warehouse is because I take my little cousin- he's only about 4 -"*
>
> <div align="right">*(Joint Interview, 21.11.14)*</div>

These young girls were excluded from such spaces as they were no longer 'children' of the correct age, and yet they found it was possible to attend as supervisory adults. They considered negotiating or had negotiated the institutional restrictions on age in order to 're-live' their childhoods. These forms of negotiation and rejection were time and space specific. Their memories of Wacky Warehouse, and each other's support, made moments for exercising their agency regarding social expectations of age possible.

The young boys from HIDE2 also rejected social expectations of age in certain 'time-spaces'. The boys were often perceived by adults, predominantly teachers in school, as troublesome. They kept up this appearance most of the time, misbehaving in school, truanting on some occasions, and commonly presented themselves as fearless, tough males. However, in a focus group in March 2015, the boys explained that they had recently started playing games from their childhoods again, including hide and seek:

> *Me: So, do you not play these games anymore?*
>
> *Karel: We do- yeh we went back to it-*
>
> *Reggie: 'cos it [chilling on the streets] got boring. When we were like-*
>
> *Karel (interrupts, shouting): -we just went, you know what, do you wanna bring our childhood back? You know what, let's go play hide and seek. I'm like, really? really boys? You went 'yes, lets go!' And we went and it's fun, so we gotta do this every single day.*
>
> *Karel continues, saying quietly to Dal: Are we gonna do it today?*
>
> *Dal: Yeh*
>
> *Karel: Today as well.*
>
> *Me: Where you gonna go?*
>
> *Karel: It's on west road and it's actually sick cos you got like-*
>
> *Dal: -It's like, got trees*

Following the focus group, I went to play hide and seek with the boys near where they lived on the West Road:

> *The boys were visibly having fun as we hid and ran around the spacious yet quite dark paved area between the wall of a shop and a row of terraced houses just off the main road. We had to hide and then run to reach the telephone box before we were found by whomever was 'on'. To be 'on' you were selected based on a number game, whereby the boys counted around the circle until there was only one person left to be 'on'.*

> *(Fieldnotes, 10.03.15)*

Fun was key to the young people's participation in physical activities. However, here fun became part of the reason for reliving their childhoods. They also simultaneously rejected the notion that they were troublesome. The extent to which such practices were seen as "childish" by others became clear a couple of weeks later when I asked Taz, who had visibly enjoyed playing hide and seek that night, about their hide and seek games. Taz condemned the other boys' practices, saying that they were "childish playing hide and

109

seek when they think they are all hard". One can suggest that this group of young boys had a certain degree of agency over their decision to engage in a childhood game that they missed as adolescents: playing hide and seek appeared dependent upon group dynamic. Hide and seek occurred whilst Taz, and likely others, deemed the practice "childish" and 'inappropriate' for the "hard" identities they had attempted to form during their teenage years. The events that led to their temporal resurgence in playing hide and seek produced a 'time-space' where the boys could be "childish" again.

4.3 Concluding remarks

I have situated local experiences and physical activity changes within the national and global contexts of youth transitions and life-course theories. Recognising the complexities of young people's changing lives helps to shed light on how and why young people's ways of being physically active also change.

Literature regarding life-phase categories and re-conceptualisations of the life-course is important for understanding my ethnographic data: theoretical ideas incorporate the notion of 'time-space' and the role of institutions, socioeconomic contexts, and accessible resources for young people. This chapter suggests that the non-linear and nonsynchronous 'transitions', that I discussed in Section 4.1, were mirrored in the domain of physical activity. In many cases, the young people from Space 1, tended to suggest that forms of play had declined, clubs had been dropped, and that they had become 'lazy'. And yet, by using theoretical ideas to unpick the key themes concerning changes in physical activity, I am able to suggest that the young people's experiences and stories of changes in physically active practices are embedded within institutional changes and expectations of age, that also shape understandings of physical activity.

Moreover, I highlight the ways that physical activity patterns alter over years, months or days in ways that are not always as linear as much of the public health-orientated literature surrounding physical activity across 'transitions' suggests: the young people sometimes re-lived or subverted 'transitions' or 'age-appropriate' practices. Although this study does not claim that overall physical activity levels have not declined as these diverse groups of young people have aged, it does suggest that lives change circumstantially, and that physical activity is haphazard and contingent upon certain 'time-spaces' in certain socioeconomic contexts. Looking at the data through the lens of 'critical moments' (Thomson et al., 2002) and 'vital conjunctures' (Johnson-Hanks, 2002), enables one to see how changes in physical activity are experienced and embedded within expectations of social ages, and lastly, how "social and economic environments frame

individual narratives and the personal cultural resources on which young people are able to draw" (Thomson et al., 2002:351).

Building on these understandings, the following chapter delves into the 'space' element of 'time-spaces'. I further discuss what life was like for young people growing up in the East End, providing details about young people's meaningful places, issues such as conflict and safety, and how the young people negotiated their socio-material environments in daily life.

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Chapter 5: Using space and negotiating the socio-material environment in daily life

Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter I located particular 'time-spaces' and used the ideas of 'critical moments' and 'vital conjunctures' to connect individual biographies to the social processes of growing up. However, as the word 'time-space' implies, geographical location, space, and place also influence, facilitate, and limit young people's opportunities and experiences (Henderson et al, 2007; Evans, 2008) in life and in physical activity. This chapter therefore discusses young people's meaningful places, issues regarding young people's use of space, and their experiences of their local social environments. The chapter is separated into four sections: Section 5.1 provides a brief introduction to concepts of spatiality and place; Section 5.2 uses these concepts to discuss the meaningful places that the young people commonly frequented; Section 5.3 explores the relationship between the social environment and young people's mobility, which included experiences of group conflict, perceptions of safety, and the young people's and their parents' negotiations of potentially unsafe spaces; and lastly, Section 5.4 focuses on the innovative physically active practices that young people performed in their socio-material environments. This chapter is prefaced with an account of two girls from Space1, Hen and Kalehsi (aged 13-14 during fieldwork), whose histories and experiences of space were closely intertwined.

Narrative 2: Hen and Kalehsi

Hen is proud to be one of Space1's longest standing members with Kalehsi joining not long after her (at ages five and six, respectively). When they returned to the newly renovated Space1 building in August 2015, the girls said, "This is our childhood!". They were messing around playing wink murder in what used to be half of the original hall when Kalehsi explained, "all my memories happened next door". The two girls have been friends since they were 6 years old, and although they have 'fallen out' many times, they always 'make up' and continue to be very close friends. When I began attending Space1 youth sessions at the old building in May 2014, Hen was in the 'seniors group', whilst Kalehsi was still in the 'inters group', due to Hen turning 13 several months before Kalehsi. During that time, Hen talked about Kalehsi a great deal. I briefly met Kalehsi that summer but only got to know her when she moved into the 'seniors group' after the Space1 re-location. Although Hen and Kalehsi temporarily attended Space1 sessions separately, they spent much of their time in and outside of school together. During the spring/summer of 2014 they would walk or get the bus from school to a stop near Space1.

Hen would drop Kalehsi off at the inters session, stay for half an hour before getting 'kicked out', go home, nap, and then return to Space1 at 6pm for the seniors' session.

The two girls used to live a five-minute walk away from each other and from Space1. Although Hen has always lived in the same house, Kalehsi has moved house twice since she lived in the area near Hen, which she describes as 'much nicer' than her current neighbourhood. Kalehsi fondly remembers her time living near Hen and her time in the previous house, as she explained that she used to play out on the streets when she was "9-10 years old 'til 10.20 at night" with her friends and family who lived close by. During my fieldwork, Kalehsi lived in an estate approximately 2.5 miles away from Hen's house, further out from the city centre, which she described as "rough" and "a shit hole". She claimed that it was difficult to walk to school from there, and did not like living there. Much to Kalehsi's excitement, in summer of 2015, there were loose plans for the family to move house again later that year.

The girls' parents' financial situations appeared to affect them at times. For Hen, her parents' inability to give her much money for going out with her friends was a source of tension. Moreover, Kalehsi's Dad, a self-employed builder, experienced a jobless period during the winter of 2014/5. Her mum, a carer, worked long anti-social hours looking after elderly people. Kalehsi disliked the hours her mum worked and how little she saw her. Kalehsi enjoyed spending time with her mum, especially when she took her to places, including the shops nearby and the out-of-town shopping centre. When her mum and dad were out at work during the day time of the Easter and half-term school holidays, Kalehsi explained that she either came to Space1 or sat at home "on her laptop".

Kalehsi explained that her tendency to stay at home watching Netflix or playing online games was partly a consequence of where she lived: she said, "I'd rather go outside but when I go outside I get shouted at so I'm like nope, staying inside". In the winter and spring of 2014/5, Kalehsi talked a lot about how her family had apparently been having 'ructions' (conflict) with their neighbours. She described the neighbours as "horrible people" who use drugs, "just sit in the door smoking crack in front of their kids", and who had threatened her on different occasions. She explained that these experiences affected her ability to walk around and to where she used to live. She said: "I'm not allowed to go out around mine because we've had reck with my neighbours and cos I live in a place where erm, a 40-year-old man has just been stabbed by two 16-year-olds". During the spring of 2015, she explained that she did not want to get the bus to Space1 from her house as she could hear conflict at her neighbours' house. Instead, she said that she waited for her dad to come home so that he could drive her to Space1 in his van. Despite drawing attention to the mobility constraints she experienced, Kalehsi also explained that, "It's [Space1] in walking distance but I'm just really lazy".

Although Kalehsi claimed that the area where Hen lives is 'nicer' than Kalehsi's new neighbourhood, Hen did not always feel the same way. Hen similarly explained that she spent most of her time in the house, or in the garden with Kalehsi and other friends. She and Kalehsi claimed that there was a rapist living at the top of her street: Hen believed this was one of the reasons her mum did not allow her out alone, especially not at night. Moreover, during the spring of 2015, Hen's father's bike was stolen from their shed: the intruders woke Hen up in the night, which made her too scared to get back to sleep. When talking about this incident, Hen claimed that she felt restricted in her use of space because of "chavs" who "steal bikes" and "hang around the bottom of the shop and watch you ewwww". Certain individuals or groups of other young people made the girls feel

intimated or "self-conscious". Hen explained that "sometimes it is just too much and I don't want to walk down the street."

The girls' perceptions of their mobility was also connected to their parents. For Kalehsi, her understanding of where she could go was connected to her parents' roles after she had moved house. In November 2014, she said: "I stopped playing out because I moved house and my dad is too lazy to take me back down to where I lived." When discussing their movements around the local area in a youth session, Hen contrastingly explained: "the thing is I don't want my mum or Dad taking us places." In reply, one of the youth workers, Jason, said: "So you want more freedom then basically?" Hen replied, "Yeh, but I sort of can't have that." When I asked why that was, she explained, "because my mum is paranoid in case I end up getting mugged by teenagers and stabbed in the back", to which Kalehsi replied jokily and sarcastically, "Hen, you are a teenager".

Despite the accounts of the constraints on their mobility, it was clear that mobility was dynamic as the girls negotiated their sense of safety, and their mobility, at points in time. In late spring and summer of 2015, Kalehsi negotiated her sense of neighbourhood safety and her perceived immobility. She said that she had started playing on her penny board[19] outside of her house, which she said she felt safe doing in the cul-de-sac at the time, even though her Dad did not like her doing it. Likewise, Hen negotiated her mobility through other people. When the youth sessions were being held at the Church a short distance from the old Space1 location, Ant and I would always walk Hen to the end of her street on our way home. At the original Space1 building, Francis often walked Hen home before returning back to his house across the road. When Space1 moved to further away from her house, Hen was inconsistent and hesitant regarding attendance. When Hen started attending more regularly, she explained to me the issues with the new location: she said that she had to get a bus from the East Road or had to walk along the East Road in the dark. Her family did not own a car and Hen expressed fear about walking or being on the East Road at night. She said that the East Road is where many of the teenagers hang around. And yet, after a short period of time, a form of negotiation occurred: Hen began meeting Alesha and a few others so that they could walk or get the bus to Space1 together.

The girls also negotiated at what time they could use spaces in the local area, and created meaningful places through memories that contradicted the spaces' associations with 'anti-social behaviours'. On a guided tour around the neighbourhood in July 2014, I discovered that the girls occasionally used the park nearby their old primary school: St Jude's park. The girls would sometimes use the space together in summer, during daylight hours. St Jude's park was a large green area, consisting of different purposefully designed spaces, and enclosed by houses on all sides. One side of the area was a marked pitch where a group of young people were playing football. The other side comprised of an open grassy space, and a space with a sandpit, some swings, some sculpted large stones, and a children's climbing frame.

On arrival, Hen ran straight to the sandpit before rushing over to play on the swings. When I asked Hen about why she wanted to go to the park, she explained, "it's a park with swings…where Amelia broke her arm. Remember when she had that massive cast on? (said to Ant)". And yet, on our approach to the park she described how some boys had recently set fire to the bin near the park building. Ant also explained that there had been a

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[19] A small type of skateboard

number of complaints by the residents and younger children about the park's use,
particularly at night. The park encompasses memories of friendship and play, and yet it is
simultaneously used by some young people for activities described as 'dodgy', such
sexual activities, drinking, and drugs.

Hen and Kalehsi's story of friendship and experiences of place have unique elements, and yet their narrative illustrates the common ways in which the young people experienced and produced meaning about places at different points in time, and how they negotiated everyday spaces through relationships with people. The portrait illustrates the key themes to be discussed in this chapter: young people's meaningful places; young people's understandings and negotiations of their socio-material environments; and the implications of these understandings and actions for their mobility and physical activity practices. The following section introduces some theoretical ideas for thinking about these themes. I outline key terms and discuss why Lefebvre (1991) and Massey's (1994) concepts of space and place as relational can be particularly useful for understanding young people's lives and spatial patterns of physical activity.

5.1 Thinking about space as relational

Since the new sociology of childhood emerged in the 1990's, driven by key players such as Allison James, there has been a surge in geographers researching the spatialities of young people's lives (Evans, 2008). Scholars have sought to comprehend the ways in which young people's experiences and actions vary across space and time (Hopkins, 2010; Valentine, 2003). Some authors focus on how children's identities are formed within particular spaces, including how space constructs aged identities (Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Hopkins, 2010). As 'identity' encompasses ideas of sameness and distinctiveness, one way in which young people build their identities is by engaging in the same or different activities and living in the same or different places: local socio-material environments become principal domains forming, and being formed by, young people's identities (Hopkins, 2010). Young people tend to spend a large proportion of their time within a certain 'home range' (Spilsbury, 2005): this home range may include outdoor public spaces in the local area, which are often frequented because of financial marginalisation from fee-paying places and desires for spaces for socialising (Hall et al., 1999; Matthews et al., 2000). Due to the importance of public space for young people, authors have explored how such spaces are contested and negotiated by young people (Matthews, 2003; Skelton, 2000); how young people are restricted in their use of public space (Malone, 2002; Vanderbeck & Johnson, 2000); how children's use of public space changes over time (Karsten, 2005); and how boundaries are drawn between the

meaningful public and private spaces used by adolescents for recreation (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009).

Geographers commonly use 'place' to refer to a physical setting, as well as the human experience and interpretation of that physical setting (Stedman, 2003). A place is a space that people in a locality feel has a history, a space that generates "emotional identifications" (Watt & Stenson, 1998:169). Places are understood as having "permeable boundaries, shaped by complex webs of local, national, and global influences and different cultural flows and processes" (Hopkins, 2010:11). Places are also said to be "practised or performed" as "they are continuously brought into being through a variety of processes that involve dynamic and changing constellations of people, technical artefacts, buildings, symbols, rules, etc" (Ettema & Schwanen, 2012:177). There are two key theorists that many researchers draw on when conceptualising space and place: Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Doreen Massey (1994).

Lefebvre (1991) argued that space is "emergent, not as a container or neutral back drop against which everyday life take places, but produced by and productive of lives, relations and actions" (Thompson et al., 2014:66). Lefebvre (1991) understood the production of space as a triad of "spatial practice", "representations of space" and "representational space". Firstly, "spatial practice" involves how space is *perceived* by the subject or body, and includes what is done in space. Lefebvre (1991:38) wrote that spatial practice "embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure)". Secondly, "representations of space" is what Lefebvre (199:38-39) referred to as "the space of scientists, planners, urbanists", and policy makers: it is how space is *conceived*, where space incorporates knowledge and ideologies. This space is therefore the "dominant space in any society". Thirdly, "representational space" is understood as the space of inhabitants, how space is *lived* and where there is a symbolic use of the material space. This form of space is said to be the 'dominated' space in any society (Lefebvre, 1991:39), where Thompson et al. (2014) suggest that one may find 'third space': "a dynamic zone of tension and discontinuity where the newness of [syncretic] hybrid identities can be articulated" (Matthews, 2003:103).

Lefebvre (1991) suggests that anthropologists most often study *lived* or representational space and more often than not ignore *conceived* space or representations of space. However, this is not always the case. Thompson et al. (2014) used Lefebvre's (1991) triadic conceptualisation of space, recognising that the way in which spaces of residence, training, and unemployment are *perceived* and *conceived,* can provide insights for how the spaces are *lived* by marginalised NEAT (Not in Education And/or Training) youth.

Thompson et al. (2014) used Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualisations of "representations of space" to discuss how provision for disengaged youth is spatially *perceived*, *conceived,* and *lived* differently from adults. According to Thompson et al. (2014), the *conceived* space of the training providers or pupil referral units are uncritically seen as 'good', whereas the *lived* space was experienced by the young people in a 'churning' fashion, as the youth felt a lack of control over the short-term often useless courses with which they repetitively engaged (Thompson et al., 2014).

The spaces used by the young people in my study may be analysed in terms of *perceived*, *conceived,* and *lived*, and yet the data also lends itself to further understandings of space as *relational* (Massey, 1994). Massey (1994) conceptualised space and place in terms of social relations, and included class and gender in her empirically grounded theoretical perspective. Massey (1994) makes important contributions to theory by stating that space must be understood as intrinsically interconnected in and with time. Similar to the notion of 'time-space', frequently mentioned in Chapter 4, Massey (1994:3) discusses the importance of "space-time": "a configuration of social relations with which the specifically spatial may be conceived of as an inherently dynamic simultaneity". Just as Hörschelmann (2011) explained that one must understand the relations between biographies, structures, and changes as spatially and temporally contingent, Massey (1994:2) explains that "the aim should be to think always in terms of space-time". Massey (1994:4) argues that if one thinks in "space-time", place can be thought of as "a particular articulation of those relations…which stretch beyond" the local so that place is "always unfixed, contested" "multiple", "porous" and "open" (Massey, 1994:5). In a similar manner to Lefebvre's theorisations, if one thinks of space and place relationally and dynamically, one can see that the way in which place is formed is "subject to the workings of power" (Ettema & Schwanen, 2012:177): people in power experience spaces differently to those who are not in power.

What can physical activity researchers learn from conceptualising place relationally?

As scholars acknowledge that the "social and built environment of many children living in impoverished neighbourhoods frequently fails to support their healthy development" (Wridt, 2010:130), the relationship between physical activity and the physical environment is often investigated. Some scholars address research questions using a positivist approach, quantitative methodologies and a 'conventional view' of place (See Fig 5.1), whereby young people's physical activity practices tend to be considered 'determined' by physical structures in the physical environment. Other studies, which focus on 'barriers' and 'facilitators' to physical activity participation (Findholt et al., 2011; Moore et al., 2014; Mulvihill et al., 2000; Walia & Liepert, 2012), often suggest that limited recreational

facilities act as a 'barrier' to participation in physical activity (Martins et al., 2015; Walia & Liepert, 2012). However, as Moore et al. (2014) state that having leisure centres, gyms, parks or greenspaces nearby does not necessarily correlate with adolescent usage, I suggest that the benefits of using a relational approach to researching young people's health and physical activity practices may be beneficial.

'conventional' view	'relational' view
spaces with geographical boundaries drawn at a specific scale	Nodes in networks, multi-scale
Separated by physical distance	Separated by socio-relational distance
Resident local communities	Populations of individuals who are mobile daily and over their lifecourse
Services described in terms of fixed locations often providing for territorial jurisdictions, distance decay models describe varying utility in space	'Layers' of assets available to populations via varying paths in time and space. Euclidian distance may not be relevant to utility.
Area definitions relatively static and fixed	Area definitions relatively dynamic and fluid
Characteristics at fixed time points, e.g. 'deprived' versus 'affluent'	Dynamic characteristics e.g. 'declining' versus 'advancing'
Culturally neutral territorial divisions, infrastructure and services	Territorial divisions, services and infrastructure imbued with social power relations and cultural meaning
Contextual features described systematically and consistently by different individuals and groups	Contextual features described variably by different individuals and groups

Figure 5.1. Key differences between 'conventional' and a 'relational' views of place and space (Cummins et al. 2007: Fig.1)

According to Cummins et al. (2007:1826), "conventional representations of space and place", that view "places and people (or 'context' and 'composition') as mutually exclusive and competing explanations", can be limiting for health research. If one only thinks in a 'conventional' sense, where space or place are static and bounded, space and place can become separated from the young people's social lives, in which they are physically active. In contrast, Christensen et al. (2015) argue that a relational understanding of place (Fig 5.1) can be highly beneficial for physical activity researchers seeking to understand why young people are physically active in certain places. Christensen et al. (2015:1829)

suggest that relational understandings of place and space help to highlight how socio-material factors combine and influence children's perceptions and uses of places for physical activity; "the characteristics of persons and the contexts (and places) they live in are tightly interrelated".

Christensen et al. (2015) used Massey's 'relational space' as a theoretical grounding to their 'place mapping[20]' study of children's physical activity patterns and conceptions of space. Their theoretical approach enabled an analysis that recognised the importance of experienced and imagined qualities of the neighbourhood, and the complex interrelations between people and place. Cummins et al. (2007:1829) explain that,

> *"the lives of children growing up in a particular neighbourhood may be shaped by the social and material aspects of the neighbourhood (prevailing social norms and values, the built environment, educational provision and standards): but the social interactions and behaviour of these children, and how as adults they might operate in the same neighbourhood, also shapes the local social and physical environment and helps create 'context' for their neighbours."*

'Context' is therefore co-created in a circular fashion through practices, perceptions, and interactions with the physical landscape. A relational approach recognises how "social processes and the physical spaces in which they unfold are mutually constitutive" (Christensen et al., 2015:591), hence it provides a way of looking at the social lives of young people, and their physical activity patterns, together.

Building on relational understandings of place and theories of spatiality, still rare in the field of physical activity research, the remainder of this chapter discusses the young people's meaningful places in daily life; their perceptions and negotiations of safety in their neighbourhoods; and the innovative uses of their socio-material environments for physically active practices.

5.2 Important places in daily life: youth centres and public spaces

Wridt (2010) suggests that how children and young people perceive places in their neighbourhoods is important for understanding the influence of the socio-material environment on their wellbeing, their physical activity, and their mobility. The young people in my study had mixed feelings concerning the places in which they lived and spent their time. Many recognised negative aspects of their local areas, including litter, violence, drug use, theft, and petty crime, and located 'problem' places. And yet, for most,

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[20] 'Place mapping' is a participatory mapping technique where qualitative GIS is used with existing maps, rather than maps drawn by participants, to elicit meanings.

the area was their home and often memories and a sense of belonging were ascribed to the spaces they frequented. The 'positive' places identified were the youth centres and public spaces that the young people used. This section uses the theoretical ideas introduced in the previous section, alongside other literature, to explain how young people created meaningful places (places described, often in stories or memories, in positive and/or negative ways) through social relations and how they experienced public spaces in daily life. This section (5.2) does not consider physical activity specifically; instead, it provides a background regarding the young people's use of places, which feeds into the debate surrounding young people's 'physical inactivity'. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 discuss the young people's perceptions of their social environments in relation to mobility and informal physical activity practices more closely.

5.2.1 Youth centres: making meaningful places

Concerns about low levels of physical activity are intertwined with notions of young people spending less time outside being physically active, and more time in screen-based activities. According to Carver et al. (2008) and Foster et al. (2014), today's children are considered to be "indoor children" who play within the confines of their homes, and are chauffeured by car between different structured activities where they are supervised by adults. These concerns are connected to perceived safety concerns, such as 'stranger danger', romanticized notions of young people's mobility in previous decades, and what constitutes 'good' parenting practices (Foster et al., 2014; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997). The youth centres that the young people engaged with provided opportunities for spending time away from the home environment where the young people mainly participated in sedentary activities such as television, games consoles or homework. Although some were chauffeured to Space1, many were not, and so attendance at the youth centres often required mobility within the local area.

Most of the young people located the youth centres as important places, and many felt that their lives would be considerably different if they did not attend. The youth centres were important places for safety and provided something 'to do' and somewhere 'to go'. However, the most prominent aspect of the youth centres were their social environments: the relationships between people. I suggest that these relationships made these places socially and emotionally meaningful. As noted in the narrative that prefaces this chapter, Hen and Kalehsi had been attending the youth centre since they were five and six years old. The young men had also grown up with HIDE2. Consequently, the young people's memories were embedded in the historic socio-material environment of the youth centres, the physical space, and the social relationships formed there.

The ethos of HIDE2 concerned building good relationships with the young people: it was the central strategy that underpinned their work. Carla's relationship with the groups of boys had grown over the years she had worked there, and the history of her own role and the young men's roles were central to the social environment they created. Carla explained:

> *"We try and do it like family, like they [are] accessing family. You've got the older ones, you've got the inter-generational things and they are learning things. They do like to come here because it's a safe place to come to be yourself but also to access whatever you want."*

> *(Carla, Interview)*

The young boys' relationships with the older mentors, B-Hive and Koffee in particular, were crucial to their involvement in the project and the activities HIDE2 offered, including music production, graffiti art, and led bike rides. Carla and the other staff at HIDE2 expressed care, support, a desire to get to know the boys, and further their interests and passions. For instance, B-Hive explained,

> *"I feel as though I'm almost a big brother with them, I joke around and stuff like that but if they ever needed help and stuff or advice or if certain things were happening, we would be the first people to talk to them"*

> *(B-Hive, Interview, 05.05.15)*

The younger boys enjoyed 'banter' with the volunteers and said that they were fun to have a laugh with on activities, such as the led bike rides. The relationships between the boys and the volunteer youth workers and senior youth worker contrasted with the relationship the boys had with other adults in positions of authority, such as the police.

Similarly, Strobel et al. (2008), who conducted a focus group and interview-based study with young people at urban youth centres in the USA, found that the young people's relationships with the adults at the youth centres were key to their experiences of the place. They further discovered that adults became confidantes, as they could talk more freely with them about problems and life; sources of advice; 'mentors', although they were not formally called this; and mediators of peer conflicts (Strobel et al., 2008).

Likewise, many of the young people from Space1 explained that they attended sessions because of the youth workers: they were fun, friendly, and listened to the young people. On a photography exercise, Jay took a photograph of Danny, one of the youth workers. He explained: "That one is 'person who makes me happy'. Reason why, as I said before, makes you feel funny, makes you laugh. He's always there for you." However, as two members of staff were made redundant during my time at Space1, relationships with

122

youth workers were often temporary. Strobel et al. (2008) noted that relationships with staff were not always positive as some of the young people felt frustrated with staff turnover. In contrast, the young people from Space1 did not express frustration or disappointment with Karen and Dalia when they left Space1, although many long term attendees missed them. Relationships with past youth workers were important as they often reminisced about them, but relationships with new youth workers were also important. As another young woman, a student, began working at Space1 during the time that I was in the process of leaving the field, I realised that many of the young people adapted to changing faces and enjoyed building new relationships with adults.

Peer relationships were also crucial for the young people attending both the youth centres: most young people attended drop-in sessions for social reasons. Attendance at the youth centres was often collective, which meant that occasionally a group of friends would be absent if a few key individuals were unable to attend. The young people at Space1 often said that they enjoyed Space1 as it was a space outside of the house away from parents, where they could freely chat, listen to music, watch videos, play games, "chill out", "have a laugh", have "fun", and did not have to "be productive". Space1 was a place for relaxing, socialising, and taking your mind off of other problems at school or home. The youth centres were "intermediary spaces" (Noam & Tillinger, 2004:79), safe spaces that were "more accepting and supportive", and less performance based, than school: they acted as a "new social space" that was not home, school, nor the streets (Noam & Tillinger, 2004:82).

The social situation at Space1 was rather particular because of the re-location of the youth space. The atmosphere at Space1 had altered since the youth sessions moved location. At the previous location, different groups of people had been attracted to the place, and some intimidated others. Upon relocating, the attendees and group dynamic changed and new social relationships created a new atmosphere. Although there were occasional 'fall outs' between some girls, the wider group got along well. No one reported bullying occurring at Space1 as they did at school. Other researchers have found that, in youth centres, young people felt friendships were "less cliquey" and "more friendly" than in school (Strobel et al., 2008).

Ownership of space and sense of place

The youth centre staff, especially Carla from HIDE2, recognised the need for a space solely for young people. She felt that the young people had produced a sense of ownership of the HIDE2 space. The young boys and men often talked about HIDE2 as their "second home". This ownership of space was most explicitly expressed in the unexpected actions of Karel, Miko, and Marz on a Saturday afternoon in November 2014.

Carla explained to me that the boys had asked her if they could tidy up the back yard for her: it needed doing and they wanted to help. She explained that she was shocked when they proposed cleaning the yard and even more surprised when they turned up at 3pm on a Saturday to complete the task. Littering was seen as a big problem in the local area: several community litter picking and clean up schemes were in operation. At 3pm on that Saturday, Karel, who had only just surfaced from his bed, walked with Miko and Marz for 15 minutes from their houses to HIDE2 to clean up the yard. Koffee was present too as the boys began cleaning. He said, "Big respect to you guys" as they swept up numerous drink bottles, cans, cigarette butts and food wrappers. As Karel picked litter using his gloved hand from the 'flower bed', which had become a soil filled square gap in the concrete, home to weeds and rubbish, he said, "I swear down if someone drops something". I asked, "would you be annoyed if people dropped their rubbish here?" He shouts "Yeh!". Karel often acted at points as if he did not want to be there cleaning up. He hung his body in a manner that suggested he was tired and could not be bothered. And yet, he still did the cleaning voluntarily. He put on gloves with the other boys and they all spent approximately 10 minutes picking up rubbish and putting it all in bin bags. I felt that this incident showed how much the boys valued the space and took responsibility for it.

The combination of the social and material environment of Space1 was crucial for the young people's attendance. The physical space was where social relations had formed over time, creating a 'sense of place' (Lee & Abbott, 2009). For Hen and Kalehsi, the social fabric of Space1 extended to the new location through the youth workers and changed in a way they enjoyed. However, after the relocation in July 2014, several young people who had attended for many years never or rarely visited the new location. Becca and her crew never visited, and Mel and Annie attended just three times over the year. The staff felt that the new space was too far for the young people to travel. The new location was one mile away from the old location, and Hen and a few others mentioned that travel was more difficult than previously. However, non-attendance (Becca and her crew), rare attendance (Nelly and Annie), and the hesitance in committing to regular attendance (Alesha, Amelia, Hen and Francis), can be further understood if one considers space in relational terms (Massey, 1994).

As the new location attracted a new group of young people from the local area (including Tony, Billy, and Haz), during Easter 2015, Annie explained, "I don't like it. It's not Space1 down here- it's not the same, it's not the same people, it's different." During the autumn of 2014, Space1 hosted senior sessions at a local church, approximately 300m from the old Space1 building in an attempt to engage with those who were not attending the new location. These sessions on a Friday evening from 6-8pm were poorly attended: Hen and

Kalehsi attended a few times, and Nelly, Becca, and a couple of her friends attended once. Annie explained:

> "there's not a lot we can do at that church place to be honest. Just a
> room…like I normally would [go] on a Friday but I didn't really bother
> going on a Friday but it's not the same, it's not the Space1…I liked when
> it [the seniors' sessions at Space1] was Saturday night it was open from
> 4-8 and it was a long time but loads of people went."

The youth workers believed the girls did not attend these sessions on Friday nights at the nearby Church because the Friday night time-slot clashed with their time spent at Abbeywell (an alleyway) and elsewhere. However, Annie suggested that the timing of the session at the Church was not a significant obstacle because Saturday evening sessions had been very popular. The non-attendance of this group of girls at the two different locations did not simply concern timings of sessions or distance required to travel, although these were part of the explanations. Their non-attendance was connected to the dramatic change in physical and relational space. Ant, one of the principal youth workers recognised these issues:

> At the end of the session whilst clearing up Ant explains that he feels
> mixing the groups of young people will not work as they are so different.
> He says he feels bad about leaving Becca and the other girls and that
> he misses them. As he says this, I can see in his eyes how distressing it
> is for him. He looks as though he might cry and moves from side to side
> and back and forth at points as if to stop himself, or distract himself,
> from becoming too upset.

> *(Fieldnotes, 05.02.2015)*

Comprehending place in relational ways can help to show how and why changes in space may cause obstacles for young people, and why young people ascribe meaning to certain spaces. I suggest that the different places were separated by "socio-relational distance" (Cummins et al., 2007:1827). There were significant memories of events, relationships, and comforts associated with the old Space1 building. For some young people, youth workers and old friends attending contributed to old memories of Space1 in the new space. For others, the youth space provided a place for building new friendships. And yet, for others it was an alienating experience devoid of meaning.

5.2.2 Meaningful Public Spaces

'Hanging out' and spending time with friends is a well-documented priority during adolescence: during teen years, young people begin to form their own identities, for which group identity is important (Matthews et al., 1998; Skelton, 2000). Matthews et al.

(2000:63) explain that there is a "growing post-modern assumption that local 'streets' and neighbourhoods are of declining importance for young people's identities and lifestyles" as young people are viewed as spending much of their time indoors and at home; however, their research with white working-class young people (ages 10-16) in three edge-of-town council estates in Northamptonshire, showed that almost half of the young people interviewed regularly used outdoor public spaces, metaphorically named 'the street', to hang out with friends. Matthews et al. (1998) also described how 13-year-olds from an economically deprived area on the outskirts of Northampton created outdoor 'play spaces'; used children's playgrounds as spaces to meet and 'hang out' with friends during the evenings; and played in the tunnels in a wooded area that was often considered off-limits by their parents (Matthews et al., 1998). Boys who lived in areas with high rates of unemployment and crime generally used 'the street' for informal sports such as football, skateboarding, and rollerblading (Matthews et al., 2000). Moreover, Skelton's (2000) study in South Wales, UK, showed that girls recalled using the streets and outdoor public space for "just walking around, walking up and down" (Lara in Skelton, 2000:90).

In my study, the use of streets and other outdoor public spaces varied across the groups of young people. Although those from the new Space1 location went to some parks and travelled on foot to places, they did not report spending much time on the streets. The group of girls who originally attended Space1, and the young men and boys from HIDE2, reported spending a great deal of time in outdoor public spaces and on the streets. The different groups engaged in divergent practices in certain time-spaces. Here, I discuss the important public spaces for the boys at HIDE2, the recently formed group of young people at Space1, and Becca's crew, who did not attend Space1 after the relocation.

HIDE2 boys: the streets, the Box, and chillin'

Many of the young men from HIDE2 recalled spending much of their time when they were younger simply walking around the streets of the local area, playing football and other informal sports in streets or parks. The same applied to the younger boys from HIDE2: whenever I asked the boys what they had been doing when they were not at HIDE2, Karel, Reggie, Dal, Ezzy, and Miko would say, "chillin'", "chillin' outside innit" and "walking about". The words 'chill' and 'chillin'' were used commonly to describe any activities that were unstructured and social, such as listening to music, chatting with friends or girlfriends, and walking around. As most of the boys smoked, smoking often coincided with 'chilling'. When I asked Riza what he liked about Fairview, he said "there's lots of places for chillin'". 'Chilling' was also spatially defined and often occurred in outdoor public spaces.

'The Box' was an important outdoor public place in the daily lives of the boys from HIDE2. The Box, described by local authorities as a 'five-a-side football venue', was talked about frequently: the boys spent much of their time (most weekday evenings and weekends) there when they were not at school or at HIDE2. One night in March 2015, the boys wished to take me to the Box on their way home from HIDE2. They wished to show me their neighbourhood and be filmed on their parkour route. They were excited whilst simultaneously surprised that I was willing to go with them. The reflective description (and corresponding photographs in Figure 5.2) that follows explicitly shows the importance of the Box in these young boys' daily lives as a site for social and physical activities.

Figure 5.2: The alleyway next to the Box (left) strewn with bins and litter, and the HIDE2 boys walking near the Box (right).

As we walked towards to Box, the boys unexpectedly narrated the film in their enthusiastic jovial way:

Karel: "Welcome to box!"

Miko: "Welcome to tramp box"

Dal: "This where we chill"

Karel: "Basically, we come here-"

Dal:" -We play football here"

Then Karel sees a friend of theirs and shouts, "Aye aye Martin!"

Walking, I hear before I see. It is noisy, noisy with the sound of people talking, shouting, and playing football. It is dark (it is around 8pm) and my vision is failing me a little as I find it hard to see how many people there are in the shadows of the dim or broken street lights. The Box itself looks like a metal cage, situated between two terraces of houses, with front doors facing one side and back yards facing the other. It is a dark metal enclosure with what appears to be a tarmac floor with some

127

lines on it. It is clearly intended for playing sports in, and currently some young people are kicking a football in it, running, and striking the ball at the sides of the cage. The ball hits the metal making a crashing sound as it bounces back to the players. To my surprise, the Box itself is not lit. As such, the young people playing football can barely see; yet they play nonetheless. The only light stems from the street lights which line the two terraces it lies between. The lights are sporadic, with some working and others not. The place is a hive of activity. Outside of the cage, young people, tall and small, sit on the curbs, whilst others stand nearby. One group of four or five individuals sit on some steps at the edge of the Box in the dark. I can barely make out faces as I try to recognise if I know any of the other boys here. My attention is instead drawn to another group as I walk with the HIDE2 boys. We head towards a group who are huddled around something, or though it seems. It is dark so it is difficult to make out how many people there are and what or who they are standing around. As we get closer I can make out that it is a large group of approximately ten to twelve individuals, and I realise that they are surrounding a wheelie bin and are having an arm-wrestle competition on top of it. This is not quite what I expected. I look around and see there must be over forty individuals here all using this dark space in different ways on this cold weekday evening. The alley we are stood on, which backs onto some houses, is strewn with rubbish and glass, and although it is supposed to be lit with street lights, it becomes darker in places where lights have gone out overhead. This is certainly the case where they are wrestling on top of the bin: it is very dark and difficult to see as even where rays from a lone street lights shine, people cast shadows over each other. After we have chatted to a few others, witnessed the arm wrestling, and hung around for a while, Karel says to me, "as you can see this is a trampy area- don't be afraid to say, everyone knows… and we are proud of it."

Karel was correct: at first I felt hesitant entering this space as I felt like I was entering a 'dodgy' or "trampy" space. The stereotypical associations I held about the aesthetics of the space led me to feel this way. The combination of poor lighting and dozens of young people, from small boys to tall young men made me feel somewhat scared at first, or at least slightly on edge. However, after being there for a while, I recognised that no one was being threatening or overly violent, except the odd push or shove between friends, which from previous observations I understand as part of their interactions with each other. Likewise, from what I could see first-hand, no one in my sight, which I must admit was limited, appeared to be drinking alcohol or doing drugs. Instead, in hands, I noticed cans of 59p energy drink and other fizzy drink bottles. Although I have been informed by the boys and by Carla that the Box is often a location where fights break out, tonight I only see physical competition between boys in the form of arm wrestles and a social group being active, both physically and socially, in a space that otherwise would be empty and lifeless. These boys have brought me here, to show me this space, to film this space. They have made it into a

place that brings them together as a group: they all go there and all live on streets nearby.

<div align="right">

(Fieldnotes, 10.03.15)

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The boys explained that the Box was a place where friends congregated to play football and 'chill'. They celebrated their use of the space, and formed a sense of belonging to the place. The Box was not used by all young people in the area: it was used by young people of specific ethnicities and nationalities and those of certain social groups. Most of the young people at the Box were of Slovak or Czech nationality and they spoke to each other in these languages. The boys knew most of the other young people who went to the Box as they were siblings, cousins or friends. The people and their practices made the place meaningful to the boys:

> *"There's no one, like nothing to do … But like Box, there is people you can play like something with, friends like you play many game not only football…in Box we play sometimes tag- that fun." (Jaka)*

The activities that the young people could engage in at the Box with many of their friends made the space enjoyable. The young people also never spoke of adults using the Box, despite it being surrounded by houses. According to Goheen (1998:479), "citizens create meaningful public space by expressing their attitudes, asserting their claims and using it for their own purposes", and according to Lefebvre (1991), "lived" spaces are emergent because spatial practices produce space. Matthews et al. (2000) use the term 'third space', borrowed from Soja (1996), to explain how certain public spaces become 'lived spaces', vital for creating young people's identities. Matthews et al. (2000:64) suggest that the 'third space' of the street can be used by young people to "affirm their sense of difference and celebrate their feelings of belonging". This sense of difference and belonging relates to age, gender, and ethnicity, as we see in the case of the Box.

Space 1's young people: home, routines, the streets, and having 'nowhere to go'

As previously noted, the young people attending Space1 constituted two different groups: one before and one after the spatial relocation. The new group at Space1 did not have a set place where they would go to hang out outside of school, with the exception of Space1 and the park next door (described in Chapter 4). Most of the young people who attended Space1 during the relocation period reported staying at home (the girls in particular) or attending organised clubs (the boys in particular) when not at SPACE1. The main activities reported outside of Space1 included staying over at friends' houses on the weekends, sleeping, watching YouTube and Netflix, and occasionally visiting Costa or the

out-of-town shopping centre with friends. Some had structured organised time, such as cadets, football or kick boxing during the week, and would describe their lives through weekly routines. When there were fears that Space1 would close in spring 2015 due to funding cuts, many of the young people felt that without Space1 they would have nowhere else to go and would return to spending time at home during the week nights:

> *"I'm gonna be bored of my life, just gonna sit in me house go on my ipod, play on my playstation, go on DS, that's it." (Billy)*

> *"I mainly just sat and watched telly or read books or caught up with homework [before attending Space1]" (Leonie)*

Skelton (2000:84) suggests that the child/adult binary, discussed in Section 4.1.1, can be "mapped onto the public/private binary", and that in doing so we begin to understand that there are assumptions about the spaces both socially constructed groups should inhabit. As the adult/child binary leaves adolescents spatially as well as socially liminal, in neither the public nor private spheres, a sense of having nowhere to go is unsurprising.

'Becca's crew', the group of girls who were in year 9 (aged 13-14) when I met them in May 2015, frequently used the streets, Abbeywell (a back alley), and the Den (a disused building in Hawthorne park) as social spaces for meeting friends, 'hanging out', and having drinking (alcohol) 'sessions'. Becca's crew tended to complain of having 'nothing to do' and 'nowhere to go': they explained, unlike the new group, that the only thing they could do aside from coming to Space1 was to meet people on the streets. Becca said, she would "walk on the street and do nothing. Because there are no places to go to", describing the area as "shite". The girls suggested that they only used the streets as a last resort for social space. During the relocation period, I saw Becca just twice at two of the community garden days: she said that she missed Space1, had been doing 'nowt[21]', and that she and her friends had nowhere else to go but the streets.

However, the streets and other spaces appeared important for their social lives. Becca's crew commonly had (alcohol) drinking sessions on Friday nights in a poorly lit secluded cut-through pedestrian alleyway: Abbeywell. When I managed to speak to Becca's older sister, Annie, when she attended the new location twice during the Easter holidays, she explained that Becca and her friends "would rather be on the streets with boys and stuff rather than be at Space1". The streets seemed more important in their social lives than Becca had implied. Annie explained how Becca and her friends were "always on the streets". Annie also used to spend much of her time on the streets a year or so ago, although now she is older she goes to more parties on Friday and Saturday nights. She

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[21] A Northern English slang word for 'nothing'

explained, in a similar vein to her sister, that she and others used Abbeywell "cos like there's nowhere else to go, there's not a like a quiet place for [us] to sit."

The girls' contradictory explanations suggest that their reasons for street use was more complex than simply having 'nowhere else to go'. James (1986:155) voiced young people's experiences of being young in the North of England, explaining that 'having nowt to do' and 'nowhere to go' had become part of what it meant to be an adolescent in the UK. The use of Abbeywell appeared connected to adult surveillance, spatial exclusions, and group identities. According to Valentine (1996), young people's self-perceptions are partly constructed through spatial exclusion, often from fee paying places, such as cinemas, cafes, or private leisure centres due to monetary cost. These exclusions reinforced the sense of both Becca's crew and the new Space1 group of having 'nowhere to go' and 'nothing to do'. Despite the similar rhetorics, the differential use of public spaces by the groups can be understood through Massey's (1994) theoretical idea that 'place is negotiated', has different meanings for different people, and different sets of assumptions associated with it, which produce different uses of place.

For Becca's crew, 'free spaces', such as streets and alleyways, became important in their daily lives. Similarly, Hall et al. (1999) showed that young people wished to frequent "free spaces", which were often bus shelters, park benches, or street corners, as they could enter these spaces for no cost, on their own terms, meet friends, and be unsupervised by adults. The so-called 'free spaces' offered the young people who had little money a *free* space in a monetary sense, as well as a space where they can be *free* of adult surveillance (Hall et al., 1999). Pavis and Cunningham-Burley (1999) also found that, although young people said their town was 'dull' and 'boring', the street was both a geographical and social space that the young people used without adult supervision for their own leisure. Matthew et al.'s (2000:71) study similarly found the street became the only place young people could feasibly meet friends as home was considered an "unsatisfying social environment" where they were often denied privacy. Hence, as Hopkins (2010:201) says, public spaces, and streets in particular, are crucial spaces where young people create spaces for themselves in an 'adultist society'. However, as I discuss in Section 6.2.1, for many of the new group, the streets and parks at certain times of day produced a sense of fear and risk.

Adult-youth contests over public space

> *"The street is infused with cultural identity and how, in their attempts to claim socially autonomous space with the public domain, young people frequently collide with adults and with other groups of young people"*
>
> *(Matthews, 2003:102)*

The streets and 'free spaces' that were important for the young people's social lives were often 'contested' by adults. Conflict with adults over the young people's use of Abbeywell, the parks, and the Box, sometimes involved the police. Conflicts were connected to assumptions about young people and their practices, and adult conceptions about where young people should spend their time. Holloway and Valentine (2000:15) claim that there are ideologies regarding "where children should spend their time". Valentine (1996) suggests that these ideologies are connected to two central discourses that are at play in contentions over young people's use of public space. The first revolves around adult concerns for young people's safety on the streets, including 'stranger danger', whilst the second comprises adult concerns about unruliness and violence from older children: 'youths' and 'adolescents'.

Firstly, with regards to Abbeywell, Annie, Becca's older sister, explained that the elderly residents who live in the vicinity of Abbeywell did not like the young people being there on Friday and Saturday nights. She said that the old people complained and would call the police to move the young people on. She explained: "I think they think that we are trouble but most people done it when they were younger as well". She felt that adults "think every young person is the same as everyone else" but did not like being stereotyped. She said: "like you do get the odd one or two but not everyone's the same".

Carla, the senior youth worker from HIDE2, also felt that "young people are always seen as a problem by society". This homogeneous view of young people, stemming from practices in public space, was sometimes reproduced in policing tactics. Matt, the manager of Space1, discussed some issues regarding the blanket policing at St Jude's park:

> *The park is heavily policed and the older kids are an issue. The police have a method of targeting a place and placing huge amounts of resources into it, especially when a large number of residents (elderly people) are complaining about the young people in the park and the anti-social behaviour. The young people were openly having sex, drinking, smoking, and snorting coke. But that this is not every young person's scene, so what do those young people do when they feel uncomfortable doing these things? And the police don't see these young people, they say 'all young people were doing that' so just target all young people doing these negative behaviours in a blanket approach to the issue. But then the police are not to know that. What are those young people going to do? Hang out at a library where it is quiet and civilized? Young people don't want to do that.*

> *(Fieldnotes,10.07.14)*

During the time of my fieldwork, Hen, Kalehsi, Alesha, Amelia, and Jay, who used St Jude's park, did not drink or use drugs there. They occasionally spent time there after

school or on weekends messing around on the swings and 'hanging out' with their friends. The policing practices described by Matt could further exclude those who use the space in more 'appropriate' ways.

Similarly, the Box was subject to local police and outreach youth worker surveillance due to late night use and reports of fights. A local police Facebook post described disturbances from late night games and gatherings of people causing disorder. The post suggested that young people were not using the space in a way that is deemed appropriate by adults. The police claimed that they were meeting the needs of the residents, whilst also enabling people to enjoy the space. One can comprehend the police actions and narration of the problems and solutions at the Box by drawing on Lefebvre's (1991) triadic concept of space. The 'conceived space' (the planned space of the Box) clashed with the 'spatial practice' of the young people using it. The Box was built as a football cage for young people, but the ways in which different young people used the space was considered 'anti-social'. Gathering at the edges of the cage, arm wrestling on bins late at night is unlikely to have been its intended purpose; however, these practices became part of how the young people constructed the space as a meaningful place.

Some of the young people used strategies to negotiate their spatial marginalisation in public places and to etch out spaces that they could use for social practices. For example, on an occasion when Geba and I walked around the nearby Hawthorne park during a mobile interview, Geba took me to a clearing behind some trees and bushes at the back of the park, explaining this was where he and the others used to hang out:

> *"This is a public area so we used to just walk here like this and sit there. We used to call this place Jungle. Meet up in the jungle and just get pissed… The only reason we came here was cos [it is] closest for everyone, easiest place and closest to everyone. Like Willow Park, we could go there but it's too public, we don't get the freedom... Like whatever you do, if you scream, you playing, or you messing about, people just call the police for no reason. Anything happens, they used to just be like calling the police, 'you being too noisy, be quiet'… Then the police come and look at you funny and they stay there for a while and they take off… the police just roll up and say, 'what you doing?' You say, 'nowt'."*

According to Valentine (1996), young people are often excluded and marginalised in public space in the UK. Geba notes that Hawthorne park was "public", and yet explained that the boys had to negotiate how "public" they could be in such spaces. Geba expressed his discontent regarding this marginalisation, explaining that adults would complain about the young people's practices for what he considered 'no reason'. Hanging out in groups or creating some form of noise becomes seen as "unruly behaviour" (Valentine, 1996), which

makes young people particularly visible in public space. This 'visibility' of young people in public space "positions them at the front line" in contests over use of public space (Malone, 2002:162). Hall et al. (1999) claim that it seems to be the lack of productive activity (eg. hanging around in groups, not playing football as intended at the Box) or loitering, rather than any specific activities, that trigger claims of deviance. For instance, Malone (2002:161) found that shopkeepers viewed young people's loitering and "hanging out" on the street as a hindrance and disruption to the flow of shoppers, simultaneously making the space look "untidy".

However, as Robinson (2000:430) explains, focusing on how young people "threaten or contest already constructed spaces with their own meanings" inadvertently "re-produces street-frequenting young people's marginalization in public space". Robinson (2000:430) addressed "'tactics' of place making", and what the places meant to young people. The jungle was a space that the group of young men had etched out for being social during their teen years, and where they formed experiences and a group identity that remained important years later. Similarly, those who were in conflict with the police and older adult residents over Abbeywell, or those who used The Box, created group experiences whilst at those spaces, which they talked about at the youth centres and elsewhere: they claimed Abbeywell and The Box as a place for their friendships. Following Matthews (2003:106), one can suggest that their etching out of spaces, such as Abbeywell, the Box, and the Jungle, is evidence of the young people's creation of *cultural crevices* or *social fissures,* which played an important role in the young people's social identity formation.

By using literature and the theoretical ideas of Lefebvre (1991) and Massey (1994) to discuss the themes in my data, I have shown how social relations that play out in spaces are important for how young people construct meaningful places of their own. The importance of the youth centres was constructed through interactions with peers and adults. Likewise, public spaces, such as the Box and Abbeywell, although both contested at times, were central to the young people's social lives as they etched out spaces for themselves. The Box was also an important site for group inclusion in informal physical activities, predominantly football. The differential uses of public spaces and these young people's engagement with the youth centres suggests that many of these young people spent time outside of the house being mobile and sociable in multiple and diverse ways, and were not homogenously found causing trouble, confined to the safety of their own homes, or chauffeured to structured activities. As contests with adults over public space are said to be connected to issues of young people's safety (Valentine,1996), I next discuss the young people's experiences of the social environment, the tactics they use to negotiate staying safe in their social environments, and how these relate to their mobility in the local area.

5.3 Experiences of the social environment and young people's mobility

Mikkelsen and Christensen (2009) identify the social environment as encompassing gender, social network, social cohesion, institutional attendance, risk perceptions, and risk management. Issues of risk, fear, and threats to safety were themes that emerged in the data regarding young people's experiences and perceptions of the social environment. This section firstly focuses on voicing the young people's experiences of the social environment: issues that made the young people from Space1 feel unsafe or intimidated, and peer conflict in the lives of those from HIDE2 (5.3.1). It then discusses young people's tactical negotiations of space through specific self-presentations, youth centre engagement, and group sociality (5.3.2). I also highlight the diverse nature of the young people I knew: there were nuanced differences between and within groups, individuals and genders.

5.3.1 Perceptions and experiences of others in the social environment

Space 1 young people: feelings of intimidation and fear

Other people, who used spaces at different points in time, influenced the young people's uses of space and their sense of safety or fear. Most of the young people's concerns were linked to the possibility of something bad happening: being at risk. Tudor (2003:240) provides a sociological understanding of fear, explaining that "fearfulness is heavily mediated through the physical, psychological, cultural, and social environments in which it is located". For the young people at Space1, there were two key issues that made them feel intimidated, uncomfortable, and fearful: other young people, who tended to be considered 'chavs', and/or criminal adults. Hen and Kalehsi's narrative raised issues regarding other 'teenagers' or 'chavs' in the local area. The young people's dislikes and fears of these people stemmed from assumptions about them:

> … "they all smoke and drink and crowd in bus shelters and stuff and I
> wouldn't really do it"... " it makes you kind of nervous in case they say
> anything to you. Cos like you've gotta like go straight past them"
> (Leonie)

> "When I go over there [Elm road] I'm very cautious about everything I
> do. When I'm walking across Elm road I see people going down and
> they'll be wearing hoodies and generally they don't exactly look like
> happy cheery people. And err I don't really like walking down there by
> myself, like Elm road, especially when it's dark, which is a lot of the time
> when I get off the bus." (Francis)

The presence of 'chavs' made many of the young people from Space1 feel uneasy in the spaces they moved through. Although the Space1 young people used public spaces to walk to places, such as the shops for snacks or takeaway, Leonie said that in contrast to 'chavs' she would move out of the way for other users of the street. The young people's fears of 'chavs' were tied up with experiences and presumptions about 'chavs' and their 'antisocial behaviours', which were worsened by their presence at night, a time of day they often associated with drugs, drinking, and fighting. The clothes and appearances of the 'chavs' were also connected to their practices. Neary et al. (2013) found that young people in Glasgow, like adults, held negative perceptions about other young people, namely those they considered to be 'neds' (Scottish version of 'chav'). In Nayak's (2006) ethnography, conducted in a Northern English city, he explained that 'chav' styles of clothing, which include tracksuits, trainers, and caps, were banned in a number of city establishments: the spatial, social, and economic marginalisation experienced by 'chavs' meant that they developed their own, albeit marginalised, leisure activities on street corners. These practices furthered their social marginalisation, engagement in 'anti-social behaviours', and although possibly unintentionally, the intimidation of others (Nayak, 2006). The young people's fear of 'chavs' was therefore at least partly socially constituted.

As we learnt from Hen and Kalehsi's narrative at the beginning of this chapter, knowledge or personal experience of violent crimes, criminals or 'anti-social behaviour' influenced how unsafe they felt in local areas. The young people claimed that bikes being stolen from yards or school, suspected rapists or drug users living nearby, and stabbings, made them feel uneasy about leaving their houses, about walking around in the local area at night in particular, and using outside space. The young people's sense of safety was often rooted in particular instances they had experienced or heard about through word of mouth. For instance, Annie and I discussed why she had said she did not feel safe in the area:

> Me: And so why do you not feel safe?
>
> Annie: The people that live around the area… Some people that live in the area I dunno, it's, it's not one of the nicest places to live, but it's not the worst… It's not too bad in the day time, it's normally like the night time.
>
> ...
>
> Annie: erm like a few weeks ago a people got stabbed at the top of the street and like you know my little brothers, they were out in the street and the car pulled up and stabbed someone and I was like to be doing that in the day time in an area?!
>
> Me: So that's just on Beech road?

Annie: Yeh and it was loads of young kids on the streets and that and frightening them… it's horrible, but I don't think it was people that lived in the area that done it but it's still…

The street she referred to joins the street that her house is on, where her younger brothers and sisters, and their friends, 'play out' after school and at weekends. The story of the stabbing, relayed through her younger brother, made Annie feel particularly shocked and unsafe, especially because her understanding was that violent acts happened at night, not during the day. Incidents that challenge one's previous understandings of safety, mean that feelings of fear are dynamic. Perceptions of place can therefore differ across and during different moments in time.

The young people's experiences, such as having one's shed broken into (Hen), getting beaten up (Jay, Tony, Liam), witnessing fights (Leonie), or hearing second hand about a stabbing (Annie), influenced their levels of fear and discomfort. According to O'Connor and Brown (2013:158), "the temporal drift through varying intensities of fear across the lifespan is influenced by our experience, our social interactions and by our spatial and historical relationship with our environment". Christensen et al. (2015) further suggest that, by considering place in relational terms, one can comprehend how memories shape perceptions and consequently young people's movement around places. In accordance with Massey's (1994) concept of 'place as process', Christensen et al. (2015) also show that time of day is significant in shaping meanings of place, and that episodes of violence, although located in history, influence the meaning of a place for years to come. Hence, although the incident described by Annie may not be physically visible in the present, it is nonetheless, for her and others, "inscribed into the socio-material fabric of the urban environment" (Christensen et al., 2015:596).

As other people's presence or potential presence during darkness, and their potential practices, made the young people feel unsafe, they negotiated where they went, frequently avoiding particular risky places altogether or at certain times of day:

"cos you always see pure chavs walking around and then I see them and I get scared so I don't wanna walk down the park" (Alesha)

"Cos it's like night, there are drunk people out then and people who do drugs so I try not to go out late at night" (Leonie)

"To be honest since Sycamore park, since that incident [he was beaten up], when you are not with people, you really feel out in the open so it's dark there's no lights there at all. You just feel like a randomer can come out at any time. That's why I never get me phone out or never go out after it gets dark. And at St Jude's you feel safe up there. The people that go there- if they are- you are guaranteed to know them, but when its

night time that's the alarm clock to go home cos that's when people start drinking." (Jay)

Those from Space1 avoided lone use of Sycamore park at night because Tony and Jay had been beaten up there in the past. Associations about places therefore changed temporally across the day. Similar ideas have been noted in Kraack and Kenways' (2002) ethnographic study: the beach was seen as a "morally virtuous" place for young people to 'play' at during the day time, whereas, at night time, the beach transformed into a "morally corrupt" space where young people's presence was taken as an assumption about illegal activities (Kraack & Kenway, 2002:152).

Young men and boys' tales of peer violence at HIDE2

Violence is "broadly conceptualized as interpersonal behavior that threatens, attempts, or completes intentional infliction of physical or psychological harm" (Spilsbury, 2005:79). Many young men discussed in Henderson et al.'s (2007) multi-sited UK longitudinal study, which used a biographical approach to understand young people's experiences of growing up, were often involved in violent defence of territories that were often defined along ethnic and cultural lines. Watt and Stenson (1998) also explained that racial violence, in the form of "defensive street masculinity", has been found in studies with Asian men in Northern England (Webster, 1996) and Bengali men in East London (Keith, 1995).

The following extended excerpt (and corresponding photographs in Figure 5.3) sheds light on how violence appeared in the young men and boys' lives from HIDE2, during certain time-spaces; how this violence was related to use of space; and how it was intertwined with understandings of ethnic difference.

Figure 5.3: Graffiti on the walls of the HIDE2 yard

It is a cold night in December (11th) and there is some kind of commotion outside of HIDE2. Koffee is quick to move outside to see what the trouble is about. There is a large group of young people and Koffee runs off after some boys who seem to have left in a hurry. The senior youth worker, Carla, says with urgency, "Dew, can you go and support Koffee please" as she quickly grabs the phone to call the police. Outside, I see Riza and some graffiti on the white wall of the HIDE2 yard (See Figure 5.3). It is dark but I see some boys gathering around and a couple of girls standing behind the wall. They live two streets away and know the boys involved. They say that the boy often wants to fight but they don't know why. Riza then explains: "they write EDL[22]...they are the Bodham Bad Boys all of them who were here!!"

Reggie, Karel, and Marz appear out of the darkness, walking intimidatingly in a row out of the back lane across the road towards HIDE2. If I didn't know them, I would be quite scared. They are dressed in hoodies and caps, and walk quickly and aggressively in a tight group. Marz pretends to piss and spit at the BBB (Bodham Bad Boys) graffiti and Reggie kicks the wall where the tag is. They speak in Czech, and although I can't understand it, I can infer that they are talking about the boys who tagged the wall. Riza tells me that the culprits go to "the school for naughty kids", claiming one of the boys has "been in court three times". He says, "they always here causing trouble, I had a fight with one of them ages ago."

A few moments later, Dew and Koffee come back from chasing the culprits and explain to Carla what happened. Koffee explained that the boys said, 'look it's full of Czechs' and that he and Dew told them, 'look if you want, you can come in but you can't just barge in like you have, like maybe one day you can come in and talk to the person who runs it and join in 'cos these kids are having a good time coming playing FIFA and doing all these things in the studio upstairs'. He then said that the boys replied, 'aww can it not be separate', to which he said he responded, "slowly you are gonna have to integrate with the rest of the friggin' community-'" At this point, Dew interrupted saying, "-I was like, 'look at the area you are living in, it's twenty frigging fourteen'. I was like 'look at him- where you from?'- he was like 'I'm half Portuguese'. Well there you go, you being racist to them, you being racist to him. But he was like 'yeh yeh yehhh'."

The conflict between the groups of boys had been rising for some time; however, tensions were high at the time of the graffiti incident due to other ongoing nationalist political movements. An anti-immigrant march was planned for the following Spring, which the

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[22] EDL is short for English Defense League, a far-right street protest movement opposing the spread of Islam in the UK. It is said to have evolved around a culture of football hooliganism and marches frequently break out into street violence and police arrests. Although EDL leaders argue otherwise, discourses within the numerous branches of the EDL are seen to reflect right wing extremism, racism, Islamophobia and white supremacy.

boys were discouraged to attend due to the increased racial conflict and fears that the boys and young men would get into trouble. The conflicts between different groups of young people in the local area were often described as motivated by cultural, ethnic, or racial difference, which was also linked to places used in daily life. HIDE2 was available for all boys over the age of thirteen in the local area to access; however, in reality it unintentionally became a space that Czech, Slovak, and mixed-ethnicity groups used almost exclusively. In contrast, Space1 was dominated by White British young people commonly from low-income families. Although the young people did not speak about 'territories' or claims to space, Matt, the manager of Space1, explained to me that young people "had territories" and that youth work was not as simple as "integrating them altogether under one roof". Claims to places were also inferred through 'groups' that were all named according to areas inhabited. These included groups, called the BBB (Bodham Bad boys) and FBB (Fairview Bad boys), who had tagged certain alleyways and buildings in the local area. Matt, the manager of Space1, further explained the group conflicts within broader social problems, migration and change:

> "It's a changing community, for people who have been here for generations, not just White working class but also Asian people who have been settled here for generations. What has been done to support the changes? What are the impacts on young people? Do they see migrating young people as a threat? Change always brings fear. If young people are afraid, they are going to be confrontational, whether they understand the reasons for those feelings or not. If change isn't managed, people can feel scared and feel conflicted about it."

> (Interview, 10.07.14)

The observation that the area is continually changing and becoming more ethnically diverse was crucial to the young people's experiences of place and conflict. For the mixed ethnicity men, they felt the area had become "more diverse", "not as dangerous", "much nicer", and "more calmer". K-Z explained that "back then [when the young men were teenagers] it was just like chavs and every so often you might see someone Asian or Black or whatever". Despite perceptions of greater multiculturalism in 2015, compared to 'back then', the present conflicts that the boys experienced remained connected to migration and ethnicity. The boys explained that the primary reasons for fighting concerned bullying, racial abuse, and defending friends:

> Karel: basically yeh, we get bullied. They call us Czech bastards!

> Miko: 'cos of the colour of our skin

> Karel: It's like, 'Yo stop it! how would you like it if I bullied you?'

Many of the boys claimed they would, in retaliation, punch or fight those who were being racist towards them. Racism was even more prominently discussed in the young men's stories of past violence and present experiences. In B-Hive's narrative we saw incidents where large groups of young boys and men organised fights with each other, which were often described as linked to racial conflict. Geba illustrated the complexity around why fights broke out:

> "If they be racist to us, we just fight them. Like it wasn't really about racism, it was just about that group was different from you and when you walk past them they gonna say something and you say something back and it turns into a fight. It don't make sense."

> *(Mobile interview, 31.08.15)*

'Racism' was often the term the young men and boys used to describe the motivations for fighting, and yet these fights were often equally connected to other markers of difference concerning ethnicity and youth subcultures. For instance, Dew explained:

> "I used to wear timberlands, baggy jeans, and a baggy jacket. Bit of a gangsta kind of thing innit see. So if I was wearing that like yeh, like me, Koffee, and B-Hive were like that, and Marcel we're all like that right, like we used to have a lil' gangsta persona going on right, and all the chavs were dressed in tracksuit bottoms and all that so you are gonna have miscommunication right. So after that, and that how the racism started, like you fucking gangsta you fucking Paki and that."

> *(Interview, 21.11.14)*

In this way, clothes, skin colour, and nationality were intertwined and became markers of difference that sparked conflict. Ettema and Schwanen (2012:177) explain that collisions over space occur due to the creation of conditions where some people can belong and others are excluded. The consequences of these conditions are conceptualised as "out-of-placeness" and "insideness", both of which are associated with age, race, gender, appearance, and clothing (Ettema & Schwanen, 2012:177). The Czech and Slovakian boys, for instance, could be considered 'insiders' at the Box due to their shared ethnic identities and friendships, whereas they appeared as 'outsiders' in Ashmoor due to conflicts with White British boys that appeared to be connected to markers of difference.

However, some of the young men also reflected on violence as a result of boredom, which appeared to be a narrative from wider youth work practice: the notion of keeping young people off the streets was concerned with reducing boredom and trouble as a means of entertainment. For example, K-Z explained:

> "I think poverty as well and lack of opportunity, like that what send people [to fight], and boredom. Boredom is the biggest thing 'cos if you had nothing to do like there was literally times when we was like ah we

*got nothing to do why don't we go start on someone. And it's like
ridiculous when you look back on it but that is literally their mindset and
it was my mindset ...It's all about proving points do you know, it's who's
the hardest, who does the most dangerous things, who's the craziest."*

(Interview, 28.04.15)

K-Z sees boredom as an individual issue; an issue of young people's 'mindsets'. He
suggests that one response to boredom is to engage in "dangerous" or 'crazy' acts, which
makes oneself look 'hard'. However, simultaneously, K-Z explicitly deemed 'poverty' a
socioeconomic issue that had a role in the violence they experienced: he and Aari were
the only young men to explicitly do this. Although K-Z then discussed boredom as an
individual behaviour, boredom is intertwined with "lack of opportunity". In a study of young
people in a Northern English urban estate, Henderson et al. (2007) discuss how crime
filled a void where high levels of unemployment, poverty, low cash incomes, and high
boredom were the norm.

Due to experiences of violence in the distant or recent past, for many of the HIDE2 boys,
the area of Ashmoor and a few streets at one end of Bodham, 800m from the Box, were
perceived as "bad". Many of the HIDE2 boys who lived in Bodham said they avoided
specific streets due to the fears of fights with White British lads:

> *Karel: Gill street down- you don't wanna go down there- don't wanna go
> that park.*
>
> *Me: What kind of things are gonna happen to you if you go there?*
>
> *Karel: Gonna get fucked up.*

The boys' prior experiences aided decision-making processes for avoiding potential fights.
Christensen et al.'s (2015) place-mapping study, conducted with children (aged 11-12)
living in a "relatively deprived" part of Copenhagen, showed that boys avoided certain
places due to knowing "big boys" spent time there. Neary et al. (2013) also discussed how
young people (aged 8-16) attributed meanings to certain places in Glasgow, and avoided
places based on witnessing or hearing stories regarding 'anti-social behaviours'. All of the
young people's experiences, whether being beaten up, or fearing 'chavs', were formative
in creating their 'street literacy' (Cahill, 2000). Although avoidance practices may "seem
spontaneous or intuitive" (Cahill, 2000:253), they were learnt through various experiences.

5.3.2 'Tactics' for mobility: negotiating violence and safety

Scholars often identify perceived safety as a key issue in relation to young people's daily
physical activity and 'independent mobility' (Foster et al., 2014): defined as children's

movement 'alone' or 'on their own' (Mikkelsen & Christensen, 2009). Based on the vague definition of 'independent mobility', Mikkelsen and Christensen (2009) argued that the term 'independent mobility' "renders what children do together invisible", and further "reflects a cultural focus on individuality and autonomy" (Mikkelsen and Christensen, 2009:40). Following Mikkelsen and Christensen (2009), and subsequently Horton et al. (2014), I suggest that the term 'independent mobility' is unhelpful for understanding how the young people moved around the East End and negotiated their social environments: most of the time the young people recalled travelling around the local area, or to other places, with friends. As the young people's mobility was strongly connected to their friendships, not just independence from their parents, this section deliberately avoids discussing 'independent mobility'; instead, in the context of peer conflicts and perceptions of unsafe public spaces, I focus on the young people's use of 'tactics' (Robinson, 2000) and resources for negotiating their socio-material environments.

The central ways of negotiating the social environment and being mobile involved avoiding certain places and moving in groups of friends. In some cases, for the girls from Space1 in particular, abiding by and negotiating parental restrictions also played into how mobile they were. For the boys from HIDE2, strategies for negotiating their socio-material environment involved presenting themselves as fearless. Many of these negotiations or 'tactics' were key to the young people's mobility, whereby mobility is defined "as an entanglement of movement, representation and practice" (Creswell 2010:17 in Middleton, 2010:576).

The HIDE2 Boys' self-formation as fearless

I suggest that, for the boys at HIDE2, presenting oneself as fearless, intimidating, and using physical aggression, was a tactic used for negotiating growing up as boys of minority ethnicities in the East End. In one-to-one interviews, and on occasions when Carla and I were talking to just one of the boys, they would sometimes admit that they felt unsafe because of other boys:

> *Me: What about the times you don't feel safe?*
>
> *Riza: When I see loads of boys out there and I walk past them*
>
> *Me: Is it a specific bunch of boys or people?*
>
> *Riza: Bunch of boys. But I'm not scared, I punch them all.*

Riza immediately contradicts himself: he simultaneously claims he feels unsafe but is also "not scared" by a bunch of boys. Despite some ambivalences, other stories told shed light

on how and why the boys presented themselves as fearless in the spaces where they grew up. For instance, on the night of the graffiti incident when the boys had returned from chasing the others, Karel proudly claimed that "6 of them ran away from us", that he is "not scared of them", and that he and others had "chinned him" in the past and "put him in a bin". This rhetoric was how they presented themselves in front of each other.

Furthermore, Ezzy explicitly explained in an interview several months after the boys had experienced a period of intense peer conflict, how violent practices were connected to being respected on the street and part of negotiating living as a young man in the East End:

> *Ezzy: Like if you're like a nerd or something they like jump you and then that's the bad point. When you can't fight, they jump you.*
>
> *…*
>
> *Ezzy: But if you hit someone you will have respect.*
>
> *Me: If you hit someone you have respect?*
>
> *Ezzy: If they jump you and you don't show them that you not scared, they won't do shit.*
>
> *Me: Aha*
>
> *Ezzy: They won't do shit.*
>
> *Me: So you have to show them that like-?*
>
> *Ezzy: -That you not scared.*
>
> *Me: And you say that they respect you?*
>
> *Ezzy: Some of them*
>
> *Me: They respect you if you stood up to them, is that what you mean?*
>
> *Ezzy: Like not like respect but they won't start on you 'cos they will know that you not scared.*

Ezzy connects being respected with fighting, and explains how one has to be fearless to avoid fighting. The young men and boys shared similar understandings and practices regarding respect, fear, and intimidation. Koffee (see Narrative 3) and Aari felt they shaped their bodies and appearances to look "intimidating enough to deter trouble" [Aari]. Aari proudly said he never walked away from trouble. He claimed that, "Chavs, they only understand one type of language, and it's a violent language", and that "if you stick up for yourself you'll be alright, you'll get that respect." K-Z also felt that "the only way to be safe" in the neighbourhood when he was younger was "to be aggressive", explaining that you

have to "act like the big guy so you can be like left alone". These self-presentations and actions were necessary for negotiating their safety and mobility. Quite often, even though the boys thought some spaces were risky, they either needed to or wanted to traverse these spaces. For example, Dal said, "I think it's bad, but I still go there- they don't do nothing to me".

The actions and self-presentations that the boys and young men engaged in can be considered part of their 'tactics' (Robinson, 2000) for negotiating mobility across and within certain spaces. Not being scared, acting aggressively or looking intimidating to others can be understood as part of the boys' 'street literacy'. Cahill (2000:253) uses the term 'street literacy' "to express and recognise the practice, application, and acquisition of a particular form of social and experiential knowledge". The concept describes the "dynamic processes of experiential knowledge production and self-construction in a specified context, public urban space" (Cahill, 2000:252). She explains that negotiating streets requires an "acute awareness of the presentation of self and one's relationship to others" (Cahill, 2000:253). Bearing these insights in mind, one can suggest that the boys and young men's self-presentations as 'hard', tough, and fearless are necessary constructions and practices for negotiating daily life in the local socio-material environment. These strategies, used for feeling safe, will be further discussed in Chapter 6 (Section 6.4.1) in relation to masculinity.

Negotiating safety through youth centres: HIDE2

In the context of adult-youth contests over public spaces discussed in Section 5.2, and young people's liminality in public space (Matthews, 2003), there have been national discourses in the UK regarding keeping young people, and particularly adolescents, "off the streets"' or away from public spaces (Vanderbeck & Johnson, 2000:7). Hall et al. (1999:507) state that youth work provision has always been driven by a desire to support and protect young people, whilst giving young people what they want, 'somewhere to go and something to do'. Youth work also aims to help prevent 'anti-social behaviour' and juvenile crime by keeping young people "off the streets". This is mirrored in the focus on violence and 'deviance' in Youth Studies and Youth Work, which, according to Henderson et al. (2007), may be the result of 'moral panics' around juvenile delinquency in the 1960's and 1970's, as statistics do not necessarily back up a picture of increasing youth crime.

The boys and young men utilised HIDE2 as a space of safety; however, their opinions were also produced amongst discourses about keeping young people "off the streets". For instance, in a focus group in March 2015 with the core group of HIDE2 boys (Miko, Dal, Reggie, Marz, and Karel), I planned on beginning with some questions about why they came to HIDE2, and what they felt the space provided. However, when I began

explaining, 'so I want to talk to you first about HIDE2-', Karel cut in immediately claiming, "cos outside we were always getting in trouble". Dal continued this narrative, saying, "But now we are inside in HIDE2". Miko then added, "-so we don't get dropped anymore". I knew from participant observation and other informal chats that they were or had been involved in fights so I asked, "Really?", to which Miko replied, "Yeh" and Karel added, "cos we used to have fights innit, used to break windows, used to be bad man". Miko claimed that they were "kicking the doors, everything", before Reggie, who is often very jovial and cheeky shouted, "knocky knocky violence!" and laughed. I sensed they were joking around and embellishing stories that suggested their practices had been 'bad' until they began attending HIDE2. When I asked them if fights still happened, Miko smiled and said, "stopped" but Karel tilted his head to one side followed by the other, saying, "well it's stopped but it's kind of not-". Marz who is not as loud as the others, interrupted, saying "-It's not stopped". Karel then continued explaining, "cos you don't see us on the streets innit".

Similarly, the young men explained that attending HIDE2 equated to less time on the streets or in parks 'being bored', which meant there was less opportunity for conflict, fights, and vandalism:

> "But every time HIDE2 was closed, we getting in trouble. We only realised that after a couple of years. If HIDE2 closed, we go some party and get into trouble. But if HIDE2 was open at that time, nowt would happen 'cos we would be inside there."
>
> (Geba, mobile interview, 31.08.15)

In a similar vein, Marcel explained that he wished to run football training for boys in the future because he felt activities, such as football, kept young people 'off the streets' and out of trouble. The way in which the youth centre was seen as stopping trouble was often more meaningful to the boys than safety; the young men explained that it provided something positive for them to engage with. For instance, K-Z explained, "I always tell Carla, like now and then, like this project like saved my life, like literally". Engaging with music made him realise "I can actually be something" rather than just "doing nothing with yourself other than being bad". After the death of his mother, he explained that he went "off the rails", got into the wrong crowd of 'chavs', was drinking heavily on Friday nights, and looking for trouble and fights. K-Z saw HIDE2 as having a crucial role in his and others' lives, and felt that there should be more youth projects for young people in what he felt were "bad areas".

The HIDE2 did not completely stop all ongoing group conflicts as the boys suggested; however, it did act as a safe haven from intergroup conflict in the area, and the young men felt that, on reflection, HIDE2 helped them stay out of trouble. Fights did not occur at

146

HIDE2, Carla called the police if any fights broke out nearby, and the older young men were on hand to mediate any issues. During the time of high tensions in spring 2015, the boys still travelled to HIDE2 during the week of an anti-immigration march. They explained why they came to HIDE2 despite admitting they feared violence in the area:

> Karel: We feel really safe here
>
> Miko: It's like our home
>
> Karel: We could have stopped coming here but we knew we was gonna be safe.

The boys had expressed their fears to Carla and for a week she picked them up in a mini bus from outside their houses so that they could attend music sessions at HIDE2. Carla explained that the boys had talked to her about how "they couldn't come anymore because their walk here was not safe". She said, "They are really scared and won't come to the project. We are keeping them off the streets. Now what are they gonna do?". In response, she involved other outreach youth workers, a local conflict officer, and police in the area so that together they could deal with the conflict. I got a sense that the boys recognised how much Carla cared about their wellbeing and the issues they experienced, and how HIDE2 was about feeling safe and at home.

Being mobile and negotiating potentially unsafe places with friends

Friendships were key aspects of the young people's mobility, and walking, often with friends, was the primary mode of travel around the local area. Much of the young people's mobility practices concerned walking, getting the bus or, when they had had bikes in the past or at points in time, cycling. They rarely travelled alone: many individuals of both genders frequently reported and were observed walking around, walking to shops, walking to bus stops, walking to parks, or walking home with friends. Although some of those from Space1 were chauffeured to places in cars, many used buses, especially if they had weekly pre-paid tickets from travelling to school, or walked, either out of preference or necessity.

For many of the young people, especially those who did not have access to other forms of transport or cars, there was often no option other than to walk. As the young men's financial resources were limited (only K-9, who was at University nearby, owned a car), they often walked or cycled around the local area, and commented that walking was 'free'. B-Hive explained, "Yeh, cos you have to walk. If you don't walk you ain't going anywhere." B-Hive had no access to a car: his mum did not drive. Amelia explained, "well, I've got to [walk] really cos my mam is like at work". The HIDE2 boys also claimed that they walked

"everywhere" [Karel], which from my observations was accurate. The boys were never escorted by adults to the youth centre: they always arrived on foot and left on foot together, with the exception of the rare occasions when they travelled by bike. For the most part, being able to walk to friends' houses, shops, bus stops, and the youth centres was crucial for daily life in the East End.

Some of the young people liked the 'nature' in the parks, or enjoyed listening to music whilst walking, but most commonly, friendship emerged as central to walking practices:

> *"I like to go with my friends. If [you] have friends you can talk to someone and have fun. I like to walk with friends. I walk with my brother, with friends. Having fun, go to ASDA, Greggs, spend our money, and then share with friends." (Jaka)*

> *"Say if I walked here by myself, I put my headphones in and it wouldn't even feel like I'm walking far. And my friends as well, like I feel like I'm more safe when I'm with my friends and it doesn't drag as long when I'm with my friends 'cos I've got someone to talk to." (Amelia)*

Christensen et al. (2011:240) state that, "children's mobility is primarily social, and that companionship is a central aspect of it". Moreover, Horton et al.'s (2014) study, conducted in new-build urban developments in south-east England with young people (n= 175 aged 9-16), showed that walking was more than "just walking": the young people rarely walked alone, and whilst walking was unremarkable to the young people, as a practice it was central to their friendships. Transport research assumes that walking is "a homogeneous and largely self-evident means of getting from one place to another" (Middleton, 2010:576) and yet, according to Middleton (2010), this understanding obscures other aspects of walking important for those engaging in the practice.

Walking or using public spaces with friends enabled the young people to negotiate their mobility within their potentially dangerous social environment: friends provided a sense of enjoyment and safety. Generally, the parks that the young people from Space1 considered unsafe at night were used in the day time and at night time, in the company of friends. Sycamore park, around the corner from Space1, was commonly frequented by the young people during the hours of darkness; however, they always went in groups: no one ever went outside of the youth centre alone. The boys from HIDE2 were also unlikely to be seen outside in the local area on their own: they walked to town together, walked around together, went to the parks together, and played football together.

However, in a context where ethnic conflict was common, for the HIDE2 boys, going to Ashmoor was risky even as a group: they said that they often avoided venturing there. Jaka explained that in "Ashmoor, there is only fights". Consequently, the boys stopped

using the swimming pool in Ashmoor: they decided to use a different pool in Fairview so that they had even less need to visit Ashmoor.

For the young men who had lived in the area for a long time, the social safety net extended to the wider social network. Feeling safe was linked to knowing 'everyone' and also being known by 'everyone' in the local area.

> *"…For me I feel completely safe, I've known everyone, I've lived here all my life so everyone knows me I'm completely safe. Erm, yeah I dunno about other people, maybe they feel different but I'm fine here." (B-Hive)*

Social strategies to negate risk have been seen in other studies. Producing a sense of collective safety through the company of friends, and familiarity with others in the local area, was highlighted in Watt and Stenson's (1998) study with young people in a town in the south-east of England. They found that personal familiarity and knowing people facilitated feelings of safety and made movement across invisible boundaries of youth territories possible. Similarly, Spilsbury (2005), who conducted a study regarding children's home ranges in Cleveland, showed that girls (aged 10-11) who lived in neighbourhoods with 'elevated-violence' had larger home ranges when out with friends or older siblings, and smaller home ranges when alone. A "(feeling) of safety that collectivity provided" was also enjoyed by the children (aged-10-12) in Mikkelsen and Christensen's (2009:54) ethnographic and GPS study in suburban Denmark: their mobility was largely based on companionship.

For girls, there was another layer that influenced their mobility practices, their desires to be with friends in public spaces, and their avoidance of places at night. Their gender, being girls, provided additional perceived risks:

> *Me: And do you go out on your own? Or do you always go out with friends?*
>
> *Alesha: Always friends*
>
> *Tony: On me own [he smiles and pulls a cheeky grin which suggests he might be joking]*
>
> *Alesha: Not in the dark! [Alesha says with a shocked face]*
>
> *Tony: Nah, I go out with friends as well*
>
> *Alesha: There are weird people around I need someone to protect us.*
>
> *Hen: How am I gonna protect ya?*
>
> *Alesha: Well you're gonna have to I don't wanna get raped!*
>
> *Me: Is that a genuine concern?*

Alesha: Yeh, everytime I go out, could be a rapist.

Jonny: That's a really weird specific concern

[Ant Laughs as do the boys]

Ant: boys, are you worried about that as well?

[Tony laughs hysterically almost falling backwards. And, as Billy is eating his pizza, he grins too.]

Alesha: Probably doesn't help cos I've watched loads of crime movies and that and I get so scared.

(Focus group, 25.02.15)

Alesha's words and the boys' reactions in the focus group suggest how stark the gender differences were in terms of feeling safe. Children's mobility has been shown to be conditional on gender elsewhere: the girls in Mikkelsen and Christensen's (2009) study preferred moving about with friends more than boys. A similar focus group study with 10-11-year-old children in the UK, showed that boys (10-11 years old) reported engaging in active play further away from the home when compared to girls (Brockman et al, 2011). Mikkelsen and Christensen (2009:54) suggest that the reasons for these gender differences concern girls being "socialized into 'feeling' more vulnerable, more cautious, and to act therefore more physically moderately than boys".

Gendered parental restrictions

According to Wridt (2010), children's mobility is heavily connected to their parents' values towards mobility, and the parenting norms they experience. Restricting children from certain places due to fear of potential risks has been seen in other studies of young children and parents in Australia (Foster et al., 2014; O'Connor & Brown, 2013; Veitch et al., 2006) and the UK (Horton et al., 2014; Seaman et al., 2010). Seaman et al. (2010) researched park use in two different SES areas of Glasgow and discussed how parents restricted or increased surveillance of their children due to safety concerns. The prime concern over their children's safety related to older young people, as their presence was equated with 'anti-social behaviour'. Horton et al. (2014) also found that walking practices provided mobility within areas that were "bounded" by their parents. 'Boundaries' were often connected to the parents' ideas about where 'dodgy' or 'unsafe' people spend time.

During my fieldwork, many of the girls from Space1 explained that they experienced some parental mobility restrictions; issues regarding parental restrictions rarely arose in conversations with the boys. The HIDE2 boys in particular were very mobile in the local area and only mentioned curfews for being home at night. As mentioned in the

introductory portrait, Hen experienced ambivalence between disliking her mother's desire to travel with her to places, and her own sense of fear on the streets. Alesha explained that her mum in particular did not allow her to go "like proper far" and would frequently text her if she was somewhere other than Space1. Most of the girls either got the bus home or were picked up in cars as they were not allowed to walk home alone at night. In contrast, Billy and Tony were supposed to text their mothers their whereabouts when outside the house; however, they often failed to do so, and although they were consequently "wronged in the house", they laughed about it.

O'Connor and Brown (2013), who discussed fear as a regulator of children's independent physical activity in their study with 24 parents of children living in a White middle class suburban area of Australia, suggested that adult anxieties paint 'landscapes of fear' (Tudor, 2003:239) for children. These 'landscapes of fear' are formed by positioning strangers as potential rapists, paedophiles, and abusers (O'Connor & Brown, 2013). In my study, these 'landscapes of fear' appeared more concerning for girls, or parents of girls, than for boys. Other studies have also suggested that parental restrictions are gendered. Foster et al.'s (2014) quantitative study of children's (n= 1231 10-12-year-olds) independent physical activity and parental fears in Perth, Australia, showed that parental fears of strangers, especially regarding daughters, were associated with lower levels of girls' independent physical activity (from adults). Hornby-Turner et al., (2014) also found, in their study in an economically deprived urban context in Northern England, that parental fears about safety in neighbourhoods limited the girls' (aged 9-11) active travel and physical activity outside of school.

However, in my study, parental restrictions were often mitigated by being with friends and were dynamic, changing with the young people's age. Some of the girls were happy with these restrictions, others felt frustrated by them, and others negotiated parental mobility restrictions. Alesha explained that her mum "wouldn't let us go out in the dark on my own. Like if I was with friends, but not on me own". She understood her mum's restrictions as a form of 'care' and appreciated it. Likewise, Amelia explained, "now that I'm older, she's [her mum] like, 'you can walk to get the bus', which I'm happy about because I like being independent". Leonie engaged in the most negotiations as she had 'strict' parental restrictions regarding her movement outside of the house:

> Leonie: "… it took convincing for me to come down here 'cos me dad was like, "aw what's the big fascination with Space1 all of a sudden, cos you never used to wanna go". And I was like, "well I never used to know it was on", and like he was like "where? who with? what time?". I was like, "bottom of Sycamore street, and who with, loads of people from school". And when he was like, "time?", I was like "4-8", and he was like,

"you're not staying down there 'till 8 o'clock". So it took 'em a while to let us stay down here 'till that late.

Me: So how did you convince them?

Leonie: I dunno, me mam used to meet us at Quick Fit (around the corner from Space1). So like I could stay down until 8 if me mam met us. And then eventually I just told me mum to stop meeting us 'cos like the weather was getting bad and then she was just like, "be safe on your way home".

After a few months of attending Space1 Leonie's parents became more relaxed about her attendance at Space1 and her abilities travelling there and back. Nonetheless, overall the girls experienced additional concerns and restrictions regarding their mobility in comparison to the boys.

This section has explored the nuanced differences in the young people's experiences of violence, group conflict, and other potential risks in their local social environments. These included feeling unsafe due to violent incidents in the past, or peer conflicts in the present, both of which influenced how young people perceived their local areas, and how they navigated particular places and used space. I argue that the young people were active agents in negotiating their mobility and uses of space. Their strategies for negotiating their safety included presenting the self as fearless, avoiding particular places altogether or at certain times of day, drawing on friends to create a sense of safety, and negotiating parents' spatial restrictions. The following section discusses how the young people were even more innovative in negotiating their socio-material environments in explicitly physically active ways.

5.4 Improvisation, innovation, and spontaneity in socio-material environments: mobility and daily physically active practices

This final section (5.4) of the chapter focuses on how the young people used physically active practices to negotiate the socio-material environment, drawing on relational understandings of place. In Chapter 4, I discussed how the young people's informal ways of being active were contingent on life-phase negotiations, time, and circumstance. Here, I discuss how informal physically active practices were also highly connected to space and place. Although I found that some of the young people highlighted 'barriers', such as not having enough gyms nearby, or 'facilitators', such as attending organised physical activity sessions with friends, these answers did not have much applicability to their daily lives. Instead, I discuss what is less well documented in previous literature: the ways in which the people negotiated their daily socio-material environments in innovative, improvised,

and spontaneous physically active ways. I describe how young people used the youth centres' indoor and outside spaces for fun spontaneous games (5.4.1), and innovatively used objects in the material environment for different forms of physical activity, including parkour (5.4.2).

5.4.1 Making space for fun physically active practices at youth centres

On numerous occasions, the young people were active in informal and unanticipated ways at or near Space1 and HIDE2. Forms of movement were often rapid and haphazard, and included pretend wrestling or fighting, playing on the Soft-play, chasing each other around the room, throwing items such as bottles or shoes away from their respective owners, and walking or running across streets to Sycamore park. Although the park was 'designed' for physical activity, many of the other spaces were not.

As this chapter has already discussed, places are in part produced by the practices and social relations of those who use spaces. In Lefebvre's (1991) terms, I suggest that the young people had to negotiate the rules of the *conceived* space of the youth centre in order to be physically active and have fun in the building. For instance, one afternoon Francis, Jay, and another boy threw cones across the room at each other in a game they called 'Dodge the cone':

> *In the main hall, Jay and another boy hold the large multi-coloured soft play half sphere structure up against their bodies as a shield before sprinting past the leather sofa frantically to pick up some plastic sports cones they had thrown across the room. They throw cones and have to dodge out of the way of them or attempt to catch them. Francis shouts at them, 'you went across the line'. There appears to be an invisible line dividing the teams. He is getting bombarded with cones and shouts 'stop it!', hiding temporarily behind the poster board which they have moved into the middle of the room. He comes back out, grabs some cones, and throws them at them. After watching them run about ducking and diving for a few more minutes, I ask Francis, who by this stage is a bit sweaty and red in the face, what the game is about. He says 'dodge the cone', excitedly. He follows this up with, 'it's like dodgeball but with cones', before stating, 'as long as it's controlled and not hurting anyone' whilst smiling as if he expected I was going to say that it was not OK to play.*

(Fieldnotes, 29.06.2015)

The way that Francis defended the game as 'controlled' suggests that it needed to be 'controlled' to be allowed in the space. The youth workers often restricted games they felt were 'too loud' or 'out of control' in the youth space: the young people were told to stop throwing items around the room or 'calm down' when they were being 'too loud'. These 'loud' and 'uncontrolled' practices were part of how the space was *conceived* (Lefebvre,

153

1991). The way in which Francis and the others negotiated the space for such games was through ensuring a sense of control and safety. On this and other occasions, the young people negotiated how to use the space in ways that were acceptable to the boundaries of the *conceived* space, but also part of how they *perceived* the space for fun. Martins et al. (2015), who conducted a systematic review of young people's barriers and facilitators to physical activity, stated that, 'fun' was the most frequently mentioned 'facilitator'. This was also apparent from my observations, and yet the young people also had to negotiate how they created physically active fun.

HIDE2 provided additional opportunities for novel physical activities, including bike rides, quad biking, ice-skating, national park trips, and outdoor cooking sessions in Hawthorne park. The boys found the activities fun and exciting because they rarely had opportunities to engage in new activities as a large friendship group. During these activities, the boys also engaged in spontaneous additional forms of physical activity. On organised led bike rides, the boys ran around on grassy areas and played on playground and gym equipment at the destinations. At the local bike hub events, some of the boys practiced flips using each other as props, played football, and walked around the park. When the boys attended a National park several times over the summer of 2015, they played Frisbee with a youth worker from the partner organisation who organised these sessions, and explored the natural environment, climbing and jumping off boulders, and running along old walls and up hills (See Figure 5.4). With the exception of the bike rides, many of the outdoor

Figure 5.4: Boys (including Karel, Miko, Ezzy, Reggie, and Jaka) climbing and jumping off rocks at a National park (left and centre), and Karel doing back a back flip in the park before starting a bike ride (right).

sessions led to spontaneous physically active practices, despite not being promoted as 'exercise' or 'physical activity'.

The HIDE2 boys were also innovative in their uses of the socio-material environment around the youth centre. Occasional semi-organised physical activities occurred at HIDE2 when specific volunteers were working: for instance, when B-Hive was volunteering he would often get the boxing pads out of the cupboard and stage some sparring with the young boys in the yard. This was his expertise: he knew how to box well and the young people admired him for this, enjoyed joking around with him, and so often tried it out. However, most of the boys' physical activity practices at the youth centres can be considered self-directed spontaneous uses of space. The following excerpt shows one of several occasions when the boys would bring or find some kind of ball and play with it in the space available: sometimes in the yard, others times in the street or alleyway.

Karel has a small squishy stress ball (just slightly smaller than a tennis ball) with him today. We are outside in the yard in the dark. There are some other boys, including Dal, chilling outside too. In the yard, Karel does a 'keepy uppy' with his ball. He kicks the ball against the wall of HIDE2, and as it comes back down he jumps and catches it, shouting 'woo'. As he does that and finishes what seems like a show, he says, "and that's why I have this" and smiles. He does the trick a few more times before returning inside for a short while before coming back outside. On this occasion, the other boys join in. It is so dark I can barely see the ball as they throw it. I realise this is part of the game. The darkness becomes part of the challenge and does not stop them playing. They throw it quickly back and forth to each other trying to see where it goes. The ball itself is dark in colour so it is particularly difficult to see. I say to Karel, "you need a bright yellow one so you can see it." He looks at me in a way that that makes me think he does not agree, walks past and says, "nah". The ball bounces across the wall and over the road. Miko shouts, "it's there!" and runs to get it before throwing it back. Another boy throws it back to him and then Chris says "me", to request Miko to throw it to him. He avoids Chris and again, Miko runs out into road and throws it from across the other side. It lands against the back wall and bounces in the middle of two bricks on the side wall and falls to the floor. The boys shout at the girl who is there with them to get it. She says "what would I run for?". Without her involvement they continue to play, throwing the ball against the wall. As it bounces off one time, Reggie jumps and twists off the wall to catch it. He squeezes the ball and says, "strength-squeeze that". It seems like he is showing off and taking risks. Next, Chris catches it and shouts to Miko, "I got it, not you, how do you feel?". Miko runs and jumps high to catch it. He is now visibly out of breath. Taz jumps high and catches it too. Miko then says, "Basketball man", as he passes it through his legs. Suddenly, Miko goes inside, saying, "gotta record". Chris continues for a short while, but after

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These kind of games were contingent upon someone, Karel in this case, having or finding a ball, and the dynamic of the group allowing for such games to occur. This spontaneous engagement in informal games in these spaces was sometimes in front of girls, and sometimes not. Often, when girls were hanging around outside, the boys tended to smoke and chat to them whereas, on other occasions, the boys played games that appeared to act as ways of showing off to the girls.

Brockman et al.'s (2011) focus group study argued that promotion of physical activity in local environments needs to take into account gender differences: they suggested that fields were positioned as boys' spaces, and no similar spaces were discussed for girls. However, Barron (2013) showed how the girls and boys created games that meant that the girls could use the spaces that boys has dominated, suggesting that young people are innovative in negotiating spatial restrictions. In my study, there were nuanced differences between the groups and how different sexes interacted spatially. The HIDE2 boys did not include girls in their 'parkour' practices, whereas they sometimes used physically active practices to show off in front of girls, or included them on the side lines. Within the group at Space1, the girls were included in physically active practices in the park, on the tarmac outside the youth centre, and inside the building. Via opportunities through the supportive social environment, many of the girls engaged in free-play and movement in the local area with the boys.

5.4.2 Mobile performances and having fun with fear

According to Brockman et al. (2011:5), "less 'managed' spaces are more appealing" for children (aged 10-11) and adult-designed playgrounds are currently unsuccessful in meeting children's needs or expectations in relation to play". Barron (2013:233) also found that, for the young people (aged 8-13) in her ethnographic study, streets and pavements were crucial places for meeting friends and socialising, and that "everyday objects like lampposts and trees" became "transformed and re-transformed by children, to suit differing physical play activities." For many of the young people in my study, objects in streets, alleyways, parks, and yards became props for physically active practices and games. The young people, mainly but not exclusively the boys, walked along walls; climbed trees, fences and other objects (See Figure 5.5); and practiced what they called, 'parkour'. For the young men, most of their practices and innovative uses of urban props

were strongly linked to their desires for fit selves and muscular bodies, discussed in Chapter 6 (sections 6.3 and 6.4), although Dew in particular engaged in "thrill" seeking activities. This section discusses the younger participants' fun practices for negotiating the material environment.

Not all of the young people talked about their use of props in the urban environment; however, the HIDE2 boys, Jay, and Kalehsi explicitly discussed and performed what they called 'parkour', 'hardcore parkour' or 'free running'. Parkour is differentially defined as a "course of obstacles" or "art of movement" (De Freitas, 2011), whereby *traceurs* "athletically and artistically negotiate obstacles found in the urban environment" (Kidder, 2012:1). Parkour is also a means "of moving from A to B as fast and efficiently as possible" (Saville, 2008:892). Since its increasing popularity in the USA and UK, by the 2000s, scholars were analysing the practice in a number of ways. For instance, Saville (2008:892), who conducted ethnographic research with *traceurs*, contends that parkour is a "practice intent upon re-imagining place" as it "seeks new ways to move playfully with places". Sharpe (2013) suggests that through re-conceptualising the relationship between urban space and the body, cultural theorists and social geographers often theorize parkour as a resistance to capitalism or state powers. Some draw on Lefebvre's (1991) triadic concept of space to explain how and why *traceurs* challenge the *conceived* space of the urbanists and architects. Ameel and Tani (2012) discuss parkour practices as a way of "loosening" space, where people use spaces in originally unintended fashions. However, others analyse parkour as a bodily risk and test of individual character (Kidder,

Figure 5.5: Kalehsi climbing a metal pole (left) and Liam walking and jumping off a brick wall (right).

2013b); as a performance of masculinity (Kidder, 2013a); and as an embodied mobile practice (Sharpe, 2013).

In line with the different analyses of the practice, there were different ways in which the young people discussed and engaged with parkour. Some attended classes in the present or past, whilst others joined in and attempted jumps or climbs for the first time on the streets. Only Jay and Kalehsi, who attended classes, discussed the practice as a discipline that included self-challenge and trust in one's body. Conversely, the HIDE2 boys often used the term "hardcore parkour", which suggested they viewed the practice as associated with youth and masculinity: as de Freitas (2011:209) states, parkour "has become a popular expression of youth culture". The HIDE2 boys used parkour moves for fun and efficient travel, taking short cuts across un-walkable terrains. Jaka explained about his route to and from HIDE2 up and over walls of some hospital grounds: he said, "if it's raining it's [parkour] faster to Bodham- if you don't, going around, it take[s] you ages".

The meanings concerning the boys' parkour practices became apparent in a multitude of ways, from observing the boys' interactions with the physical environment outside the youth centres, which often involved jumping on walls, walking on railings, and doing back flips off plant containers, to watching adventure sports and parkour *traceurs* on laptop screens. For example, one evening, I watched a Parkour YouTube video with Reggie on a HIDE2 laptop:

> *Reggie commentates with "easy" and "hard" during different performances in the video. As a traceur jumps from one post to another, Reggie says, "I could do that". We watch the parkour in awe and Reggie continues to say "easy" and "hard". At one point, he exclaims, "you know the guy that did that (he points to the young man spinning in the air doing a flip), I used to do that!". Reggie used to go to a parkour club up until age 9. He explains how you start off using a trampoline to do back flips before successively moving to a smaller floor trampoline to practice. As he speaks, he simultaneously moves and twists his body, mimicking the spinning movements that he learnt.*
>
> *(Fieldnotes, 24.03.2015)*

Reggie's continual commentary of "easy' and 'hard' expressed his attitude towards physical abilities in parkour: he rated each move against his own past or potential abilities. His commentary and his use of body movements presented his embodied experience of parkour. The young people's engagement with YouTube videos and YouTubers seemed to aid their imagination of how to climb and jump off obstacles, act as a source of inspiration, and influence their desires to be filmed themselves. According to de Freitas (2011), there were at the time approximately 500,000 parkour or free running videos

available for viewing on YouTube. Kidder (2012) explains that the internet, including such videos, influences how people interact with parkour and the evolution of parkour moves. However, parkour and parkour videos were also part of the boys' interactions with each other. The HIDE2 boys in particular explained that they free ran together, and they appeared to include those who were not yet able to climb high or jump far.

The parkour forms of movement and the crossing of private property produced risks. These risks included becoming criminalised by the police, physically harming one's body or potentially even dying. A few years previously, Jay explained that he and his friend had been chased by police when engaging in parkour around some derelict buildings. He explained that his friend got away, but that he fell from a height, became unconscious, and was found by the police. After this incident, he stopped doing parkour for a while but returned to the practice a couple of years later through paid gym sessions with Kalehsi. The HIDE2 boys' encounters with the police when engaging in parkour were due to traversing "private property and roofs", which was "not allowed" (Reggie). Reggie explained what happened when the boys saw the police: he said, "we run! But if we are stopped by police, they write names down", and moved his hand pretending to write. The police deterred the boys and confined them to certain spaces, and yet when it came to some spaces, namely the hospital grounds that they often used, the boys had strategies for negotiating surveillance and restrictions regarding use of space. Reggie explained: "You know by the hospital, there are cameras that caught us, but we jump on the roofs".

For those who engaged in parkour, the dangers and risks did not produce negative attitudes towards or full disengagement from the practice: they enjoyed the performance and potential dangers and risks of parkour. Fear and risk was shaped into something fun that could be played with. One night, I followed the boys with a video camera as they wanted to be filmed and photographed doing their parkour moves (See Figure 5.6). Karel said, as he ran and kicked off the wall to his right, "Basically blood, basically I'm free running right now. You don't pay when you are running so it's called free running. But, if you can free run, it's gonna be painful." He then ran and jumped up onto a bin, landing the jump in a pose whilst looking at the camera and shouting "hardcore parkour!". Shortly after, when he began to do a back flip off the joined up arms of Miko and Dal, he said, "if I die, don't post it anywhere".

Saville (2008) helps to explain how, for the boys, the negotiation of authorities, the risk of falling, and the personal challenge, became part of the enjoyment of the practice. Saville's (2008) paper challenges the negative understandings of fear that I discussed in relation to crime and fighting in Section 5.3 of this chapter. Saville (2008: 893) says that fear is often

Figure 5.6: Boys from HIDE2 climbing walls and landing off objects in the street.

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cast as the "ultimate villain", which holds true to research concerning children's physical activity and 'independent mobility'. However, Saville (2008) explains that, contrastingly, in parkour, fear becomes "a lived and mobile process" that can be "considered, cultivated and sometimes even enjoyed" (Saville, 2008:893). He further suggests that "fear can be a highly complex engagement with places, which can in some circumstances be considered more a playmate than paralyzing overlord" (Saville, 2008:893).

The elements of risk and danger in parkour that the boys had experience of, lead to exploring links with masculinity. Kraack and Kenway (2002), who conducted an ethnographic study in a coastal town in New South Wales Australia, explained that the boys in their study performed their masculinities through engaging in dangerous late night car racing in their own or stolen cars. These practices, or performances, were understood as highly intertwined with time and space: they were specific to the coastal town, where drastic social and cultural changes had occurred over the last ten years, including a reduction in 500 permanent jobs, significant amounts of outward migration, and depleted essential town services. Similarly, Kidder (2013a) analysed the practice of parkour as a "performance" and "accomplishment" of masculinity, whereby the young people, in his case all young men, spatialised gender. Although parkour is seen as an alternative to the hyper-masculine sports that I discuss later in Chapter 6.4, such as football or rugby, many scholars have noted that key aspects of parkour, such as embracing risk, danger, and

pain, are connected to notions of masculinity (Kidder, 2013a). Consequently, young women and girls are often excluded, albeit unintentionally by the young men, from parkour, meaning that the sport is extremely male-dominated (Kidder, 2013a).

For the HIDE2 boys, asserting their masculinities through parkour was connected to their presentations as fearless (discussed also in Section 5.2.2), and identities as Eastern European immigrants. The boys had a relatively large amount of contact with the police in the local area and at school (their school has its own police officer) regarding 'anti-social behaviour', their use of space, and their conflicts with White British boys. Carla felt that the boys' relationships with adults in authority tended to be symbolic of a lack of care: she said the school did not care about the immigrant boys in particular because they were seen as trouble, both socially and academically. Most of the boys spoke Czech or Slovak with their friends and families, and many felt that the East End was their home: some had lived in the East End since they were 4 years old. One can suggest that their feelings of home were a contrast to the conflicts they encountered and the racial nationalist discourses they experienced first-hand. The latter experiences may have suggested to boys that others, nationally and locally, did not want them to belong.

To help unpick the relationship between the boys' immigrant Eastern European identities, space, and parkour, I draw on the work of De Martini Ugolotti (2015), who studied parkour and capoeira in a group of young people from immigrant families in Turin, Italy. De Martini Ugolotti (2015) worked with 12-20 year olds whose parents had migrated from Eastern Europe, North and West Africa, East Asia, and South America. Instead of using the gyms, in which parkour was taught, these young people tended to practice parkour on their way to school, or whilst supervising younger siblings in parks. They "did not need a dedicated, regulated time or space" to practice parkour or capoeira. As the young people mentioned that urban space reminded them of their 'tolerated' presence in Italian society, despite being born and raised in the country, De Martini Ugolotti (2015:25) realised that their use of playgrounds, parking lots, and street corners enabled them "to declare in public, unrequested and irreverent, their presence in the city's life". Due to the HIDE2 boys' conflicts with White British boys, and their issues at school, I suggest that, similar to those in De Martini Ugolotti's (2015) study, engaging in parkour at various points can become a way of claiming ownership of space, space the boys were marginalised from but desired a stake in.

5.5 Concluding remarks

In the final section of this chapter I showed how the young people innovatively negotiated spaces and their socio-material environments, and etched out spaces for fun, friendship, and physical movement. Practices, such as parkour, acted as a means of presenting one's masculinity and claiming space. This chapter has also discussed how young people create meaningful places, use spaces, and negotiate their socio-material environments in safe, mobile, and improvised physically active ways. As Henderson et al. (2007:14) points out, context or place is not merely a backdrop to young people's lives: context and place "shapes values and meanings" that young people hold. I have used Massey (1994) and Lefebvre's (1991) understandings of place and space to re-think how the meaningful places in the young people's lives, the youth centres, the Box, and the streets, were created by the young people.

The youth centres were integral elements of the young people's social environments, and provided a means of getting out of the house and a space to socialise with friends. For those at HIDE2, who experienced peer conflict in their local area, the youth centre helped them negotiate peer conflict, racial abuse, and fighting. I have discussed how conceptualisations of the relationship between the street and young people play into how streets and public places are considered dangerous, and how young people using them are seen as troublesome. I suggest that these discourses can play a role in restricting young people's mobility, and need to be challenged if young people's daily physical activity levels are to increase. The young people in this study used public spaces outside of the youth centres: the young people etched out public spaces that they could use for their own sociality. They negotiated where they could go and when because there were clashes between groups of young people, which commonly manifested in fights or feelings of fear and intimidation. Due to feelings of intimidation or fear, the young people avoided certain spaces at certain times of day, moved around the area with friends for safety and enjoyment, or presented themselves as fearless.

However, in some cases, fear and risk became playful: parkour, and other innovative practices in the socio-material environment, often became more fun than organised physical activity in structured settings. I suggest that the insights regarding innovative, spontaneous, and improvised forms of physical activity are useful for those promoting physical activity to young people. Providing young people with safe and socially supportive spaces for unstructured or self-directed physical activity, and allowing them to be active in spaces in ways that clash with the *conceived* space of adults, can help young people be mobile and physically active in daily life, outside of PE, school, and organised sport club contexts.

The following chapter moves on from how the young people negotiated their local social environments to analyse how they viewed themselves and their bodies in relation to

physical activity. Although I found that time and space, discussed in this and the previous chapter, were important in shaping the place and meaning of physical activity practices in the young people's lives, the young people often discussed 'physical activity' and their 'physical activity' practices in more individual level terms: 'physical activity' was connected to individual health, body image, and capability.

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Chapter 6: Healthy bodies, appearance, and capability: gendered selves in an era of Healthism and Obesity discourse

Chapter Overview

Several scholars have explored the connection between young people's understandings of physical activity, health, and bodily appearance. In this chapter I address what is less well documented: I explore how understandings of physical activity, intertwined with health, appearance, and ability, were experienced through young people's biographies and displayed within everyday practices. In particular, I shed light on how many of the boys' and young men's understandings of bodily utility and physical capability were expressed in daily life.

The first part of this chapter (6.1) outlines the theoretical perspectives utilised: I introduce the work of Foucault, (1985), Connell (1995), and Bordo (1993), among other poststructuralist scholars. The second part (6.2) then shows how many of the young people's conceptions of ''healthy' and 'unhealthy' bodies were inherently entangled with healthism and obesity discourses. I argue, as others have, that the manner in which young people interconnect physical activity, diet, health, fatness, and their bodies can be problematic, as bullying, teasing, and judgements made about fatness can be damaging for young people. The third part (6.3) explains how many of the young people understood and/or used physical activity for changing their bodily appearance: most of the young people had gendered understandings of physical activity and did or did not engage in physical activity partly due to an expectation of visible bodily changes. There was a general understanding that physical activity aids weight-loss, for girls in particular, and builds muscles, for boys in particular. However, there were nuanced individual differences in opinions and rejections of idealised bodies. The fourth part (6.4) focuses on the boys and young men, discussing their physical activity practices as rooted in expressions of masculinity in a specific context. Within this section, I argue that fitness was "useful" for everyday living by detailing how young men and boys challenged and "bettered" themselves through physical activity, for their present circumstances and/or imagined futures. I begin this chapter with a story about Koffee, that illustrates some of the key themes that I then develop throughout the following discussion.

Narrative 3: Koffee

The same day I met B-Hive, I also met his best friend, Koffee. Koffee, who was 21 years old at the time, lived less than a 10-minute walk from HIDE2. He lived with his family, which included his mother, father, younger siblings (ages 9 and 7), and older sister in a semi-detached house on a housing estate. His family migrated from Bangladesh and he was born in another Northern city not long after their arrival: they then moved to their current city when he was 8 years old and joined the primary school where he met Dew and B-Hive, with whom he has been friends with ever since. Family and close friends were very important to Koffee: he played a vital role looking after his younger siblings, walking them to and from school most days. Similar to B-Hive, Koffee had a very close relationship with his mother and a different complex relationship with his father. Koffee's close friends played an important role in his life supporting him through many challenges, including his battle with depression, which began in his late teens. He therefore referred to his close friends, Aari, K-9, and B-Hive in particular, as his brothers.

Koffee grew up with the youth centre, and as such the senior youth worker and the space meant a great deal to him. During my fieldwork, he volunteered at the youth centre full-time, mainly running the music stream as he had experience in song writing and music production. During this time, he was unemployed for over a year and a half. Although he struggled financially, he explained that he did not search for another job because of the promise of funding applications for workers at the youth centre and his invaluable commitments as a volunteer. He desperately hoped to secure employment so that he could assist his family financially, instead of 'just being there' and not contributing.

Koffee was a competitive person. This side of him was particularly evident in relation to sport, physical activity, and gaming. He competed in athletics and running events for the city during his school years; however, when he left school these types of physical activities ceased to exist in his life. Competition carried on mainly through gaming, which he described as excessive at certain points in time.

In the early years of secondary school, Koffee and his friends experienced a great deal of violence. One of his friends described how Koffee had to become a fighter to stick up for himself in a school in an area which 'back then' was permeated by racism. Koffee said that he used to fight a lot, as did the other young men. On one occasion, Koffee was slashed with a knife whilst defending his house from bricks being thrown at it. He also ended up in hospital on a few occasions, the worst being when his face was kicked in and his jaw broken: he now has a metal plate in his jaw. Even though Koffee and some of his friends say that when they were younger they did not train to fight, during one group conversation Koffee revealed why he wanted to be strong and big 'back then':

> *"It looked good, obviously with the whole crew like frigging like ruhhh, but that's not why we did it… I just wanted to be like strong…like our fucking crew was jacked up man, [we] used to knock everyone…we were monsters man.... We looked more intimidating"*

Even though Koffee's main conscious motivations for starting to lift weights (and cans of paint when he could not go to the gym back then) may not have been as 'training' for fighting, it appeared necessary to look intimidating to other groups of young people in the

area and for some of your "crew" to be capable of fighting. Koffee's reasons for wanting to be strong were connected with violence in complex ways. He claimed that "if you were young and could pop out a friggin' muscle, you were the shit." However, this was not just about impressing girls or appearing masculine; it was heavily embedded within a local social environment that was saturated with conflict.

At the end of school, Koffee chose to pursue a music career; however, unfortunately, he frustratingly explained that it "went to crap" after a short while. Instead of continuing with education, he went out to work in restaurants and retail so that he could earn money to help his family. After his school years, structured physical activity and 'work outs' primarily remained part of his life through going to the gym. It was something he started in his teenage years but when he was 21 the gym played a major and very different role in his daily life.

When Koffee was not 'going gym', he explained that he 'gets lazy', reverts to playing video games all night, eats very little, sleeps badly, feels lethargic and tired, and not himself. Contrastingly, when Koffee was 'going gym' and doing physical activity, he felt 'alive', 'healthy', and 'active'. He explained that the prime factors stopping him from 'going gym' were money and laziness. He had been out of the gym for approximately 2 months in October 2014 when his sister bought him three months' worth of gym membership for his birthday. He was thrilled and continued to go 6 days per week for at least 1 ½-2 hours at a time throughout the time I knew him. He was able to continue attending after the three-month period ended because a new low cost gym opened nearby at the price of £10 per month. Koffee described on many occasions how the gym helped give structure to his days and weeks and added to his sense of well-being. His gym attendance became so routinised and habitual when he was 'going gym' that he got annoyed if he missed a day. For example, in November 2014, Koffee badly strained his wrist in a cycling accident on our charity bike ride. He was told to rest but explained that he could not stay out of the gym for a month as advised:

> *"I wouldn't stop. I know it's best for me to stop, but what else would I do in that time? Be in bed? That's what I used to do, I'd stay in friggin' bed, fuck that shit, fuck Final Fantasy[23]."*

For Koffee, the gym was a means of escaping his sedentary gaming activities, which he equated with feeling 'unhealthy'. The gym became his opposite of excessive gaming. The gym acted as a gateway to all physical activity as without the gym he felt he was inactive in most aspects of his day-to-day life.

Koffee's gym attendance was highly connected to physical goals he wished to achieve. He was interested in muscle weight gain and fat loss. He explained that every time he stopped "going gym" he would become a "skinny twig", and claimed he did not "look healthy". The body image and weight status that he worked towards was important to him in terms of self-confidence. He explained:

> *"I like used to be like really skinny, like just under 9 stone. I'm like 10 and like in these 4 months I've put on like just over a stone and a half… It helped build confidence in myself."*

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[23] Final fantasy is a science fiction action role-playing third-person shooter video game

When I asked him in what way it was related to his confidence, on one bike ride, he explained:

> *"I started to fit all my tops again. 'Cos like when I exercise, I would get like tighter tops and every time I would stop exercising they would look really big on me, but then when I do start exercising again they look small on me. So with all my top sizes fitting me again, it was just like, 'yeh'."*

He talked on many occasions about how goal setting was important for weight gain. He says,

> *"Well you don't wanna just do it for nothing, you need to have something you wanna reach, mine is the 70kg"*

Weight targets offered a means by which he could monitor his progression towards this goal. Progression in physical activity is often measured through visible impacts on the body. Progression, for Koffee, became a way of competing with himself. He used to compete with others in sports at school but post-school, in early adulthood, he 'bettered' himself by "beating" himself in the gym.

When I asked Koffee what was desirable about gaining weight, he explained:

> *"… you feel better, you look better, and it's about beating my own self, beating what I can do now, cos you know there is progression in what you are doing and I think looking good comes after, so it's a self-thing, about beating yourself, reaching your goal, and your body is just gonna get more in shape"*

However, I witnessed Koffee become frustrated by not reaching his weight goal. He worked hard at the gym, felt he ate 'well' (regular, and what he considered 'healthy', meals), and still did not put on weight. He also claimed that he lost weight quickly when he did not attend the gym. Nonetheless, he did not see his desired body weight as unobtainable. His motivations for weight gain were not just about appearance, it was about competency, capability, and an embodied experience of feeling or doing 'health'. He said:

> *"I'm not doing it just to get in shape. I dunno, just like I say it's the whole mind set of things, you automatically feel healthier and you eat healthier and it's about what you are doing"*

The feeling of 'healthiness' was important to Koffee and something he gained from attending the gym. He explained that 'going gym' made him feel hungrier, so he would eat more regularly, more protein where possible, and thus feel that he was being 'healthier'.

Monitoring himself by how much he weighed, how much weight he gained or lost, and how he felt, was one form of self-surveillance. Monitoring himself through how much weight he could lift (his capability) was another connected form of self-surveillance. When Koffee injured his wrist, he was greatly frustrated and often commented on his inability to lift gym weights he was lifting before the accident. On an occasion, in late November at the youth centre, a few weeks after his wrist injury, he explained why he could not stop attending the gym:

> *"Because [I am] scared I will get small. I won't, but still. I have to do little baby weights [says with disappointed face] because I can't lift heavy ones with this arm [moves arm to signal his injured arm]"*

He was lifting 40kg before the accident but had to revert to lifting 20kg afterwards so as not to injure himself further. Lifting half of his previous weight made him feel weak, whilst progressing in the amount of weight he could lift made him feel strong. Feeling weak also made him feel like he was losing muscle mass.

Judging himself on his capabilities also extended to outside the gym. For Koffee, being fit in the gym translated to being able to do pull ups on scaffolding (See figure 7.4), cycle up a big hill, or carry heavy music equipment with ease. Being capable was part of daily life and important for Koffee's imagined future self. He explained:

> *"two things I will not stop. I will always be keeping fit, you know … when I was skinny I would go running and now I'm going to the gym but I'm still very physically fit in every aspect and when I'm older I will still, maybe not as much, but like my music wouldn't leave and keeping fit wouldn't leave."*

He explained why he felt this way:

> *"Basically, when I'm older I don't want to be limited to what I can do…I think you should take care of your body, it's what is gonna keep you going for the rest of your life"*

This morality of self-care of the body was important for maintaining what I interpret as his future capable masculine self. Although some of the finer details of Koffee's story are unique, many of the themes concerning masculinities were evident in many of the boys' and young men's words, and the idea of self-monitoring and self-bettering was typical within the narratives of other young men in his friendship group. The connections between physical activity and body appearance were found in many of the young people's understandings, but the effects these understandings had on practices were inconsistent and contradictory. These themes will be explained and theorized in this chapter.

6.1 Theoretical basis: Foucault, masculinities, and femininities

Foucault, the philosopher or 'historian of thought' (Markula & Pringle, 2006), has played an important role in post-structural theory and research in the social sciences since the 1980s. Medical anthropologists have increasingly used Foucault's concepts of power and governmentality to comprehend how lives are influenced and formed by the structures of society (Samuelsen & Steffen, 2004). Foucauldian theory offers a means by which scholars can bridge the two polarities in medical anthropology: the political economy of health and the lived experience of illness (Samuelsen & Steffen, 2004).

According to Markula and Pringle (2006), Foucault's theories are very useful for understanding varied global and local sports and exercise contexts. In Foucault's earlier work, he focuses on how subjects are governed by technologies of power and domination. Many sports sociologists use such notions of governmentality to understand sport in society, ranging from analysing sport coaching (Taylor et al., 2016) and practices within rugby teams (Markula & Pringle, 2006), to comprehending how young people's bodies are governed through obesity discourses and biopedagogies in schools (Pike & Colquhoun, 2010; Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015). Others use aspects of Foucault's 'technologies of the self' to understand weight management practices in women's rowing (Chapman, 1997), sport, gender, and development programs in Uganda (Hayhurst, 2013), reasons why male youth invest in football in Ghana (Esson, 2013), and young people's constructions of fitness and health in Western societies (Atencio, 2006; Burrows et al., 2002; Garrett, 2004a; O'Flynn, 2004; Wright et al., 2006). These poststructuralist scholars use Foucault to unpick how young people's bodies are formed and inscribed with knowledge in a manner that influences their understandings of themselves and their involvement in physical activities. It is in an inductive manner that my own work comes to utilise Foucault, as the words and actions of the young people led me to explore this theoretical avenue; however, given the widespread application of his theoretical frameworks in this area, it is unsurprising that Foucauldian understandings are helpful in explaining aspects of my data.

When we talk about young people's understandings of health, physical activity, and reasons for being physically active, it is key to consider obesity and healthism discourses (introduced in Chapter 2.7) and therefore what Foucault meant by Power/Knowledge and discourse. Young people's opinions, understandings, and subjectivities do not arise from nowhere; they are formed within various social interactions, "are dynamic and multiple, constantly positioned in relation to the circulating discourses and practices" (Oliver, Hamzeh, & McCaughtry, 2009:93).

At the centre of Foucault's work is an understanding of subjectivity as the product of power, knowledge, and culture: the complex interplay of power and knowledge is what creates subjects (Mansfield, 2000). Foucault's understanding of subjects is contrary to how many people in Western neoliberal societies understand themselves. Danaher et al. (2002) suggest that, in Western neoliberal societies, people think of themselves as strictly individuals in charge of their own identities, lives, and meaning making, and that this idea of self-knowing permeates our society to the extent that no one ever questions it (including the young people I worked with). Therefore, the first step in the analysis that follows is to recognise Foucault's understandings of the subject or person as a political

entity, part of a community and national systems, constituted through discourses, and not as a specific entity owned by the self.

Power is understood not as an object, but as "a relational phenomenon" occurring or acting on and within multiple layers of social interaction (Samuelsen & Steffen, 2004:3). Knowledge, for Foucault, is said to be "a matter of the social, historical and political conditions under which for example, statements come to count as true or false" (McHoul & Grace, 1993:29). Discourse is described as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Discourses are not about objects; they constitute them and in the practice of doing so they conceal their own invention." (Foucault in Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015:466). Various authors' interpretations of Foucault's work suggest discourse refers to "relatively well-bounded areas of social knowledge" (McHoul & Grace, 1993: 31) that "constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern" (Weedon, 1987:108). For Foucault, discourse is where power and knowledge are joined; as power cannot exist without knowledge, Power/knowledge is used in his writings. In the case of physical activity, there are a number of discourses, including dominant healthism and obesity discourses, which shape young people's subjectivities.

However, young people do have some agency over their own lives. In Foucault's later work, he contemplates a form of governmentality in which individuals actively negotiate their own identities (Danaher et al., 2000) and become subjects by engaging in a process called the technologies or 'techniques of the self' (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Foucault describes these techniques as

> *Techniques which permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a*
> *certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on*
> *their own thoughts, on their own conduct, in a manner so as to*
> *transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state*
> *of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on.*

(Foucault, 1993:203)

The form of power that Foucault discusses operates within the 'technologies of the self', creating subjects who transform themselves by voluntarily engaging in a process called 'subjectivication' (Foucault, 1985). The mode of subjectivication includes four aspects which help analyse how an individual engages in the 'technologies of the self' and becomes a subject. These are the 'ethical substance', the 'mode of subjection', the 'ethical work', and 'telos'. The 'ethical substance' is the element of an individuals' behaviour that is concerned with moral conduct, and needs to be problematised. One's moral conduct may be acts, desires, and feelings. They could include one's thoughts or desires about having a healthy body, or being fit, and the acts carried out to achieve these desires. The 'mode

of subjection' includes the myriad of manners in which one can adhere to what is deemed 'ethical'. The reasons for engaging in 'ethical work' concerns enhancing one's life in some way, and could include wishing to feel 'healthier'. Ethical work is the work done on the self to 'transform oneself into an ethical subject' (Foucault, 1985:27), and as such could include physical activity.

However, when deciding upon which theoretical avenues to follow for exploring themes pivoting around the self, the body, appearance, and capability, some words of Gilroy (1989) resonated with me. Gilroy (1989:163) explained how theories concerning power, including those of Foucault, "seemed too 'grand'", often "gender blind", and "didn't help explain how power was reproduced at, and through, the level of the individual". However, Wright (1996) suggests that Foucauldian thought can provide a good starting point from which to discuss masculinities and femininities, as both are constituted through historically and culturally specific processes regarding the regulation of bodies.

Masculinities studies are largely informed by Connell (1995). According to Connell (1995), masculinities and femininities are what individuals move through and produce by engaging in 'masculine' or 'feminine' practices (Schippers, 2007). Paechter (2006:254) explains that 'masculinity' is commonly considered to be "what men and boys do"; however, she problematises this, stating that "what men and boys do" is diverse and varied. The use of Connell's 'masculinities', rather than 'masculinity', is important in recognising this diversity: Connell (1995) stresses that there are multiple masculinities: hegemonic, complicit, marginalised, and subordinate masculinities. These multiple masculinities operate on a hierarchy that is not fixed or trans-historical (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005); however, Connell (1995) states that generally subordinate masculinities are conflated with femininity, complicit masculinities realise the "patriarchal dividend" but do not embody hegemonic masculinities, and marginalised masculinities are embodied by racial or ethnic groups because hegemonic masculinity is associated with Whiteness. According to Swain (2000), Connell's notions of masculinities are particularly useful as power has been included in his analysis: Connell transferred the concept of Hegemony, originally coined by Gramsci in relation to social class structures, to the field of gender relations in the form of 'hegemonic masculinities'. Hegemonic masculinities are considered normative but not necessarily the most common form of masculinity embodied by men. Masculinities are considered "configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005:836). Thus, embodiments of masculinities, which effect individuals, relations between individuals, and institutional structures (Schippers, 2007) are likely to vary spatially and temporally.

Paechter (2006:257) suggests that masculinities and femininities are commonly defined in relation to each other and in relation to men and women: she states that "without femininity, masculinity makes no sense". Feminist scholars, such as Bordo (1993) and Young (2005), consider 'femininities' and 'masculinities' not as 'naturally' or biologically determined essences of a woman or a man, but as "loosely defined, historically variable, and interrelated social ascriptions to persons with certain kinds of bodies" (Gardiner, 2005:35). Paechter (2006:256) further explains that "femininities are not constructed in the ways masculinities are; they do not confer cultural power, nor are they able to guarantee patriarchy. They are, instead, constructed as a variety of negations of the masculine". Young (2005:5) states that femininities are "a set of structures and conditions that delimit the typical situation of being a woman in a particular society, as well as the typical way in which this situation is lived by the women themselves". Schippers (2007) explained that although Connell (1995) only talked about 'emphasized femininity', which serves the desires and interests of men, there are multiple femininities too.

Despite these social constructionist understandings that gender is relational, Bottorff et al. (2011) suggest that scholars in health research have tended to consider 'femininity' and 'masculinity' as separate, and 'femininity' as a 'uniform concept'. As gender theories aid interpretations of how health meanings, that encompass the body, are constructed within specific sociocultural circumstances (Rail, 2009), there is a distinct need to consider the diversity of femininities as well as masculinities (Bottorff et al., 2011).

In the following section, I discuss the young people's understandings of physical activity in connection to 'healthy', 'unhealthy' or 'fat' bodies, drawing on the concepts introduced in this section, and the healthism and obesity discourses introduced in Chapter 2.7.

6.2 Young people's understandings of 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' bodies: embodying healthism and obesity discourses?

Since the 1980s, scholarly thought surrounding the body has come to the forefront of anthropological and sociological theory. The body began to be viewed more problematically, critically, and historically, given the evocations of Foucault. The body is said to have become a "lively presence on the anthropological scene" (Csordas, 1994: 1). Concurrently, in recent years the body has become a central object of analysis when understanding young people generally (Hörschelmann & Colls, 2010), and young people's physical activity identities (Garrett, 2004b; O'Flynn et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2002). However, Monaghan (2001: 331), who discusses body builders' experiences, suggests that there has been less theorisation of 'healthy' bodies, "vibrant physicality" or "embodied pleasures"; it is more common for the ill-body to be a critically analysed in medical

sociology and anthropology. Recently, some scholars have focused on physical activity as an emotional experience of 'feeling' healthy (Randell et al., 2016); investigated children's understandings of healthy bodies (Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015); and theorised the role of the family in children's embodied physicalities (Dagkas & Quarmby, 2012).(O'Flynn et al., 2013)

Intimate relatedness of physical activity, health, fitness, and the body

Since the 1970s, in the UK and other Western societies, there has been an increasing "preoccupation with personal health as a primary- often the primary-focus for the definition and achievement of well-being; a goal which is to be attained primarily through the modification of life styles" (Crawford, 1980: 368). An increasing collection of research shows that young people comprehend health in purely corporeal terms, and thus judge their own and others' health, assumed behaviours, and moral worth based on bodily appearance (Burrows et al., 2002; Garrett, 2004a; Rail, 2009). The use of physical activity to produce 'healthy' and 'better' selves was a common theme emanating from the young men's narratives. The equation of fatness with ill-health, and conceptualisations of the body as a "machine", were prevalent issues in the young people's understandings of what constitutes 'healthy' bodies; however, they often took up and rejected discourses in complex and contradictory ways. These themes are discussed sequentially in the following sections.

Becoming a healthy, "better" self

Many of the young people in this study expressed, and had internalised, understandings of the dominant discourses regarding physical activity, diet, 'health', and 'fitness'. Phrases included, "keeping fit makes you live longer" (Marcel), "you need to be healthy to just look after yourself" (Geba), "Keeping healthy, keeping your body fit and everything. To keep yourself motivated really" (Lilly). Some of the young people took up these dominant discourses of individual responsibility more than others. Those who strongly took up these ideas, including Koffee and most of the young men, engaged in physical activity for reasons that they considered were intrinsic to their identities and personal preferences. Koffee's narrative illustrated how moral ideas concerning health and fitness are taken up and how physical activity can be used for becoming "a better self" (B-Hive). The analysis of B-Hive's words presented below more explicitly illustrates how the 'technologies of the self' can provide a conceptual framework for understanding how health practices and notions of self-responsibility are taken up by some young people, the young men in particular.

B-Hive had been involved in sports and weight training during his teenage years. In one interview, he talked about a moment in time after he had started boxing, when he was 16, that he considered a major moment of self-reflection regarding his health:

> "Well, what happened to me, I started boxing. I went sparring against this kid. And this guy was 10 stone, and I was about 17 stone, and he bust us up, popped nose, popped lip and everything. Erm, I was tired after 30 seconds. The next day I wanted to go on a run. I couldn't run a mile. Erm, I was fast but I couldn't run a mile or 2 miles or whatever. It was 'cos I was smoking. and erm what else, I would have a hang over the next day. That's why I stopped, because I had a reality check. Like I'm only 16 and I'm like this. I should be feeling like this when I'm in my 40's, you know what I mean?"

He explained further, saying that people who are

> "really really fat, they are gonna die like any minute, but when you see an 80-year-old man doing runs like that, you think he is gonna live 'til 100. You know what I mean. Er I, I like to live longer and like to live better you know, like before I go I don't wanna have a lot of illnesses or on my death bed or anything like that like, I like to be just the way I am now."

He continued to rationalise his own personal desires for physical activity, explaining how his engagement is a preference linked to his character traits:

> "I like to be a better self, but also I like competing, I like training for something and seeing the end results, seeing if I was good enough or wasn't good enough…and I like going on runs, I just become a better me you know."

B-Hive monitors and surveys himself in a variety of ways, from how much he can lift in the gym, to his body weight. He also says that he uses an icardio app "to check how much I've progressed and that- it's got like a progressions chart on it". He explains 'it's probably the best app i've ever got… tells you how many calories you've burned, tells you if you've done your best or your worst performance." This monitoring and balancing of "calories" was seen in his daily life too. One evening when I went to play badminton with the young men at a Sport's centre on the West Road, he said to me, "I'll tell you, the only reason I come here like is cos I've been eating loads of crap recently. Like today, I had a chip butty and then cake at work. I'm not going to say 'no'. YOLO [you only live once]."

B-Hive uses physical activity to "better" himself in the present and for the future: he has an imagined vision of an ideal future self that is healthy, fit, free from illness, and capable of living an active life. In this manner, he uses physical activity for managing his body and his ability to live. B-Hive and the other young men "bettered" themselves in similar ways to the

US minority ethnic and immigrant young men and women in Atencio's (2006) ethnographic study. Atencio (2010) argued that the young men living in the impoverished neighbourhood actively worked on their bodies and themselves to create healthy selves for sporting success. Sporting success, and the use of sport for "self-improvement", was particularly prevalent because of the presence of community leaders and corporations, such a Nike, who promoted "self-empowerment through sport" (Atencio, 2010: 155).

Considering the 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1985), one can suggest that B-Hive is constantly undergoing a process of subjectivication, as he voluntarily takes up specific disciplinary practices. B-Hive began to conceptualise his engagement in physical activities as a form of moral behaviour, judging himself as 'good' enough. B-Hive's 'ethical substance' was his behaviours and attitudes that were considered a problem by himself and by the police. The 'mode of subjection', which is the different ways of adhering to what is considered ethical and why one should engage in ethical work, are to enhance his life, to be happier and healthier. Boxing and other physical activities can thus be understood as 'ethical work'; however, he also engages in 'unhealthy' practices, such as eating "chip butties", which he then 'balances out' through physical activity. B-Hive's practices incorporate an element of self–surveillance: he measures his progression and performance through apps and through his abilities to run certain distances. Finally, what Foucault called Telos, the kind of being we aspire to be when we behave in a moral way, appeared to be, for B-Hive, a 'capable', 'fit', and 'healthy' man, who is at lower risk of becoming incapable because of health problems in later life.

The reason for pursuing 'health', is connected to the tenets of neoliberal rationality that Ayo (2012) applies to public health promotion. He explains the foundations of neoliberalism include, "minimal government intervention, market fundamentalism, risk management, individual responsibility and inevitable inequality as a consequence of choice" (Ayo, 2012:99). He argues, in Foucauldian terms, that power in public health promotion works not by dominant governmentality, but by inciting desires within individuals to change their own behaviours. Hence, there exists a focus on individual responsibility in healthism and obesity discourse. One can suggest that when combined, obesity and healthism discourses, and capitalist, global, and neoliberal systems, urge individuals to stay 'fit', avoid becoming 'fat' or 'unhealthy', and thus play a key role in creating the understandings of 'health', 'fitness', and 'fatness', that young people express.

Fatness and ill-health: A self-responsibility

Scholars claim the body has become "a central indicator of health and adopts a metaphorical function" (Johnson et al., 2013: 458). Featherstone (2010) argues that "consumer culture" urges people to focus on the body. The capitalist imperative is one of a

care of the self, including caring for one's wellbeing, one's body, and one's appearance. He claims that working on the body has become "an imperative, a duty, and casts those who become fat, or let their appearance go…as not only slothful but as having a flawed self" (Featherstone, 2010: 195).

Rail (2009) found an overwhelming presence of three dominant obesity discourses in the narratives of Canadian youth (n=144, aged 13-15): 'eating well', 'being physically active', and 'not getting too fat' (Rail, 2009: 145). Moreover, students (aged 12-17) who took part in an ethnographic study in their high school located in a low socio-economic area of New Zealand, understood a fat body as "an inactive body, of a person that has failed to exercise and/or eat 'correctly'" (Burrows & McCormack, 2013: 130). This construction of health is also seen even in very young children. For instance, nine year olds from a New Zealand school often comprehended unfit bodies as fat bodies that "sit on the couch all day" (Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015: 475). Similar beliefs and understandings permeated from the oldest to the youngest of my participants. Jaka, who was 13 at the time of interviewing and had lived in the UK for 5 years explained:

> "If you are fat, you need to have some exercise cos like otherwise stuff
> can happen to your heart and you be in hospital and you can die and
> that."

The words Jaka uses here, such as "you need to" reflects the way in which young people take up discourses relating to health and heathy lifestyle promotions. The link between physical activity, non-communicable diseases, and obesity was seen in much of the young people's talk but was also often intertwined with associated dietary behaviours. For example, in a paired interview with Hen and Kalehsi from Space1, the following conversation ensued:

> Me: So you said you see the point of doing exercise and physical
> activity and that even like walking and stuff that's physical activity. So
> what do you think the point is?
>
> Hen: So you don't get a heart attack and then die
>
> Kalehsi: So you don't end up like Zeena.
>
> Me: So you don't end up like what?
>
> Kalehsi: Don't end up like someone
>
> Ant: Who is someone and what she looks like?
>
> Kalehsi: Because she has like a Dixy chicken like every night that's why
> she is really big

Hen: I couldn't do that, not even me.

Kalehsi: I don't even like Dixy Chicken

Although the dialogue began with a question about physical activity it quickly linked physical inactivity to poor diet as an interconnected cause of overweight or obesity. Zeena's body size is used as a marker for identifying what behaviours she engages in. In this case over eating of 'junk food', viewed as outside of the girls' own 'normal' behaviours, thus rendering the very fat body "deviant" and "abnormal" (Grogan, 2010).

According to Powell & Fitzpatrick (2015: 472), common biopedagogies and interventions, that often explicitly focus on children's bodies and weight status, position children as "at risk of inactivity, obesity and even premature death", and thus reinforce fears of fat. According to several authors (Burrows & McCormack, 2013; Pike & Colquhoun, 2010), young people consequently embody the uncritical and simplistic understandings of health that are (re)produced through these channels; however, as we will see, many of the young people in my study accepted, negotiated, and/or rejected notions implied by varying discourses.

"Body as machine": acceptances and rejections

The young people's understandings of the body often reflected the "obesity epidemic's mechanistic conceptualization of the body" (Rail, 2009: 145). This so called "body as machine" model, which encompasses the exercise=fitness=health triplex (where health is determined by body size and shape)" (Gard & Wright, 2001: 536), also consists of an energy in energy out equation. It is heavily criticised by Gard and Wright (2005) for its over simplified conceptualisation of the human body as it implies one can simply universally control one's body in terms of fuel (food) and outputs (physical activity). However, many of the young people's understandings and actions in my study also challenged and/or negotiated these views of the body, often in diverse and contradictory ways.

For example, on the charity bike ride, I asked Dew if he felt any benefits of cycling, to which he responded, "Yeh, fitness like 'cos I smoke a lot, innit. Taking all the alcohol and all the smoke out my body through sweat." Dew describes a picture of how he conceives exercise to work on the body by eliminating toxins though 'sweating it out' so to speak. He suggests things like smoke and alcohol or 'bad' food can be rid from the body through exercise as it acts in opposition to other behaviours balancing the in-out equation of the 'body as machine' model.

However, this 'body as machine' model, and some of the young people's understandings of their bodies, was 'development' dependent. A child's body was sometimes considered to be not in its final form and not fully developed yet. This impacted on the ways that young people conceived of their changing bodies. For example, when discussing his younger self's eating and exercising patterns, Dew explained that the "body is not fully developed so health is not so important then". Whereas for others, their attitudes towards weight gain were related to life-phases: childhood and adulthood. For example, one afternoon Amelia and Alesha explained:

> 'I'm a teenager, I'm gonna put on weight. I don't really care at the minute- sounds really weird- hormones all over the place. But when I'm an adult I probably will [care] like'. (Amelia)

> "Cos like now our age, I know schools get worried if kids get obese and stuff. I think if you yourself you are quite big, you should go to the gym. But at the same time, people like me, I'm only young so I'm gonna eat like different things and you shouldn't worry" (Alesha)

Understandings of physical activity in connection with health and body size appeared to be challenged by some during adolescence when their bodies were changing and perceived as 'out of control' due to 'hormones'. Some of the young people I worked with felt they did not need to consider their future health yet because their bodies were changing. Hörschelmann and Colls (2010), amongst other scholars, utilise the spatial and temporal dimensions of embodiment to broaden comprehensions of young people's experiences of the body as they grow up, the *becoming* body. They explain how young people's bodies have become means of identifying the condition of the social body, both in the present and the future. The body can highlight and reproduce the fears and concerns within society with regard to young people. And yet, here we see how some young people reject these understandings of the body during this time of change.

The 'burning off' of 'bad' food was seen in understandings and often linked to bodily appearance and weight. For example, in a paired interview with Haz and Alesha I asked, "why is getting fit important?":

> Haz: I eat a lot of junk food so probably too much so you can't really lose it…Like if you do eat like good foods, but it doesn't have to be like all the time. Like, usually when I'm having my tea, I usually have salad with it. It's like not just like a burger chips and beans or whatever, it's like-

> Alesha: You eat loads though! You can eat loads. And he just like burns it all off, it's so annoying.

> *Haz: I used to have one packet of five cookies[24] every day before school. I'd finish them before getting up to school, which would take us fifteen minutes… but I didn't put on any weight. But I dunno, I am quite active and do things so guess it works out.*

Haz viewed physical activity as a way of balancing out his consumption of 'junk food' and legitimises his consumption of 'junk food' by eating 'good foods'. As he is slim, he feels that he does 'enough' exercise to counterbalance his energy intake.

Understandings of the relationship between body size, energy expenditure (physical activity), and intake (food) were diverse and sometimes contradictory. Mechanistic conceptualisations of the body and the effects of exercise or diet on the body were occasionally rejected. For example, although on some occasions Hen reproduced discourses that implied a causal relationship between inactivity, unhealthy food, and fatness, she also rejected how fatness, food, and bodies were discussed in school:

> *"Like in science, we are doing about weight and stuff the only stuff they went on about was this is overweight, this makes you fat, don't eat too much of this. And then the teacher was talking about someone who ate a whole bag of biscuits and was going on about 'what a fat person'. But that doesn't mean you are fat because you can just have a really fast metabolism and not be aware of it, or a really slow metabolism and not be aware of it... if you look at how much I eat and how I am, it doesn't add up."*

Hen questioned the extent to which one can judge a person's behaviour based on their body size and vice versa, showing that aspects of dominant discourses are challenged. Fitzpatrick (2011a), who used Bourdieu's concepts of *field, capital,* and *habitus* to understand how the young people viewed health and PE, argued that young people had to negotiate two *fields* of health discourses in school: the dominant obesity research and government health strategies *field,* and the critical (sub) *field* of health and physical education*.* Through a combination of participation observation and interview data, Fitzpatrick analysed how these two *fields* were interwoven and connected to other *fields* concerning popular media, and how the young people were often conflicted between them. Similarly, Fitzpatrick (2011a) observed a girl joking about how fat her thighs were in one class, whilst in another class the same girl explained that "magazines try to make people feel bad" and that "bigger people are fit too". It appears that the contradictions in young people's understandings and simultaneous rejections and acceptances of

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[24] *The cookies that Haz refers to are the large soft fresh baked cookies that you can buy in packs of 5 from many local shops for £1-£1.50.*

discourses reflect the complex interplay of differing discourses they experience in daily life.

For those considered 'overweight', the mechanistic view of the body sometimes equated to self-perceptions of laziness and inactivity when compared to slim peers. Francis, who thought of himself as 'overweight' explained:

> *"They come here and they''ll just say right, they'll go out and either nip to the cooperative and they'll buy some cookies or biscuits or they'll go to the chip shop and buy chips and kebab and they'll walk in and in all fairness that isn't very healthy but these people I assume would do quite a lot of exercise since not many do get overweight. But most people who like myself, who are lazy and don't do much physical activities and mainly just don't have the time for it because of all the school and things then they'll eat a thing for quick and sheer convenience and then they'll just build up the fat and everything like that that they don't use in the physical education"*

Francis judged himself negatively based on assumptions about what bodies say about individuals' behaviours. Despite recognising the challenges faced regarding exercise and diet, primacy is given to laziness and connected to his body size.

There were other contradictory self-assessments, especially for those who could be deemed 'overweight', or who engaged in regular exercise and ate a 'good' diet, but maintained fat on their bodies. For example, Geba, a young man who the other young men sometimes talked about as and teased for being a bit 'big' or 'fat', explained the following:

> *Geba: I think I've got a slow metabolism. Even if I eat clean, I look big...I feel healthy but I don't look it.*
>
> *Me: How do you mean?*
>
> *Geba: I don't know. If a person sees me he is not gonna say, 'oh you're healthy guy', you know what I mean? They not gonna thought that until they seen me participate in whatever they doing. So they don't really know so you can't really judge people by how they look. But I feel healthy.*

Geba rejects the notion that fatness always equates to being 'unhealthy' or a lack of enjoyment and ability in physical activities, and yet he still feels that others would not consider him 'healthy' due to his size. A similar rejection and acceptance was found in two girls who had been bullied for their weight. When I asked the girls in a focus group why

they engaged in physical activity, Kalehsi shouted, "to prove I'm not fat!". Cathy said later on:

> *"Some people who [are] bigger than other people are sick of other people. They do it [physical activity] to prove it, to show they are not any worse than other people, they are just the same. They can do whatever they wanna do too."*

Kalehsi and Cathy recognised the fat=inactive+unfit equation but explicitly rejected that they or others were unfit or inactive because they had fat on their bodies. Some of Kalehsi's friends (Leonie, Mary, Lana, and Lilly) considered themselves somewhat 'inactive'; however, they suggested that Kalehsi was a 'typical inactive' person because she was very 'overweight'. Ironically, Kalehsi was one of the few girls who repeatedly said she enjoyed PE and being active.

The relationship between physical laziness, physical inactivity, and fatness, also noted in other studies with young people (Burrows & McCormack, 2013; Rail, 2009), is considered problematic as such understandings have contributed to ideas of what it is to be a 'moral' or 'ethical' person, which has led to negative or "harsh self-assessments not only of their health but also of their own and others' personal capacities and dispositions" (Burrows & McCormack, 2013: 130). Although I saw contradictions and rejections of this dominant discourse, some individuals still felt they had to defend themselves and that others would judge them negatively. The conflation of fitness with fatness can be damaging to young people's overall self-concept and body satisfaction (Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015).

By discussing how the young people's often contradictory constructions of physical activity and 'health' are shaped by healthism and obesity discourse, and not solely owned by the self, this analysis has shown how fatness is equated with ill-health, and how the body often becomes a means of judging one's own and other people's health. Drawing on the 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1993), I have also explained why young people feel that they should be 'healthy', and why some young people work to become 'healthy'. Rail (2009:151) argues that constructions of health and the body, discussed in this section, are "tied up with the larger discourses of conventional masculinity, femininity and heteronormativity". Hence, the following section discusses how gendered practices and gendered understandings of physical activity, although not often explicitly vocalised as connected to health, are entangled within healthism and obesity discourses in a myriad of ways.

6.3 Gendered bodies: differences in perceptions and practices of physical activity for appearance

This section addresses how bodies are gendered and how physical activity is understood by different genders for purposes of physical appearance. Drawing on literature regarding femininities and masculinities, I explain how the girls, boys, and young men made connections between physical activity and desirable and undesirable bodies. Many of the girls tended to understand physical activity as a practice that keeps the body 'in shape'. I discuss how an entanglement of healthism, obesity, and femininities discourses serve to produce and strengthen these understandings, and how girls themselves tended to reproduce or reject these discourses and understandings, albeit in slightly different ways. Contrastingly, although many of the boys had similar views, there were subtle variations regarding how they considered physical activity as a practice for maintaining or shaping the body. Generally, the boys tended to put particular emphasis on the connections between fatness and what I interpret as incapability, and muscularity and what I interpret as capability. I use an extract from K-Z, who worked to avoid being emasculated and bullied, to further discuss how young men and boys reproduced, negotiated, and rejected ideas associated with fatness and muscularity.

6.3.1 Femininities, female bodies, and appearance

According to Johnson et al. (2013), the connection between physical activity and body fatness is so pervasive in young women and girls' understandings because low body fat is presented as a healthy ideal, whilst a gendered feminine body is also linked to slenderness and bodily perfection. It is therefore unsurprising that the girls commented on the physical effects of exercise on the body and reproduced discourses that link physical activity to fitness through slimness and looking toned (Garrett, 2004b).

Research showing the intertwined relationships between fitness, health, appearance, and bodies is often based on formal interview data within the school context. Although some ethnographic work has been conducted (Fitzpatrick, 2011b; Hills, 2007), little work in this area has been undertaken with young men and women outside of the school context, with the exception of Atencio (2006, 2010a, 2010b). Although Powell and Fitzpatrick (2015) note that the equation of fitness with non-fatness was reproduced outside the primary school context in New Zealand, further discussion is needed to understand how these 'truths' play out in young people's daily lives as they transcend adolescence. Using notions of femininities and Foucauldian thought as starting points, this section addresses the multiple discourses that girls negotiate and the ways these can play out in daily life.

Most of the girls in my study engaged in unanticipated, spontaneous, informal, and fun forms of physical movement when at the youth centres. They did not participate in these activities due to a desire to lose weight; and yet, the meanings they had regarding physical activity were often connected to shaping the body. This was best illustrated by my observations at Space1 one afternoon and a conversation I had with Alesha:

> *We were outside Space 1 in the tarmac car park area. One of the boys, Jay, has ridden his bike over to the youth centre and Alesha asked if she could have a go at riding it. As Alesha rode up and down the pavement outside the youth centre, sitting on the seat then standing on the pedals, she briefly chatted and laughed with her friends. As she was clearly enjoying herself, I asked, 'What do you like about riding the bike then?' She replied, "Not only I'm having fun, but you can lose weight can't you? If you got into routine of doing it, you'd notice a difference I think." We talked about whether she would consider getting a bike and she said "yeh, but the thing is, I ride it (this bike) here but if I bought one, I wouldn't ride it". When I ask why not, she explains, "I just feel like I don't really go anywhere except come here, and I wouldn't ride a bike here".*
>
> *(Fieldnotes, 14.05.15)*

It became clear to me that cycling was not conceived as a possible part of her daily routine for travel, and that it was not desirable to cycle to Space1. The idea that cycling could make her lose weight and change her body was part of what she thought she might gain from it. Even though she did not see herself as a 'sporty person', she said that PE was sometimes fun and seemed to enjoy informal physical activity when at the youth centre. Although she often explained that she took part in physical activities for fun, she detailed how sometimes, when she could feel herself 'getting fat', she was motivated to go running with her Dad who she said often told her that she was not active enough. Nonetheless, she rarely went for a run with her Dad, who she saw on weekends, and said "sometimes I don't see a difference, but I think you have to keep it up to see a difference". Seeing "a difference" on the body from going on a run was something she expected and the lack of immediate visible change seemed to play into her lack of motivation for engaging in certain types of physical activity, such as running.

Amongst the young people, there tended to be an assumption that physical activity would, if done effectively, produce visible bodily changes. For many of the girls, physical activity was partly understood as a practice that was used to change one's body, which included

losing weight and thus gaining confidence. The girls often explained that the purpose of physical activity was to "get rid of this" (Kalehsi touches her 'fat' stomach), to "keep this" (Jemma touches her 'flat' stomach), or to "get a figure, perfect figure" (Hen). Fitness was also recalled as a means of "keeping your body in shape" (Leonie). Grogan (2010:41) claims that "slimness is generally seen as a desirable attribute for girls and young women in prosperous western cultures", and Bordo (1993:205) suggests that "women in our culture are more tyrannized by the contemporary slenderness ideals than men". Contemporary images of female attractiveness oscillate between thin, toned, and athletic bodies, and women are urged to fit these narrowly defined bodily ideals (Bordo, 1993; Markula, 2001). Key 'problem areas' of the body tend to be the mid torso and low torso or stomach and hips and buttocks (Grogan, 2010).

For some of the girls, these body ideals appeared to produce body dissatisfaction:

> *Me: Why do you do your circuits?'*
>
> *Cathy: "I have very low self-esteem and I don't like the way I look"*
>
> *………*
>
> *Mary: "cos like I put on like some weight from what I did and then like there's like there are certain parts of like, say my legs and stuff that's like, that I don't exactly like fully, erm so just to get them toned and everything."*

Recently, Meier and Gray (2014:4) found that adolescent girls' "Facebook appearance exposure" (Facebook activity dedicated to photos) was positively correlated with an "internalization of a thin ideal" and negatively correlated with weight satisfaction, suggesting that certain appearance focused uses of social networking sites may be worsening body dissatisfaction in girls.

Bullying and teasing of fat bodies is also said to further body dissatisfaction and reinforce understandings of what is a 'healthy' and 'beautiful' body (Beale, 2010). Cathy explained that she had issues with her body and "self-esteem": she had been bullied at the start of secondary school so transferred to the current school in Year 8 as a solution. Kalehsi also showed an explicit dislike of her body: she was bullied for her weight and experienced mental health issues. In one PE class in particular, Kalehsi felt very uncomfortable: she recalled how the teacher had everybody weigh themselves. This incident shows how much PE reproduced the link between 'health' and 'fatness'. Kalehsi became incredibly upset and angry and retrospectively, one evening, she explained that she recognised her overweight status but questioned how standing on scales in front of peers would help her as it only fuelled bullying.

James (1986) and Beale (2010), whose studies were based in Northern England, discuss how the body was used as a site of bullying in two different groups of adolescents. Beale (2010) explained how the young people's bodies played a vital role in identity formation and expression, and how stigma and stereotypes influenced the young people's attitudes towards health. She described the hierarchies of bodies in relation to stigma, showing how individuals were able to assert a sense of self-worth by stigmatising others with less 'normal' bodies.

Many of the girls' reasons for comprehending physical activity in connection with body management was not only connected to ideal 'feminine' bodies; it was more complex, multifaceted, and embedded in the ways that the girls understood and negotiated healthism and obesity discourses as well. A number of the girls who did not identify as 'sporty', felt to some degree 'inactive', and expressed a dislike for physical activity; and yet, some said that they were considering joining a gym in the future or occasionally already went to the school gym in the present. For instance, Leonie explained that she enjoyed the treadmills because she felt they were more fun and appealing than running around a field or chasing a ball. Hen, who explicitly detested 'physical activity', expressed a desire to join a gym and engage in "stuff that would make us stronger", more "toned", and "flexible". Jemma felt that the treadmill and bike in the gym were "better exercise" compared to sports she had previously stopped engaging in. Lilly explained that she wanted to engage in the gym when she was older to "just stay healthy just cos I don't wanna get like plumpish or anything. So I just wanna stay healthy and go gym and eat a bit healthier." One can suggest that these "better" forms of exercise found in the gym are presented by the fitness industry as a means to shape bodies, and prevent bodies from becoming fat or 'plumpish' and therefore 'unhealthy'.

Markula (2001) claims that women's magazines add to this complex arena of obesity discourses by reproducing the notion that slim and toned female bodies are attractive, whilst simultaneously linking attractiveness to health practices. Duncan's (1994) analysis of *Shape* magazine argued that the magazine content urged women to engage in exercise, diet, and make-up practices as means for changing their bodies from 'fat' and 'unhealthy' to 'thin' and 'healthy'. Duncan (1994) suggested that the primary mechanisms evident in the magazine, 'feeling good means looking good' and 'a rhetoric of personal initiative', can be equated to "Panoptic mechanisms" (Foucault, 1980). Using Foucault's ideas of power/knowledge, one can also suggest that the reason body discourses are so influential in producing certain beliefs is due to their normalising effects. For instance, Annie explained: "I think it's just like they wanna be like everyone else, they wanna be skinny", despite 'everyone else' not actually having these imagined 'normal' bodies. Garrett (2004b:224) argues that the lack of institutional challenges to girls' self-monitoring

practices shows the extent to which "'thin' is beautiful and 'fat' is ugly" is normalised and "part of Western hegemony".

More recently, one can suggest that the appearance-based content and 'liking' mechanisms on social media sites may be acting in a similar way: researchers have suggested that social media usage may create a "participatory panopticism, an omniopticon" (Mitrou et al., 2014:1). Markula (2001:238) suggests that such mechanisms found in *Shape* magazine, and now potentially in social media sites, coercively urge women to self-monitor their bodies in pursuit of an ideal 'healthy' and 'feminine' shape so that the body becomes a "site of constant self-scrutiny". When both discourses are combined, these mechanisms become highly influential on women's beliefs and feelings concerning their appearance and bodies.

Normalising effects of ideal body discourses may, in some cases, create a *belief* in the need to regulate the body without the continued *action* of regulation. Many of the girls in my study expressed a recognition that they 'should' engage in physical activity, and yet few reported engaging in organised physical activities outside of school PE at the time. Only Jemma reported engaging in exercise out of school PE (in the school gym) with the intention of keeping her body slim, whereas many of the girls expressed some concern over their bodies but did not engage in physical activity to alter their bodies, often saying they could not "be bothered" to engage in physical activity. Some suggested that girls "can't be bothered to do the physical things" (Lilly), describing girls as 'lazy'. The theme of laziness, discussed in Chapter 4, was therefore somewhat gendered as well as age-related. Rail (2009), who also found the young people in her study recognised they 'should' engage in exercise but rarely reported doing so, viewed the young people's disengagement from physical activity as forms of *partial* rejection of techniques from schools and public health messages that aim to discipline youthful bodies. Rail (2009) considered their rejection partial because, similar to many of the girls from Space1, the young people remained concerned about their bodies.

Overall, the girls from Space1 were, albeit to different degrees and in different ways, concerned with their appearances and beauty, which were connected to body ideals. Several of the girls enjoyed using make-up and watched make-up YouTube tutorials. Alesha and Amelia, in particular, were interested in beauty, hair, and make-up: Amelia produced her own hair and beauty YouTube channel. Beauty and its link to weight and the body was best illustrated by Hen, who recognised and challenged assumptions about body size:

> Hen: … when I eat I don't put on weight, which bugs us… Cos like when
> I was little, I used to be really skinny and you used to be able to see me

ribs and everything, and everyone started calling me thin and a twig and everything. And I just sort of like hated it. I just didn't want to be skinny.

Me: What was so bad about being skinny?

Hen: I just don't like the word 'skinny', cos 'skinny' is sort of like the equivalent of the word 'fat'. I'd much rather be called fat than skinny and anorexic.

Me: Why do you prefer to be called fat?

Hen: Just would.

Me: Is it about being normal?

Hen: Yeh, sort of like normal but then not normal. I don't want to be the size 0 model that society says you should be.

Me: Does society say that?

Hen: Yeh, but then at the same time it sort of says, 'it's OK to be fat'. Cos then you get them two sides, then this happens and everyone is going on about being skinny for too long now they are saying like fat is beautiful. Then they've been comparing fat people to skinny people saying this is beautiful this is not. No, that's not how it works, this is beautiful, this is beautiful, there isn't a weight limit on beauty.

(Interview, 18.06.15)

Hen rejected thinness and the word "skinny" as she did not wish to be associated with what have been described as low value, abnormal, and pathological bodies of 'anorexic' women or size zero models (Bordo, 1993; Rail, 2009). A US study categorised people's negative perceptions of anorexia into fear and exclusion, self-attribution, and self-responsibility (Stewart et al., 2006). All of these stigmatising views, which surface in popular media, are said to place anorexic people outside of the 'normal' and 'healthy' experiences of non-anorexic people (Rich et al., 2004). As many discourses construct slim bodies as 'normal', 'healthy', and 'beautiful', they simultaneously position too "skinny" or *under*weight bodies and too *over*weight (fat) bodies as abnormal or deviant (Webb et al., 2008).

Wright et al. (2006) suggest that, despite being subject to influential discourses, young people are not passive absorbers of dominant healthism and obesity discourses: they negotiate, reject or reinforce discourses in daily life. However, despite questioning beauty ideals and recognising what "society says you should be", Hen continued to judge herself and others within the contradictory concerns regarding fatness, thinness, and beauty. Hen's discussion of "fat is beautiful" reflects the feminist positive body image or Love Your Body (LYB) discourses (Gill & Elias, 2014), which aim to educate young girls and women

to reject unrealistic idealised bodies (Grogan, 2010) and promote beauty at every size. As LYB discourses are said to be "positive, affirmative, seemingly feminist-inflected media messages, targeted exclusively at girls and women" (Gill & Elias, 2014:179), they include media campaigns that tell women, you are "beautiful just the way you are" (Gill and Elias, 2014:180).

Consequently, a web of contradictory discourses is produced, in which girls are positioned and have to negotiate. The body becomes a "site of contesting systems of values and beliefs about what is normal and desirable" (Wright, 1996:63) and creates confusion and conflict in girls' understandings of their own and others bodies, which should, in whatever form, be 'loved'. For instance, Alesha explained:

> *"I think it's important to be healthy but I don't think people should be left sitting in the house just like watching TV and stuff all the time. I think they should like go out with their friends but I don't really like going out for exercise cos it's like kids like sometimes kinda like feel pressure to feel a specific size or something because of like models on telly or something, or like if their friends are like thin or something. I just think you should just be happy with your body."*

Alesha touches on the moral value of physical activity and connects this was body size, whilst reflecting LYB discourses. She also recognises "models on telly" and "pressure" to be a certain way, just as girls in Johnson et al.'s (2013:467) study recognised "the normal trend of being skinny". In Johnson et al.'s (2013) study, the girls challenged feminine bodily ideals but expressed a "power struggle…between resistance and acceptance of discourses" with regards to slimness (Johnson et al., 2013:46). Fitzpatrick (2011a:361) also explained how young women can be critical of dominant health discourses and simultaneously reproduce the notion that "PE keeps us thin".

As mentioned previously, Fitzpatrick (2011a:355) argued that the young people's understandings in her ethnography could be viewed as "complex responses" to two "fields of production": the *field* of dominant obesity discourse, and the critical (sub) *field* of health and physical education. Alesha's understanding that you "should just be happy with your body" raises the role of another 'field': LYB discourses, and the potential negative implications of such discourses (Gill and Elias, 2014). Despite Alesha's words, Alesha was not always happy with her body: on one occasion, Tony told Alesha that the roundabout in the park next to Space1 was not rotating properly because she was too heavy for it. Alesha consequently spent the entire evening at Space1 upset. She felt that boys do not think about what they say to girls or understand that 'body image' and 'self-esteem' are large issues for girls.

Bordo (1993) argues that a knowledge of feminist cultural relativism does not "empower… individuals to "rise above" their culture or to become martyrs to feminist ideals" (Bordo, 1993:30). In Gill and Elias' (2014:180) critically reflective paper concerning LYB discourses, they suggest that these discourses "do not represent a straightforward liberation from tyrannical beauty standards, and may in fact instantiate new, more pernicious forms of power that engender a shift from bodily to psychic regulation". They explain that LYB discourses contradictorily discuss the structural patriarchal systems which position women's bodies as "difficult to love" and create a "profound and enduring broken relationship with the self", whilst simultaneously claiming that the 'power' is in women's hands, and that women just need to "slough off" their "self-generated" body hatred (Gill and Elias, 2014:190).

Within a multiplex of contrasting discourses, on the one hand, peer pressure and normalising effects of mutually reinforcing discourses (healthism, obesity discourse, slender body ideals) make rejection of those discourses particularly difficult, whilst on the other hand, LYB discourses position girls as needing to love their bodies no matter what they look like. I suggest that girls may find themselves stuck, disliking the fat on their bodies, but simultaneously feeling they should love their bodies, and question what happens if girls are neither slim or toned or love their bodies?

6.3.2 Masculinities, male bodies, and appearance

Several studies show that young people (young women and men) are concerned about their bodies and play sports or engage in fitness practices and exercise to 'lose weight' and perfect their bodies (Burrows & McCormack, 2013; Johnson et al., 2013; Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015; Wright et al., 2006). However, literature regarding body image (Grogan, 2010) and physical identities (Garrett, 2004a, 2004b) overwhelmingly concentrates on girls and women's bodies, despite suggestions that men and boys are experiencing increasing pressures to gain ideal masculine bodies and undergo 'unhealthy' practices to meet unrealistic ideals (Azzarito, 2009; Monaghan, 2001, 2008). Monaghan (2008) stresses that men should not be dismissed, as the inadequacy attached to fatness is not purely a feminine issue (as it is positioned to be). Instead of the body being linked to beauty, as it often is for girls, Frost (2003) explained that the male body is a means of identifying a man's abilities, including being strong and able to stand up for himself. According to Connell, "true masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies—to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body" (Connell, 1995: 45). This section will address the ways that boys perceived desirable or undesirable bodies, and discuss how boys accepted, negotiated or rejected entangled health, obesity, and masculinities discourses that shaped their understandings.

The young men and boys tended to emphasise bodily capability over appearance, although appearance was also important to them. Wright et al. (2006) found that young men rarely talked about fitness in relation to their appearance, and instead discussed muscle mass in connection with utility. However, unlike Wright et al. (2006), who found boys valued fitness but did not necessarily read fitness off the body, I found fitness was connected to body size. A person's body size influenced young mens' and boys' understandings of that body's capabilities: fat bodies were considered less fit and physically capable than muscular bodies. For example, Francis viewed his enjoyment of physical activities as conflicting with his 'overweight' or 'fat' body. He says,

> *"I've always liked the kind of physical education thing, like obstacle courses and these things, which you might not be able to tell from the size (he gestures at himself, his body) but I really did enjoy it."*

> (Interview, 26.06.15)

Francis suggests he is almost an anomaly, accepting the notion that overweight people do not usually enjoy physical activities. Likewise, Dew says that being active concerns

> *"being healthy innit. When you ain't fat innit. Know what I mean, like when you ain't fucking walking, when your friends run 'n' you can't chase after them."*

He connects an ability to run to body size. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes sheds further light on the inter-relatedness of fatness, 'weight', and capability:

> *It is our first night of the charity bike ride and we are staying in a hostel in a small town. It is 2am and I sit on the sofa in the lounge. As B-Hive flicks through the channels on the TV, we eventually end up watching a program about some obese people. B-Hive and Koffee seem largely unimpressed by the content of the program, making sounds at images on the screen that suggest their distaste for fatness. I ask why they wouldn't want to be fat. They reply with arguments that equate being fat with not having a healthy lifestyle. B-Hive explains that 'you wouldn't be able to run' and Koffee agrees with him explaining 'you would be limited to lots of things, like in terms of physical activity'. This argument was furthered by the idea that a person who is overweight would get tired more easily. B-Hive says 'yeh, can you imagine this bike ride?!' and laughs a little before saying 'it's just not healthy'. He goes on to explain his thoughts on this, considering how obese people have more weight but that this weight is 'useless weight', equating it to being 'just like you are carrying a shopping bag' around with you all the time. He suggests that what a person needs is 'useful weight' that 'your body can handle'. Koffee continues to talk about how 'useless weight' can be muscle too describing it as 'useless' when 'you can't actually <u>do</u> anything.'*

> *(Fieldnotes, 08.11.14)*

For the young men, the body's utility or capability was of greatest importance. Their dislike of fat was connected to notions that visible or measurable fat on the body was "useless".

Likewise, ideas surrounding fatness and incapability were actively reproduced in schools and in some boys' actions and words. For instance, three friends, Tony, Billy, and Jonny, were all in the same classes at school except for PE because they were streamed by ability. When we talked about streaming of PE in a focus group (25.02.15), the following conversation ensued:

> *Tony: Yeh, except PE cos I'm in top set for PE and they're in bottom set.*
>
> *Jonny: No need to brag!*
>
> *Me: How can you get set for PE?*
>
> *Tony: Cos some are fat people (covers mouth as he laughs, as do others)*
>
> *Tony: Sorry sorry (and gives Billy a big hug putting his arm around him)*
>
> *Jonny: People who can be bothered and people who can't.*

Tony felt adequate and capable at PE: he played for sports teams in school and a football team outside of school. However, Jonny, who was in 'bottom set', implied that the streaming of PE was not so much about incapability as a result of fatness, but instead a decision of individuals who did not want to make an effort. Jonny's explanation may be a rationalisation of incapability, suggesting they are *choosing* not to play 'well', rather than that they *cannot* play 'well'. For Tony, and other boys who engaged in sports, the capable 'normal' body was contrasted with the 'fat' incapable body. Similar to the boys' explanations, Atencio (2010b) found young men's evaluation of 'fatness' concerned obese people's inability to play sports, namely football or basketball. Atencio (2010b:155) explained how the young men considered those who monitored their bodies to be better at sports and saw those who did not engage in 'healthy eating', or did not make the correct choices regarding healthy lifestyles, as being "slow" during games, thus "letting the team down".

The associations of the fat body were further reproduced and reinforced by casual teasing: boys often teased each other regarding bodily appearance and capability. An explicit example of stigmatising bodies occurred on a led bike ride in the summer of 2015. One of the boys taunted Jaka, who was finding it difficult to keep up on the hill we were climbing on our way back to the youth centre. The boy looked in Jaka's direction and said to me, "he's holding himself up -fat cunt". Others had commented on how Jaka was

struggling and said on other occasions that he was unfit; however, this boy's statement explicitly connected the fat on Jaka's body to physical performance.

Connell (1995) suggests that some men's practices perpetuate male dominance, whereas others do not. I suggest that bullying and teasing is one of the practices that reinforces hegemonic masculinities as the maintenance of hegemonic masculinities requires the domination and marginalisation of non-hegemonic masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). According to Monaghan (2008:101), fat male bodies are said to be "subordinated on embodied masculine hierarchies, that is, viewed as unhealthy, sickly, soft, weak and disgusting". Just as Connell (1995) suggests gay men embody subordinate masculinities, one can suggest that 'fat' men are also subordinated through their bodies and supposed incapabilities. Monaghan (2008:100) argues that the "masculine habitus" is "fat-hating" and that obesity discourse reinforces this habitus, and therefore hegemonic masculinities, by associating fat with femininities and fatness as a female issue. The boys and young men, especially those from HIDE2 appeared to reinforce this habitus and form of masculinity.

A response to the association of fatness with weakness and consequent subordination was well illustrated by K-Z, who experienced bullying due to his weight when he was a young teenage boy, and chose to 'better' himself through losing weight.

When K-Z started secondary school he said that he was bullied because he was 'fat' or 'big' back then. Boxing took K-Z's interest when he was 14/15 years old because he wanted to "get the bullies back". Being dedicated to the sport meant he 'shed all his weight', which consequently meant he got more attention from women- something he enjoyed. He explained, "I was passionate about like defending myself like just never never be seen as weak. I wanted to always be seen as this strong guy, this guy you can't really mess with." However, he also explained that had he not been bullied when he was fat, "I probably would still be big now cos it wouldn't have given me the motivation to better myself and feel more accepted." In October 2014, K-Z started going to the gym after Koffee had commented that he had "got fat". He said that he felt his body "responds to exercise", claiming that "if I eat shit, I get big and if I work out, I lose it all." Due to this, he explained that he only really exercised if he could 'see' himself, or if others could see him, getting fat. He says, one reason "I do definitely work out is that fear of going back to being fat, which I never ever wanna experience ever again… because being fat brings back the memories of being bullied and like no confidence in myself"…"So any time I see or sense shit I'm putting on weight, I get into this crazy mode of run -workout - I can never let myself go cos it brings it (the bullying) back". In April 2015, he explained, "I used to be 82kg. I'm now 68kg. and I know 6 kg is a stone,

so what's that? 14 kg. So that's almost 2.5 stone I've lost since October.
It's like cos I say when I do something, I do it to the full extent".

_____

For K-Z, the visual effects of exercise on his body were important to him due to his past experiences of bullying and present desires for a good body, viewed as central for attracting women and feeling confident. In Foucauldian terms, physical activity was for K-Z, as it was for B-Hive and Koffee, a 'technique' for working on the self. K-Z fits LeBesco's (2011:160) claim, that "most fat people internalize this stigma and admit to a sincere desire to be thinner". He problematised aspects of the self, in the past being weak and fat, and in the present desiring the ideal body of a black hip hop performer. Similar to Koffee and B-Hives' stories, K-Z's narrative suggests the young men were able to assert a certain degree of control over their lives through physical activity. If they worked hard in the gym or at sports, they would see results (muscle gain, fat loss, and sporting awards). For these young men, physical activity provided a means of control, which they seemed to lack in other aspects of their lives.

Muscularity: reproducing, negotiating, and rejecting masculine discourses

Kehler & Atkinson (2010) and Drummond (2001) explained how the young boys in their studies largely had an impression of male health as equated to large muscular bodies. In my study, an explicit link between muscularity, physical attractiveness, and health was evident in the boys and young men, and those who engaged in weight training in particular. Research with boys and girls in London suggested their "fit and strong and active seemed to be the desirable attributes of boys' bodies" (Frost, 2003: 61). These "desirable attributes" were recognised by boys in my study, even if they did not have strong desires for fitness and physical activity.

Expressions of masculinity through muscles were observed in the form of arm wrestling at the HIDE2 on several occasions (see Figure 6.1). This utility of muscles as well as the visibility of them was important and was also discussed in Koffee and B-Hive's narratives earlier. For the boys and young men in this study, muscles were often connected to physical strength and ability, and sexual success. Miko, Dal, and Karel went to the school gym to do weights on rare occasions, and Ezzy reported going almost every day in summer of 2015. Their rationales were connected to the sexual attractiveness of muscles. Many of the boys and young men joked about muscles and desiring a muscular body.

Figure 6.1: Boys and men young at HIDE2 participating in arm wrestle (right) and Karel performing a press ups (left).

A conversation one afternoon with Liam and Jay illustrated how boys can contest understandings about strength and the social values associated with a strong muscular body:

> *Me: So if you need strength to play rugby, do lads your age want to be strong if they play rugby or not?*
>
> *Jay: It's just the physique that's strong. If you strong, you guaranteed to get lasses- [Liam interrupts messing around]*
>
> *Jay: - Listen though, if you got muscles like J, you guaranteed to get bird- J from Geordie Shore[25].*
>
> *Liam: Gaz hasn't got muscle.*
>
> *Jay: But Gaz keeps on pulling the same bird, keeps pulling Charlotte.*
>
> *Liam: You don't need the muscle. Just 'cos people looks big doesn't mean they are hard.*
>
> *Me: If people look big, does that necessarily mean they are strong?*
>
> *Liam: No.*
>
> *Me: So, is it just being big that is desirable or is it being strong?*
>
> *Jay: It's just intimidating sometimes if you are in a fight.*

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[25] Geordie Shore is a reality television show set in the North East of England

195

Liam: Say if you are fighting and one person that big (uses arms to suggest a very big person) and one person that big (uses arms to suggest much smaller person), it doesn't look very nice.

Jay: Plus, it's even more embarrassing if you get beat by someone who isn't that strong. It's embarrassing 'cos someone that size and that strong [it] is basically physically impossible for them to lose, but being scrawny like Gaz from Geordie Shore can prove some advantages, like run away.

At the start of this excerpt the boys associated certain muscular body types with success in sexual encounters, which was a common assumption of many of the boys: there was a common perception that girls liked muscles, and that it was impressive to be muscular. The term 'big' meant a large muscular build or large frame, but not fat; however, the boys start to challenge the notion that being 'big', or looking a certain way, correlates with a 'macho' personality or strength. Although being 'big' was generally associated with looking intimidating, the boys suggest that other boys' bodies may not conform to these assumptions. Being hard was a personality type so to speak, a character trait, and therefore being 'hard' did not necessarily correspond with being 'big'. Although some boys questioned various assumption about boys' bodies and their abilities to fight or be intimidating, they continued to revisit notions that associate bodies with certain values or ways of being as they are so ingrained in their daily lives.

Interviews with boys from Western contexts (aged 14-17) have implied a "taken for granted triplex" between strength, muscularity, and masculinity (Drummond, 2001:58). Frost (2003:64) further explains that being 'big' or "having a big, strong and powerful body, is consistently portrayed as the desirable male trait in the research texts on boys, as a source of pride or anxiety and an indicator of group inclusion and its reverse". She also notes that boys who embodied any attributes that were considered "'feminine', passive or weak" were excluded or held at a lesser value in comparison to those who did not (Frost, 2003:64).

However, Liam and Jay's words are not based solely on perception as they have directly experienced physical violence and fighting with peers: "how our bodies are treated and how they perform" is important (Crossley, 1996:114). For instance, Jay was bullied at high school, and eventually used physical violence to "stand up to them", the bullies. The boys' words therefore must be understood within their past and recent experiences of violence in their lives because, as Yardley (1999) explains, one's perceptions of physical activities cannot be understood as detached from one's experience of physical activities. These experiences are intertwined with their perceptions of bodies and what they mean, but also

as Connell (1995:53) states, their "body experience is often central in memories of our own lives, and thus in our understanding of who and what we are".

Only the young men, including Koffee, B-Hive, and K-Z, and to some extent Ezzy, gained muscular fit bodies through their gym training. Marcel, Geba, and Aari engaged in the gym for training for specific sports and fitness needs and did not engage in the heavy weights training. The exception of all the young men was Dew, who did not attend the gym with his friends. When I asked Dew why he did not go to the gym as we walked to ASDA one afternoon, he explained how he had attended with Koffee for two months but "didn't see any benefits". I asked him what he meant by this, and he explained that he didn't gain any weight so stopped going. He stated, "it's waste of money innit…I guarantee I will not change", and explained his body "won't change shape, no matter what". Dew expected to see physical results or effects on the body but noted his body did not respond to exercise as, for example, K-Z's did. He also found gym regimes boring and did not achieve similar feelings of strength and capability that Koffee, K-Z or B-hive did from lifting weights. Dew suggested that, as he was unable to attain a 'better' body, which might afford him economic or social capital, investing in the gym was a waste of his limited funds. He felt his friends had 'better bodies' but he had 'the conversation', the chat, the charm. In this respect, he places a lesser value on needing a better body for sexual attraction.

Featherstone (2001) discussed how the body is related to social capital and Shilling (1991) explains how the fit body (slim, muscular) gains power, in terms of social capital. One can thus understand this aspect of Dew, Marcel, and Geba's lack of engagement in weight training, and Dew's disengagement in the gym or physical activity more broadly in terms of social value and capital. There was an imbalance between the money invested in paying to attend the gym or effort invested in physical activity and the lack of physical capital gained from not having a valued body.

Drawing on understandings of gender, the 'technologies of the self', and healthism and obesity discourses, I have shown how physical activity is often understood and reproduced as a practice for shaping gendered bodies and appearances; however, these understandings often appeared in conflicting and complex ways due to negotiations of multiple discourses. The boys and young men tended to understand physical activity as a practice for losing fat and gaining muscle; however, because this was often, albeit not always, connected to physical capability, strength, and fitness, the following section discusses how (what I interpret as) 'capability' was integral to the boys and young men's daily lives.

6.4 Being capable for life: boys and young men's contextualised desires for fitness and 'better' selves

This section argues that physical capabilities and fitness became particularly desirable for many of the young men and boys because of a context specific entanglement of healthism, obesity, and masculinities discourses. I discuss young men and boys in particular in this section because the theme of capability became especially stark during analysis of their observed practices and spoken words, and is not well explored in the literature. However, as Wright (2007:5) explains, the manner in which 'ability' in the context of sport is connected to power, strength, and thus hegemonic masculinity, risks "an essentialist binary" that excludes or devalues women and their abilities. Consequently, I wish to state here that an understanding of fitness for functional purposes was not absent from the girls' voices. Although many of the girls discussed physical activity as a means of body management for appearance and weight loss, for some, 'fitness' was also on occasions considered necessary for capability, safety, and a future lifestyle or employment. For instance, some explained it was important to be fit so you could run away from a threatening stranger (Cathy), gain a desired job (Cathy needed to do a fitness test for the career she wanted) or "just to show that I can" (Jemma). Hen and Kalehsi expressed desires to be strong and able bodied so that they could travel the world, whereas for others, such as Leonie, Mary, Alesha, and Amelia, the need to be fit was less prominent than bodily appearance. The reasons why they felt this way was well illustrated by Leonie:

> Me: "And is it useful to be fit or it is just…?":
>
> Leonie: "I think it depends on what job you want when you old, like if you wanna be a football trainer when you older, then you gonna have to be in shape. Like if you wanna be a dancer, then you just gotta be in shape, but if you just wanna work in an office, then I don't think it really matters."

There were differences within the group of girls from Space1: for some of the girls, physical activity was showing you could 'do' something, whereas for others, physical activity and fitness tended to be viewed as somewhat unnecessary for daily life and their imagined future selves. Similar differences occurred within the boys: Billy completely rejected fitness and capability at the time I knew him, but for others, fitness was seen as necessary for daily life. Nonetheless, Lee et al. (2009) suggested that generally, whether it was incorporating it into their social life or rejecting it from their social and cultural lives, the boys in their study constructed their identities in relation to physical activity in some

way. As this was also what I saw, the following contextual analysis of the boys' daily lives will shed light on how and why this may be.

The first part (6.4.1) discusses how physical activity and fitness are necessary for life in the specific locale studied. I explain why ability, fitness, and sport were highly valued by young men and boys, and how experiences, such as bullying and fighting, reinforced elements of hegemonic masculinities, all of which were highlighted in Koffee's story that prefaced this chapter. The second part (6.4.2) further unpicks the common theme of 'self-bettering' that has recurred throughout this chapter. Using Foucault's idea of the 'technologies of the self', I discuss how the young men used fitness practices, sports, and/or other practices in daily life, to 'better' themselves in their present circumstances and for their imagined future selves.

Midnight on a damp November evening, and I am walking down a street of the city centre with Koffee and B-Hive after conducting an interview with them in a Tea House around the corner. B-Hive has recently damaged some ligaments in his knee after an accident at the gym, so Koffee and myself meander along the pavement as B-Hive moves assisted with a crutch. We approach some scaffolding occupying part of the pavement, which consists of metal poles descending vertically from above, and horizonal bars fixed to these verticals about eight or nine feet from the ground. Koffee immediately jumps up to the bar and begins doing pull ups. Despite being injured, B-Hive joins in with the aid of a step up from a small brick wall. They both count 5 pull ups and swap over taking turns to do the exercises. It is as if their routines of the gym, where they sometimes train together, have been transferred to structures spontaneously happened upon in the urban environment. After doing their pull ups and joking around as usual, they continue to create a challenge whereby they have to swing from one bar to another. Koffee decides on the course whilst completing it. Next B-Hive traverses the bars under the directions of Koffee who shows him which bars to move to next. They both make their way from one side of the scaffold to the other, hanging off the bars, as if it is a miniature assault course. To my surprise I am urged to go next. I attempt the course myself, and yet, as expected, I only get as far as the first bar before dropping helplessly to the ground. When I fall from the bar, B-Hive says to me, you 'just gotta keep trying', 'you do a bit, then you try some more and you will be able to do it'. I reply, explaining that I am just not strong enough, but Koffee says, 'we'll have Steph doing pull ups in no time'. Leaving the assault course and wandering up the street, B-hive and Koffee then continue to tell me how you measure strength through being able to lift your own body weight. B-Hive says those 'who lift above their own body weight are strong' and explains how you 'chart yourself against others who are (the) same weight as you'.

Figure 6.2: Koffee (right) and B-Hive (left) traversing scaffolding in the city centre

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This real life scenario, visualised in Figure 6.2, concretises many of the notions regarding capabilities found in Koffee's narrative that prefaces this chapter. It was through such instances that many of B-Hive and Koffee's words from informal chats and interviews became more tangible, as their opinions and understandings visibly played out in daily life. Something as ordinary as scaffolding provided an opportunity for unstructured, spontaneous activity, and fun. Being able to take part in spontaneous activity in daily life was part of why the young men wanted to be fit. The scaffold also acted as a window to present to themselves and others their vibrant physicality and capabilities. The scaffold created an opportunity for personal challenge, competition between each other and within themselves, showing how desirable strength and muscle utility is. It thus illustrated how routines of the gym, known to consist of 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1993), and understandings of progression from health and fitness contexts and discourses, extended to everyday living.

Ethnographic research by Atencio (2006, 2010b) discusses how young men in an US inner city context felt that their bodies needed to be subjected to regimes of physical activity and healthy eating so they could be capable of sports performance. Additional Australian field-sites within the Life Activity Project found that, for boys, fitness concerned being "responsive to life" (Wright et al., 2006: 710). However, as Wright and Atencio are critical poststructuralists, they focus primarily on how young people negotiate health

discourses. Consequently, other than in Atencio's thesis (2006), where he discusses how the young people's ability and capability to play basketball was related to their racial backgrounds, there has been little analysis regarding why being physically fit and capable in life may be more important for boys and young men than girls. I suggest that a clearer understanding of capability as a driving motivation for engaging with physical activity is needed and is worthy of much further analysis and discussion.

6.4.1 'Fitness is everything': Being capable for daily life in the East End

As noted above, much research regarding boys' understandings of and motivations for physical activity has been conducted in schools, school sporting contexts, and non-school organised sports teams (See Esson, 2013; Messner, 1990; Swain, 2000). Thus, little research is concerned with how boys' understandings play out in everyday contexts; where boys and young men are active in informal ways; or why and how young men wish to be, or work to be, physically capable. I argue that, for the young men and boys in my study in particular, fitness and physical capability was often necessary for living their daily lives.

Fitness: for functioning in life

A small proportion of research regarding adolescent boys and young men's understandings of health and physical activity focuses on the importance of capabilities. A recent Swedish interview-based study with 33 adolescent boys (16-17 years old) explored boys' meanings of health (Randell et al., 2016), and found that health was a relational, emotional, and functional experience, whereby capability was central to notions of the functional body. Performance, ability, and using one's body to 'do' certain tasks, labour or activities was regarded as important for boys (Randell et al., 2016). In my study, the young mens' and boys' understandings of fitness as a term also often pivoted around functional purposes for health.

> *"You need to be fit cos otherwise if you in the bed all day, then how you gonna get money, how you gonna work, how you gonna live? We are here to live. (Marcel)*

> *"For me, fitness is not about being vain or glorious, it's about being able to keep going, about having the stamina, whether its cycling or just going through the day, fucking or whatever, (laughter) just having the stamina" (C-Dog)*

> *"There's times when I've been on stage when I wasn't so fit, and you get so tired…you get so tired and out of breath. Made me realise how unfit I was, so now I'm much fitter. It's (fitness) good for being on stage as well." (K-Z)*

'Fitness' and 'stamina' were connected words likely learnt in school PE, that became part of how the young men and boys could express how movement was a necessity for daily life. C-dog explained this disjunction between words used in PE and health promotion material, and what fitness was for when he considered his younger self and the younger boys at HIDE2:

> *"Like skating, BMXing, even scootering, like the fitter that you are the more you can do and the better your ability is going to be. So I suppose that's sort of an incentive for kids, but they don't think about 'I'm gonna do this to increase my physical fitness or do this to train sort of thing', it's a follow on."*

These functional understandings of fitness as a necessity for success and ability in life were somewhat gendered and expressed particularly through boys' daily lives. However, there was of course variation within the boys (some, including Billy, rejected a need for sport and fitness).

Physical ability: being a male in a specific socio-material environment

Being active in daily life was something the young boys and men often felt they simply did: Karel explained, "we just do it". The reasons for doing physical activity were often considered obvious, simple, and unquestionable. One can suggest that, for these young men and boys, "being physically active had become interpellated" into their "notions of self" (Wright & Laverty, 2010: 143). Being fit was often connected to performance and being capable of engaging in activities the boys and young men wanted to do, or places they wanted to go with their friends from the youth centre or elsewhere. As discussed in Section 5.3, being able to cycle, walk, and be mobile was advantageous for these young men and boys due to the circumstances in which they lived. Consequently, there was a sense that being incapable would render them less able to live life in the ways they wanted. For example, when talking to Jay one evening about the parkour sessions he attended on a Sunday, he explained the following:

> *Jay: Basically, fitness is everything- gotta work out whenever you can - that's what I do even on the way home from school. Like I said before, I do parkour, I vault over everything if I can. If there's a stationary car, I guarantee I just vault over it.*
>
> *Me: 'fitness is everything? What do you mean by that?'*

In Jay's statements, the scaffolding mentioned in the introductory narrative is replaced by a parked car, or anything he can vault over. The same applied to boys who did not engage in parkour, such as Liam and Tony, who climbed walls, fences or trees to fetch footballs or just for fun (Figure 6.3). The potential happenings or activities "that not gonna be available to you" as a young man often occurred in daily life. Being able to perform with one's body in day-to-day life appeared to be enjoyed. For instance, Tony often waited on top of various objects he had climbed so that others could watch him. He also often said that engaging in physical activity was about impressing others. Barron (2013) found that boys performed activities in public spaces, often portraying themselves in photographs as physically able and skilled. Kraack and Kenway (2002) also discussed how boys performed their masculinities through engaging in dangerous car racing. The boys in my study did not have access to cars for theatrical performance; instead some performed their masculine identities and 'showed off' through their physical abilities.

However, the perceived 'natural' desirability of fitness by the young men and boys is also normalised through what masculinity, healthism, and obesity discourses suggest being a
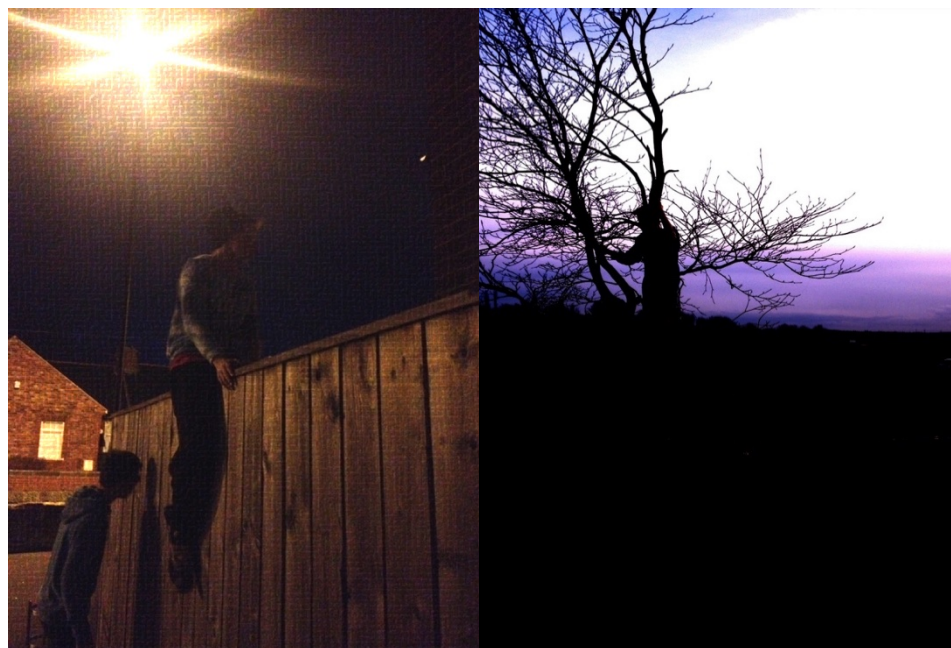

Figure 6.3: Tony in a tree in the local park (left) and Tony climbing over a fence to collect a football the boys had lost (right).

man is. This desirability and explicit link to masculinities became particularly clear during the charity bike ride that I participated in with the young men from HIDE2:

> *On the charity bike ride, we stop just before a viaduct to wait for Koffee and Dr D (the ride leader and bike mechanic) who had been fixing a puncture on Koffee's bike. Koffee emerges from the tree covered path into the open space where we are gathered. B-Hive asks where Dr D is. Koffee explains that Dr D was putting away all of the tools and told him to ride on. B-Hive says that he should have waited for him but Koffee says he won't be far behind. A minute goes by before Dr D appears. At this point B-Hive says to the group, 'He's (Dr D) not giving it 100%, he is chillin' you know'. To this, Dew says, 'cos he's a man'. Throughout the three-day bikeride I realised how much the young men admired Dr D for his physical fitness on the bike. Knowing that the ride was not a challenge for him put him on a pedestal of sorts. These ideas were illustrated further when I talked to B-hive about an incredibly long steep hill we climbed the day before. He said, "I'm not gonna be like 'can't do it', no, what a wuss".*

> *(Fieldnotes, 09.11.14)*

As a young man, being 'a wuss' was undesirable, and connected to being incapable. Koffee used the same word, 'wuss', to describe how he felt when he had to reduce the weight of the gym dumbbells from 40kg to 20kg after his bike accident. Being capable of physical challenges was considered 'masculine', and as such it was desirable to many. Feeling fit and capable for life was particularly crucial for young men who engaged in physical activities. For instance, Koffee's weight training regime was heavily connected to shaping his body; however, importantly, his behaviours simultaneously made him *feel* fit, strong, and healthy. Building bigger muscles made him feel fitter and stronger. Likewise, when I went running with B-Hive one Saturday in February 2015, (we had both signed up to run a 10km assault course that spring) I noted the following in my fieldnotes:

> *As we cross the traffic lights, B-Hive starts to talk about weight and how he feels best at a certain weight. He explains that when he is 14 stones, he feels fit, his best, fast, and strong.*

B-Hive monitored his body to *feel* 'fit', 'fast', and 'strong', and enjoyed attending the gym as he felt 'better' in himself and "alive" from doing so. Fitness and strength were felt and witnessed by others through appearance, and more importantly, action. Others, namely Dew, who did not engage in gym training, gained similar feelings from thrill seeking activities such as occasional mountain biking experiences, or climbing walls and buildings. Dew described his recent experience of climbing a ledge on a building nearby, saying:

"I get this feeling like damnnnn that's so fucking good yeh. I dunno it's hard to describe yeh, it's a moment when you feel more alive. That's the best way I can put it."

A desire to 'feel good' was evident in Wright and Laverty's (2010) findings regarding the importance of going to the gym for young people in the Life Activity Project. The young people from urban and semi-urban areas in Australia gained a sense of 'feeling good about themselves'' through managing their weight, building muscle mass, and becoming fitter, more capable and better at performance. Wellard et al. (2007:83), who studied the embodied experience of young female ballet dancers, argued that "activity creates corporeal sensations that are experienced as unique by the individual". They suggested that the corporeal experience and pleasure of movement individual to each dancer was key to their participation. Likewise, bodybuilders have been noted to discuss the 'rush' from weight lifting as a pleasurable bodily sensation that stimulates further engagement in intense exercise (Monaghan, 2001).

Moreover, physical ability was, for many of the young boys from HIDE2 and some from Space1, explicitly linked to the socio-material environment, which included fighting and conflict, discussed throughout this thesis. Swain claims, "being a boy is a matter of constructing oneself in, and being constructed by, the available ways and meanings of being a boy in a particular time and place" (Swain, 2000:96). In Section 5.3, I primarily drew on the boys from HIDE2's experiences to explain that being a BME boy in the East End often involved presenting oneself as fearless and able to defend oneself or others. Connell (1995) would suggest that these boys embodied marginalised masculinities due to their ethnicities. Hence, in relation to gender hegemony, one can suggest that the boys engaged in fighting and violent practices, presenting themselves as fearless, in attempts to become less marginalised. However, this need to be fearless and stick up for oneself was not specific to the BME boys.

By drawing on some of the boys from Space1, I further discuss how one can gain respect through one's ability to stick up for oneself. For example, Liam and Jay from Space1 explained why it was important not to back down, especially if you are being bullied at school:

> Liam: Like, if you put up a fight, don't back down. Like, if you start a fight, you can't end it straight away… you'd probably get more bullied than you are getting. Know, like I say, you get chinned or something.

> Jay: You'll get a lot more respect for it 'cos if you can get a few punches in and set the person on his arse, he gets up and annihilates you, you are gonna get known for sending properly the strongest person in the school on his arse. You're probably the first person to do that.

Liam: Even if you like, say you got badly bruised hurt chinned, you'll still like -

Jay: -Give you respect-

Liam:- cos you've fighted a person.

Valentine (2003:29) says that in particular, "boys are expected to be tough and be able to 'handle' themselves physically or to be able to occupy and take up space through verbal or intellectual performance". "The ability to win fights and 'stand up for yourself'" is said to be "an intrinsic part of the package" of being a boy or a man (Frost, 2003:65).

Other authors have studied low-income groups of young men and boys in neighbourhood and school settings. Henderson et al. (2007) explain how certain forms of masculinities were expressed through violence in a disadvantaged estate in Northern England: violence was used as a means to maintain respect or defend a family name. MacLeod (1987:26) explained that, for the Hallway Hangers of Clarendon Heights, being "bad" was "literally to be good". He argued that the boys had to be bad to be respected; they felt being bad was a necessary characteristic for status in the subculture they occupied. One of the boys, Slick, explained that "you hafta at least know what bein' in a cell is like" in order to gain respect.

In contrast to most of the boys in this study (except some of the young men who expressed some joy or buzz from violence and fighting), who often said they use fighting as defence or as a bullying avoidance technique, 'the lads' from Willis's study enjoyed fighting and causing fights through intimidation. Fighting was a means of expressing group cultural values and testing individuals' inclusion in the group (Willis, 1977). Nonetheless, both groups of boys, mine and Willis', enjoyed talking about fighting or showing off about fights they had been in as it was a means by which to show their physical abilities, strength, and masculinities.

Sport: gaining 'respect'

Sporting capability was important for several of the young men and boys' daily lives: sport acted as a way in which the young men gained respect. In Messner's (1990) interview study with former male athletes, sport was considered "just what boys did" (Messner, 1990:429). It is during their younger years that boys, through sport, are taught to use their bodies in powerful, strong, and assertive ways (Whitson, 2002). Valentine (2010) reviewed studies showing that, for boys, "bodily performance" is understood as "crucial to their ability to maintain a hegemonic, heterosexual (masculine) identity" (2010: 29), thus suggesting that boys equate sporting prowess with 'successful' males. Sport has

traditionally been said to reinforce masculine hegemony through violent and competitive practices (Messner, 1990). However, a recent ethnographic study in a semi-professional football team (Adams et al., 2010) claimed that narrow forms of hegemonic masculinities produced through sports coaching were limited to the sporting context: the sportsmen separated sporting and social identities. Nonetheless, participation in sport is commonly considered a rite of passage for adolescent young men (Drummond, 2003; Messner, 1992) and helps to comprehend young men and boys' desires for physicality.

The young men and boys' enjoyment of certain sports were often connected to their constructs of masculinity. For example, the boys at HIDE2 filled in a questionnaire in October 2014 about activities they wished to do at the youth centre. Football and bike riding were chosen most frequently. When asked about their choices, Miko explained his desire to create a HIDE2 football team and go rock climbing. He said that he liked climbing for its "competitive" and "scary" aspects as "you have to be first to the top". Themes such as competition, bravery, independence, aggressiveness, and leadership are commonly seen in male-dominated physical activities (Frost, 2003:62). Competition is linked to 'bodily competence' (Valentine, 2003) and considered a characteristic of hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1995). Frost (2003) explains that these themes are "often linked to the notion of physical strength and prowess, hence the historically enduring symbols epitomising masculinity: warriors, sportsmen, explorers and all-purpose heroes" (Frost, 2003:62).

Being good at or involved in a sport, whether playing football after school at the Box, in tarmacked areas (See Figure 6.4) or for a club, was a large part of why the boys engaged in physical activity and why they wanted to be physically capable. Although having fun whilst playing sport was crucial, and boys were not excluded from informal games and sports with friends based on ability, many implied that being 'good' at a sport was central to continued participation, as they gained some form of respect. For example, Francis explained:

> *"I really liked that, cos I discovered that I'm really good at tennis so I kept doing that"*

Enjoyment alone is part of engagement in physical activity and sport, yet enjoyment of being 'good' was more prominent and embedded within the social status boys gained from being 'good'. For example, as I chatted to Jay and Liam one evening we talked about why Liam played football:

Liam: Everyone knows me 'cos I can dive, even on concrete. Cos everyone knows me that I can take- oh he's the best keeper 'cos he dives on concrete.

Me: so do you get kind of 'kudos' for that?

Jay: He gets a lot of respect off it…People know him for his keeper skills.

Liam: People know us because I was too good for them.

Being 'good', 'hard', and capable at football was Liam's key reason for playing football: he enjoyed being viewed by others in such a way and felt valued socially, or gained social capital. Football was the most commonly played sport in the boys from both HIDE2 and Space1, and Dew explained that "football's a boys' thing, we grow up playing football innit so it's like we…we try get good at it". Furthermore, Geba explained that he wanted to work on his stamina so that he could be better at football. He says, "if you have better fitness, you can run for longer and like yeh, you can last long, you can play 90 minutes easy".

Valentine (2003) suggests that boys understand that they gain 'respect' from participating in aggressive, competitive physical leisure activities. Likewise, Wright (1996) argued that

Figure 6.4: Tony and Haz playing football with improvised goal posts on the tarmac area outside Space1 (left), and the HIDE2 boys spontaneously playing football at the Box as we waiting for everybody to arrive for a trip to a National park (right).

pain was part of being a boy for those who ascribed to certain forms of masculinity. Others suggest that football in particular is considered a principal expression of successful masculinity (Swain, 2000), as the enactment of hypermasculinity through "football is where many boys learn to be *real men*" (Hickey, 2010:110). Although there is some debate regarding the extent to which the narrow forms of masculinity reproduced in sports extend to daily life (Adams et al., 2010), football is commonly considered a site *"for the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity"* (Gorely et al., 2003:430).

Bullying, exclusion, and inclusion through being capable

Similar to the ways in which boys' and girls' bodies were teased, teasing about incapabilities and a lack of sporting success was common in daily life amongst the boys and young men. James (1986) identified five aspects of the body that are important for children's social identities and are said to allow inclusion or exclusions into peer groups. One of these aspects was performance, which included sporting prowess, ability, and gracefulness. For instance, one evening whilst hanging out in the kitchen area of HIDE2, Karel mocked Riza for not being able to run properly in football, whilst he himself boasted about scoring a goal in practice the night before by mimicking the movements he made scoring. Teasing was often experienced as a negative consequence of not being good at sports. For example, Francis says,

> *Francis: it's like in school 'n' that if you're terrible at sport, people will mock you for it. That's just human nature isn't it? If someone is worse than you at something, you will think it even if you don't say it, you will think 'I'm better than them, I like this'. So obviously, if you pick a sport you're good at, you don't really get this thing. Even if you are not as good as them but you are still good, you can stick with it.*
>
> *Me: So does that happen a lot? People getting mocked for not being good at stuff?*
>
> *Francis: Yeh, but that's kind of just high school in general.*

The form of mocking has been found in other studies and interpreted in similar ways. For instance, Hills (2007) found in her study with 12-13 year-old girls that teasing and exclusion occurred where girls performed badly in competitive settings or in settings where bodily presentation was key, such as gymnastics. Likewise, Kehler and Atkinson (2010) found ridicule and exclusion was common in their exploration of how understandings of health and body image interact with masculinities in school PE classes in Canada. They discuss how many of the boys they conducted participant observation and semi-structured interviews with were relatively disengaged from PE classes yet

actually 'liked' forms of physical activity (Kehler & Atkinson, 2010). Disengagement was partly due to teasing and harassment of those who were "not good in gym class" (Kehler & Atkinson, 2010:165). The authors interpreted this as 'sporty masculinity' being valued and other 'weaker' forms of masculinity being ridiculed. In Connell's (1995) terms, the boys were engaging in practices that perpetuated dominant forms of masculinities: hegemonic masculinities. In Hickey's (2010) discussion of extreme masculine practices and sporting identities, those who rejected hypermasculine sporting identities were often nonetheless measured against them, and consequently stigmatised or bullied. Likewise, (Frost, 2003: 62) explains that "playground and tabloid terminology such as 'weakling', 'weed', 'nerd', 'geek'— a whole range of powerful insults alluding to lack of physical strength" — are used by boys in various settings. Francis' statement, that teasing is "just human nature isn't it?", shows how ingrained and normalised such practices and judgements about capabilities and bodies are within young boys' experiences of physical activity and being a boy.

However, despite such normalisation, there was some negotiation of exclusionary practices. Peers and friendships occasionally created inclusion, and potentially averted bullying regarding physical ability. In Beale's (2010) work, young boys stigmatised those who did not play football or were not 'hard'; however, some of the boys who used the Box explicitly said that anyone could play, whether they were 'good' or 'bad' at football, as it was just for fun. Moreover, some of the boys helped each other become more capable, by showing them how to do certain physical tasks. For instance, Jaka from HIDE2 explained that he felt Karel was like a brother to him because Karel helped him become included in certain activities: he said that "he (Karel) helped me how to play football. Sometimes, if I have a fight, he is always next to me, he helps me all the time". Karel also helped by teaching Jaka how to correctly climb up and down the wall they climb over when moving between HIDE2 and their homes without hurting himself. In this instance, Jaka was able to draw on Karel for inclusion in the social group.

6.4.2 "You train to better yourself as a person": Challenging and improving the self for present circumstances and imagined future selves

Many of the young men explained that they had in some way "bettered" themselves, through sports and fitness, for their present and future selves and situations, not just their bodies. In a similar vein to Koffee, who explained he engaged in weight training to feel "better" about himself and beat his goals of what he could do, B-Hive, who trained to be "a better self", and Aari who engaged in running instead of fighting, Dew explained why 'bettering yourself' was a moral option. He said that "you train to better yourself as a

person, like if you are just doing it to impress other people. Nah". When I asked him what he meant by 'to better yourself as a person', he explained,

> *"Like, 'cos some people go train to better them self as a person, like I used to do boxing right cos I used to take out my anger in the boxing bag cos when I be really pissed off. I be like, fuck it, I go boxing and I punch the shit out of that boxing bag and in my head I'm not looking at the boxing bag, I'm looking at something else. I hate that guy, I hate him so much and when I'm punching that boxing bag, I'm imagining his face, like fuck. And I'd walk away and be like yo cos I didn't actually hit the guy, know what I mean. So I better myself as a person to control my anger, to control my emotions, and that's the way it is. If you are gonna hit the gym, do that so you can be good, not so you can show off. Get it?"*

Dew used boxing to 'better himself' at that moment in time; however, less than two years later Dew stopped boxing altogether. He did not want to fight in the ring, explaining, "fuck that shit man, you have your own mind like, nah that's not me man, I wanna be like a Grandad, having a joint, like nah what I mean." He recognised the dangers of progressing at boxing and considered his future self in his decision to stop. One can suggest that he no longer valued boxing as a means of "bettering" himself and did not wish to engage in the sport to impress others. Instead, he appeared to find a new way to "better" himself and his life, through financial gains.

In Chapter 4, I discussed how Dew made 'choices' regarding making money over engaging in boxing and football during the time-space of 'emerging adulthood'. I showed the reason making money became more important for Dew, more so than doing football, boxing or other physical activities, was connected to the past he experienced as a migrant boy, the uncertain present he lives, and the future self he imagines. Instead of "bettering" himself through physical activity, he began investing time in earning money: he worked on producing music videos, building a portfolio of videos with his friend, and worked as a club promoter and bar tender at two establishments to earn cash (which seemed to me to offer quite limited financial gains long term). In a similar vein to the young men in Ghana, who opted to drop out of school to pursue a career in football in the hope of becoming more financially successful (Esson, 2013), Dew instead dropped sports and took up paid work so that he could become more financially successful. He says he wants to

> *"make enough money go back to my country like get a proper house, like a very big house and make that my living, live in castle. End. Own a business down in my country cos I always wanna own in my country cos business is flying left right and centre, cos if I make enough money here I can always go back and invest it back in my country. That's since I was*

8 years old I always wanted to do that. That's always been my one off plan…"

At the time of this statement Dew was living at home and working part-time as a club promoter; however, he says, "sooner or later I'll get what I want".

Van der Geest (1997), who worked in rural Ghana, writes about gaining respect in old age. He explains that one gains respect from being successful in life, and claims that, "the most convincing proof of a successful life is money" (Van der Geest, 1997:536). In the rural Ghanaian context, money and respect "merge", and respect and care in old age "merge" (Van der Geest, 1997:552). One evening at HIDE2, we got talking about families and futures. Dew explained about his cultural identity, saying that in Algeria, where he was born, "they all have big families". He explained that he has a large extended family and that "if you were to only have a couple kids people would think something was wrong". He says, jokingly that he wants an "army" of children, enough for a football team, claiming that from the age of one and a half he would "get them into sport", so that that "by the age of 14 that kid would be a champion" (Fieldnotes, 11.08.14). Dew's desire to be financially successful was embedded within expectations of his cultural identity, and desired future that ends in being a "Grandad, having a joint". His wish for his children to be good at sports may be a way that Dew can attempt to ensure success and hegemonic masculinities from a young age.

However, Dew's desire to make money is not isolated to his cultural identity, it is also embedded in his experiences of life and his subjectivity. Connell (1995) suggests that financial independence and success are some of the most valued attributes of hegemonic masculinities. Moreover, Peters (2001) discusses Foucault's subjectivication as occurring via certain governmental regulations and strategies, viewing neoliberalism as a way in which power is exercised through subjectivities: the political condition of neoliberalism encourages 'enterprise culture' and the 'entrepreneurial self'. Peters (2001:61) suggests that with the growth of the 'shadow state' and associated array of neoliberal educational welfare reforms, there has been a moral and economic process of 'responsibilising the self'. He explains that this process "is concomitant with a new tendency to 'invest' in the self at crucial points in the life cycle" (Peters, 2001:61). This includes investing in one's health, education, and financial worth as one imagines one's future self. If we consider the local context, the lack of qualifications Dew gained through school, and the constraints he faces when it comes to making money legally, due to continually gaining minimum wage jobs, we start to envisage why this form of imagined 'entrepreneurial self' might be valued so highly, and strived for, even if it may be particularly difficult to achieve.

Financial and unemployment circumstances played into how some of the other young men decided to better themselves through physical activity. For example, Koffee's narrative bears similarity to Don's, a young man from Wright and Macdonald's (2010) Life Activity Project. Don, unlike most of the other participants in Wright et al.'s (2006) study, became unemployed upon leaving school. Don's motivation for doing physical activity, like Koffee's, was to "develop a strong body that is both capable of action and developed through activity" (Wright et al., 2006:710). Both Koffee and Don filled their days and weeks with gym routines, giving structure to their otherwise unfilled time. Moreover, improving his physical abilities made Koffee feel mentally better, physically stronger, and healthier, which aided his sense of ability, competency, and masculine identity. As a young man experiencing long term unemployment, maintaining his masculinity was crucial for his identity. During this period in life, he felt incompetent in terms of earning money or having a successful career. I therefore suggest that he filled this void with becoming more competent in his physical abilities. He explained that the gym gave him a reason to get up in the morning, just as work would have done if he had been employed. This 'gym culture', which is said to consist of 'practices of the self' carried out by individuals in pursuit of health and happiness (Foucault, 1985; Monaghan, 2001), provided the young men a sense of competency that was more or less useful for varying individuals at certain moments in time, whether they were attempting to deal with "anger", or creating a sense of competency during times of unemployment.

6.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter has explained how an entanglement of masculinities, femininities, health, and obesity discourses shape young people's understandings of health, fitness, and physical activity in corporeal and functional terms. I have conceptualised the persuasiveness of the moral self-responsibility for one's own health, and ways of "bettering" oneself through physical activity, by using Foucault's concept of the 'technologies of the self'. I have shown how physical activity plays out in boys' daily lives: being physically capable was often necessary for the boys and young men's daily lives in the socioeconomic context; sport and football became rites of passage for many boys; and respect and a gaining a sense of control over one's life tended to be crucial aspects of their meanings of physical activity. I showed how the young people, and the girls in particular, negotiated, accepted or rejected multiple discourses at different points in time, noting rather than glossing over the complexities evident in their understandings and actions.

Similar to other authors in this field (Burrows & McCormack, 2013; Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015), my data suggests that the young people's understandings of physical activity as a

self-responsibility for primarily shaping one's body or self, may result in harsh self-assessments of themselves or others. Girls' conceptualisations of their bodies as objects of beauty, and of physical activity as a practice for weight-loss, did not appear to be reflected in practice, and thus may either hinder motivations to engage in physical activities or produce problematic relationships with one's body. Furthermore, the manner in which young men "bettered" themselves through physical activity can be beneficial for their wellbeing in the present; however, as the following concluding chapter suggests, engaging in the 'technologies of the self' may produce a form of neoliberal individualisation and blame, which may further stigmatise and marginalise other young people growing up in low-income areas.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

As I stated in the introductory chapter, this thesis was conducted in response to a complex public health issue, and a public health discourse that constructs 'children' and 'adolescents' as individually 'failing' to meet physical activity recommendations. Health and physical activity promotion have often followed behaviour-change and individualistic approaches, in line with neoliberal paradigms (Spotswood et al., 2015). In contrast, this study takes a critical ethnographic approach, challenging individualising understandings of physical activity practices and the discourses that position young people as 'couch potatoes' and 'ticking time bombs'. This study also highlights the diversity of the young people, and stresses their heterogeneous characters, experiences, and circumstances. As Matthews et al. (1998:197) suggest, "care should be taken not to lump together what are diverse social groups" of young people.

The anthropological methods, data, and social theories employed in this thesis have helped to unravel a complex public health issue and illuminate the often undocumented aspects of young people's daily lives and physical activity practices. This thesis shows the multitude of ways in which the differing young people were physically active in their daily lives, rather than focusing on why they may not have been as physically active as they 'should be'. Through a close analysis of the young people's physical activity practices, stories, and experiences, this study presents three key insightful overarching concepts: how physical activity practices change in the context of the young people's shifting and often unpredictable lives; how the socio-material environments of daily life interact with the ways in which the young people move and spend time; and how the young people perceived, understood, and engaged with physical activity in relation to bodies and capabilities. Here, I draw out the key themes of my research, identify cross-cutting themes, and consider the implications of these findings for public health approaches to young people's physical activity.

7.1 Key findings

Firstly, this study draws on recent anthropological work on 'childhood' and re-conceptualisations of the life course and youth transitions to explore the changes in physical activity experienced by the young people. This thesis reveals how physical activity changes are embedded in certain time-spaces in life or within certain socially constructed life-phases. Using Thomson et al.'s (2002) notion of the 'critical moment' and Johnson-Hanks' (2002) concept of the 'vital conjuncture', I have been able to incorporate the complexities and contingencies of the young people's lives into my understandings of

how physical activity patterns and motivations change at certain points in time. Re-conceptualising moments of change in physical activity narratives is a novel way of analysing the major public health concern of declining physical activity levels in young people. The time-spaces where physical activity changes occurred were often contingent upon societal institutions, circumstances, social groups, and access to spaces. I located three key areas of 'critical moments' for physical activity in the young people's lives: the transition from primary to secondary school, quitting or dropping a sport, and 'emerging adulthood'. Changes in physical activity that occurred across these critical moments were enmeshed within life-phase expectations and the young people's experiences of 'childhood', 'adolescence', and 'adulthood'. However, there were also circumstantial 'critical moments' in life, such as having one's bike stolen, or having to move house, which were often intertwined with the socioeconomic context of the young people's daily lives.

The social expectations of life-phases were reflected in the young people's understandings and practices of physical activity. I questioned the rigid age group categories that shape young people's subjectivities and restrict young people from freely engaging in playful practices associated with 'childhood'. However, this study simultaneously shows how social expectations of age can be subverted in certain time-spaces: some of the young people etched out ways of being mobile and having fun by re-living childhood games on the streets, parks, and at youth centres. Phrases such as "I feel five again" and "I'm the King of the castle", showed how the young people considered their playful practices as 'child-like', whilst also revealing how child-like fun was acceptable within certain peer groups at particular times and in particular places.

Analysing the physical activity practices around varying time-spaces suggests that changes in young people's physical activity practices can be contingent, non-linear, and haphazard. This suggests that there are complexities regarding how physical activity declines with age, and that these declines may be more 'bumpy' and less uniformly linear than large scale epidemiological studies imply. Due to the haphazard and circumstantial changes in physical activity, and the constraints and subversions of life-phase expectations, I suggest that categorising young people into 'children' and 'adolescents', and positioning young people as 'lazy' in public discourse, is unhelpful for attempting to increase their physical activity levels. By highlighting the diversity of the young people, the young people's feelings, and their negotiations of life-phase changes, this thesis provides a more positive and heterogeneous image of young people, and presents unique insights that can be shared with policy makers or organisations working to provide appropriate opportunities for physical activity.

Secondly, this thesis demonstrates how the socio-material environments of daily life can limit and simultaneously be negotiated by young people in diverse and innovative ways for

being mobile, claiming space, and having fun. By employing an understanding of space and place as produced by social relations (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994), I explain how some of the young people felt restricted in their use of public space, and yet many young people negotiated their sense of safety in their local environments in order to be mobile. The young people's strategies for negotiating uses of space included avoiding certain places at certain times of day and producing a sense of collective safety through friendships. I suggest that, for many of the boys and young men, mobility in the local streets required them to present themselves as fearless to other groups they were in conflict with or had experienced conflict with. The young people also created places of their own for sociality, negotiated institutional spaces when playing informal games in the youth centres, and used spaces and props in the material environment to engage in informal physical activity practices such as 'hardcore parkour'. The boys who engaged in parkour had strategies for negotiating adult surveillance and restrictions regarding use of space. The boys enjoyed the performance, the potential dangers, and the risks of parkour, and used the practice to negotiate their mobility and claim spaces they were often marginalised from.

Through analysing the young people's use of space, and their negotiations of the material environment, using Lefebvre's (1991) and Massey's (1994) ideas, this study stresses the importance of the youth centres, and the significance of informal physical activity in day-to-day spaces, for young people and especially those not engaged in sport clubs. The findings imply that when given the opportunity to be outdoors, or to travel with friends, young people do walk around their local areas and often enjoy being mobile. I therefore challenge the consequences of contradictory discourses that position young people as 'lazy' or 'unhealthy' if they stay inside on technological devices, and 'at risk' if they spend time outside on the streets.

Thirdly, I used Foucauldian and gender theories to re-think how dominant body-centred discourses and notions of gender were intertwined with the young people's understandings of themselves, their lives, and their physical activity practices. Some of the young people rejected aspects of discourses but took up others or were positioned between multiple conflicting discourses: the themes surrounding health, appearance, and capability emerged in different ways in the diverse groups of young people, and nuanced differences existed between individuals of the same and different genders. Many of the boys engaged in practices that presented their physical capabilities, including informal performances, such as pull ups on scaffolding, and being good at sports. My analysis showed how their desires for body utility were enmeshed within the sociocultural context and circumstances of their daily lives. The young men in particular engaged in what can be explained as 'self-bettering' techniques. Taking up healthism and obesity discourses,

the young men "bettered" themselves using physical activity in different ways: physical activities, such as boxing or gym training, helped the young men to channel "anger" and "energy"; to *feel* healthier, more capable, and more 'masculine', especially when unemployed; to achieve an idealised body; and to play a valued sport. However, through Dew's narrative, I was able to analyse how physical activity could conflict with other priorities connected to their paths to 'adulthood'.

By drawing on Foucault's concepts of 'the technologies of the self' and gender theories from more recent writers, I analysed how the often taken-for-granted interrelatedness of physical activity, health, and appearance in the young people's understandings came to be. I have contributed to the field of research that uses a poststructuralist perspective to understand young people's constructions of health and fitness, adding insights into how understandings of health, the body, physical activity, and fitness play out in daily life through my participant observation data. I also raised important issues with the ways in which physical activity is promoted in connection with obesity and the 'fat', 'muscly', 'slim' or 'toned' body. Others have suggested that an understanding of physical activity as a practice for working on the self to create a desired body can be deleterious for individuals' assessments of their bodies, their wellbeing, and can be unhelpful for ensuring life-long daily physical activity (Burrows et al., 2002).

7.2 Cross-cutting themes: important contributions

Several important ideas recurred in each of the overarching concepts presented in this thesis. They include the centrality of friendships and sociality; the frequent engagement in, and enjoyment of, unstructured self-directed physical activity; an understanding of life and physical activity as contingent; and the meaning of 'physical activity' as a moral self-responsibility. This section discusses these, highlighting the specific contributions that this thesis makes regarding these issues.

Friendships and sociality

Other studies have shown that friendships play key roles in young people's participation in organised or recreational physical activities (Hills, 2007; Lee & Abbott, 2009) and mobility (Horton et al., 2014; Mikkelsen & Christensen, 2009). In rural Australia, friendships and siblings were important for playing informal sports games in back yards (Lee & Abbott, 2009). In a deprived area in Ireland, authors noted the 'collective agency' of the young people whereby "everyone" engaged in spontaneous physically active practices together, as well as the negative influences of friendships, such as drinking and smoking, that became barriers to engaging in physical activity (McEvoy et al., 2015). In UK, an

ethnographic study showed that in PE classes, girls aided and hindered each other's participation in activities (Hills, 2007). Friendships have also been considered central to the creation of social hierarchies of bodies in school contexts: Johnson et al. (2013) found that girls with thin bodies were popular and other girls either rejected or aspired to body ideals that looked 'the best'.

This thesis shows that friendships and group sociality were priorities in the young people's lives, and are therefore central to understanding the place of physical activity in young lives. In addition to the current literature, this study shows that friendships were crucial for mobility in the local area, for perceived safety, for fun, and for making meaningful places, such as the youth centres. However, social groups were also sources of bullying, fights, and intimidation. My analyses suggest that specific social groups located in certain time-spaces can enable young people to reject and negotiate the social expectations of their ages or life-phases that can restrict their abilities to engage in physical activities. For example, playful practices in the park nearby Space1 were dependent upon the recently formed social group: these friends produced opportunities for informal forms of physical activity in daily life. Friends were also key players in reproducing, negotiating, and challenging discourses regarding appearances and abilities of idealised bodies. For example, the young men and boys' social groups tended to reinforce desires for 'big' and physically capable bodies that could engage in sports or physical practices. Likewise, peer bullying of 'fat' bodies reproduced discourses that connected physical inactivity with fatness and weakness. Contrastingly, others rejected dominant discourses that implied 'fat' bodies were a result of 'poor choices' or were incapable of physical activity. However, in some of the girls' rejections of idealised bodies, other Love Your Body discourses appeared to be taken up, which I suggest may raise other challenges.

Unstructured self-directed physical activity

Sport and physical education are often arenas in which 'physical activity' is understood and promoted. However, other studies have shown the importance of informal, unstructured, and self-directed physical activity and play in children and young people's lives (Barron, 2013; Pearce et al., 2009; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015). Although I discuss how and why some of the young people (re)engaged in organised physical activities and how some had stopped participating in organised activities at particular times, informal physically active practices emerged as equally important, especially for those who did not consider themselves 'sporty'. Many of the young people spontaneously engaged in active mobility practices and self-directed physically active practices whilst at the youth centres and elsewhere. I conceptualised some of these forms of physical activity as 'playful

practices', finding these activities were often rooted in memories of 'childhood' play, which occurred and were enjoyed in specific time-spaces.

Some studies suggest that young people (13+) feel under surveillance or 'too old' to use playgrounds (Kraack & Kenway, 2002; Moore et al., 2014). Hence, other studies find that much of young people's physical activity is located in concrete areas, streets, and roads not necessarily constructed/designated for play/activity (Lachowycz et al., 2012; Oreskovic et al., 2015). Although some of the young people's informal activity occurred in parks, this study suggests that other everyday spaces and objects can be important for aiding young people's informal physically active practices. For some of the young people, the streets, alleyways, and concrete areas were more important to them and to their physical activity than adults may realise. For example, the HIDE2 boys wanted to show me how they moved on their route home, where they could 'chill' and play football, because these spaces were meaningful.

Contingency

Wright and Macdonald (2010) suggest that young people's choices around physical activity are connected to other contingent life circumstances. They explain how post-school some young people in Australia wanted to engage in physical activity but found it difficult to fit organised physical activity around their working lives or experiences of raising young children. However, other contingencies in life, how young people respond to them, and how they impact on physical activity have often remained undocumented.

This study highlights various contingent aspects of the young people's lives in a low-income context and connects them to their physical activity practices by going beyond the 'life that is told' and using ethnographic observations to access the 'life that is led' (Thomson et al., 2002). The contingencies in the young people's lives often concerned bikes being stolen or crashed, frequently moving house, or experiencing fights or violence in certain areas. These contingencies can coincide with or trigger changes in young people's interests, causing haphazard engagement in, for example, cycling. Responses to other contingencies, such as the re-location of Space1, were diverse: some walked or took the bus to the new location, whereas others became disengaged. The contingent circumstances in the young people's lives were often embedded within the context of a low-income area. The young men's physical activity practices were connected to several contingent aspects of their lives: educational experiences and outcomes, future career trajectories, unemployment, financial circumstances, family situations, and migrant statuses. This study shows that physical activity plays out in diverse ways depending on individual responses to, and resources at, such 'vital conjunctures', and suggests that

young people's physical activity in low-income areas is partly determined by the particular challenges they face.

Self-responsibility: making 'choices'

As a critical ethnography, this thesis has scrutinised taken-for-granted assumptions and hidden agendas (Thomas, 1993). The final and most challenging concern, that cuts across all the chapters, stems from how physical activity is constructed and promoted, and centres around the idea of self-responsibility for one's own health and physical activity 'choices'. This rhetoric is embedded within healthism, which "serves to depoliticize other attempts to improve health" and "seems 'natural' and 'given' that individuals should take responsibility for their own health" (Pike & Colquhoun, 2010:109). This rhetoric is reinforced as people engage in the 'technologies of the self', through which one can make oneself a more 'moral', 'masculine' or 'feminine' self. Scrambler (2002) quotes Gibbon (1998), who suggests that in neoliberal late capitalist societies, "citizens are told they are being given choice, options and power when in fact these are legitimations of restriction, regulation and disciplining" (Gibbon, 1998:38 in Scrambler, 2002:39). This understanding can be applied to the field of public health, in which people are told they can choose to be 'healthy', and yet 'lifestyle choices' are "themselves "indebted" to social structure" (Monaghan, 2008:102).

Contradictions that occurred between and within several of the young people's interviews, observations, and informal chats, further revealed how meanings concerning physical activity were caught between various individualising discourses. For example, as discussed in Chapter 5, public spaces were often contested by different groups of young people, had to be negotiated in social and temporal ways, and abilities to move and be playful were socially restricted. And yet, as mentioned in all of the chapters, many of the young people tended to feel that "it's [engaging in physical activity] all down to your mentality like what you want to do" (Lilly). Explanations of their own or others' physical activity participation were often separated from the socioeconomic situations and socio-material environments that they discussed on other occasions. Despite some of the young people recognising certain constraints, physical activity tended to be considered a 'choice', which they felt individual young people tended not to choose.

I suggest that discourses that imply individuals are responsible for their own health, weight, and body, were ingrained into the young people's perceptions and understandings of physical activity. Some of the young people who took up these notions engaged in 'technologies of the self'. For the young men in particular, their understandings of self-responsibility urged them to engage in self "bettering" practices. These practices were often connected to producing a sense of control. Some of the young men had often been

unable to exert control over other aspects of their lives (contingent occurrences such as being arrested, parental death, consequences of poor educational attainment, and employment options), and as such physical activity provided a means to control one's body and one's self. Although these practices provided individual benefits to the young men, an implication of the contradictions and understandings seen in many others lead us to question the potential negative consequences of healthism. Individual blame may lead to further assumptions about young people, their 'bad choices', and their presumed 'laziness' in the future, and it may lead to fewer resources being directed at challenging these ideas and providing informal or 'accidental' opportunities for physical activity.

7.3 Implications for public health

This study raises a number of implications for public health policy. Firstly, this study has showed that the place of physical activity in the young people's lives was varied and dynamic, and yet the young people's understandings of 'physical activity' tended to pivot around healthism and obesity discourses. The young people were very aware of the physical health benefits of physical activity but they tended to understand health in corporeal terms. The core physical activity promotional messages, which focus on one's abstract future health (Warin et al., 2015), were recognised but did not tend to motivate many of the younger participants to engage in regular physical activity: only some of the young men, and a couple of the younger participants had realisations regarding their future 'health' or 'fitness'. Others have discussed tensions between public health messages and the realities of people's daily lives in low-income areas (Warin et al., 2015), suggesting that there is a mismatch between anti-obesity core messages regarding the future and people's local horizons. In my study, a key issue concerned how health benefits of physical activity were understood in corporeal terms. Some of the young people may use physical activity to change their body shape and size in ways they considered positive; and yet, this raises issues for both these young people and others who either do not seek to change their bodies or do not *see* visible results on the body from 'exercising'. In the former cases, young people may strive for unrealistic bodily expectations, and in the latter cases, confusion, limited motivation, and harsh self-assessments may arise. Public health officials therefore need to take into consideration the complex ways in which young people take up, negotiate, reject, and respond to healthism and obesity discourses in their understandings and practices. Public health can play a role in changing potentially harmful and ineffective discourses and interventions.

Instead, I suggest that physical activity promotion should focus on young person centred ideas: fun, sociality, and movement in local spaces. To improve physical activity levels of young people living in low-income urban areas, I suggest capitalising first on what is

already done: parkour, walking, and play in parks, streets, alleyways, concrete areas, and football cages. Enabling young people to enjoy 'physical activity' as a form of movement and time spent with friends may help reduce victim blaming and negative assumptions about bodies. Through this technique, practitioners could also alter their scope: focusing on reducing sedentary time, offering opportunities for forms of light physical activity and sociality rather than just moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. This shift could also be useful in helping to change how young people are conceptualised within public health.

Promoting "active play" (usually in formalised locations, particularly the school playground), has become a focus for those concerned with childhood obesity. However, researchers taking a critical perspective have suggested that using active play as a means for promoting weight loss is problematic as it "fails to take into account the intrinsic value of physical activity play to and for children themselves" (Barron, 2013:221)). Incorporating informal activity into explicit anti-obesity and health interventions could potentially ignore the meaning these activities have for young people's sociality or alter their meanings in ways that may hinder engagement in informal physical activity practices. As others suggest that promoting physical activity does not always create behaviour-change in those it seeks to reach (Marcus et al., 2006), *enabling* young people to move instead of *urging* them to 'choose' to engage in 'physical activity' or 'exercise' seems more appropriate. Youth centres and out-of-school opportunities that are not necessarily focused on 'sport' or 'physical activities' should attempt to incorporate time-spaces that enable self-directed 'accidental' physical activity and active playful practices. This may be particularly useful for those who do not identify as 'sporty' or enjoy organised physical activity.

Youth centres may only be found in low-income areas and may be further reducing in number because of the current UK governments' funding cuts; however, it remains important to highlight their potential role in providing opportunities for informal physical activity. I suggest that youth centres provide non age-specific objects and open non-designated spaces that young people can utilise for their own fun and movement: accessible, free, and flexible spaces, and a range of non-specialised equipment, which organisations may not originally intend to be used by young people during their teen years, may be beneficial. I suggest it is important for youth centres to exist, but also for them to have outdoor as well as indoor space, or safe outdoor spaces nearby, that young people can freely use. Such set ups may offer opportunities for a mix of young people, with 'inactive' and 'active' identities, to socialise together in ways that produce time-spaces for informal movement.

Lastly, I suggest that it is important not to 'just' recommend that urban planners and public health officials create more "activity friendly" outdoor spaces (Oreskovic et al., 2015:6) for

young people of all ages; it is also important to propose that urban planners connect with youth centres and schools to garner engagement from young people in their creation of the *conceived* space and allow young people to use existing spaces in ways that planners and adults may see as 'unconventional'. Through collaboration there are possibilities for breaking down the binary designations of spaces 'for children' or 'for adults'. My findings suggest that only through changing normalising spatial discourses will young people's use of streets, concrete spaces, and parks be viewed positively and not as potentially dangerous for them or troublesome for others.

Some of the young people in this study, girls in particular, had to negotiate parental and their own concerns about safety. As "societies are not static" (Barron, 2013:233), increases in, for example, 'stranger danger' discourses and heightened 'stranger danger' fears may further restrict some young people's mobility and informal physical activity practices in public spaces, especially those not designed/constructed for young people or physical activity. Thus, in urban contexts, where walking is possible, tackling discourses around safety, and the unsupportive social environments that restrict young people's mobility, may help young people spend less time sedentary in their homes and more time outside with friends walking to, around, and back from youth clubs or other destinations.

7.4 Final comments

Within the last three decades, the field of physical activity research in western countries has expanded rapidly, partly as consequence of technological advances in monitoring techniques and data analysis. The desire for monitoring and quantitative evidence on how active young people are has led to many quantitative studies being conducted on children in particular. An image of a linear, predictable trajectory of declining physical activity across adolescence has emerged from such quantitative studies; whereas, my research challenges this view in several ways. Although fewer objective measurement studies have been conducted on adolescents and young people, there are even fewer ethnographic studies, despite the need for an evidence base regarding the place of physical activity in young people's lives. I therefore suggest that in future research projects collaboration is key for understanding physical activity in young people's lives: research that involves ethnographers in large studies with quantitative objective measurement methodologies could act as a means of producing more insightful studies, which can incorporate both generalizable quantitative findings and valuable insights into how these physical activity patterns fit into young people's lives. I believe that interdisciplinary and cross-paradigm collaborative research could help to highlight the diversity of young people, and help to critique and improve public health messages and interventions.

'Children' often become the focus of physical activity studies assessing or exploring changes in physical activity with age; physical activity changes occurring within 'emerging adulthood' have been relatively under explored. I suggest that additional ethnographic and longitudinal research with young people (aged 16-25) growing up in diverse contexts would be beneficial for understanding how various contingencies in young lives interact with physical activity practices, which may also help to further challenge the notion of 'tracking' behaviours. I found mobile ethnography was an invaluable method for understanding the spatial practices of the young people, and yet it has rarely been used to investigate physical activity in children, and even less in adolescents. I suggest that future research should focus on using mobile ethnographic methods with multiple social groups (aged 13-18) to explore their diverse mobilities and physically active spatial practices.

This thesis shows that there is substantial value in using an ethnographic approach to study young people's lives and physical activity. Through participant observation in youth centres, this study gained access to the daily lives of three diverse groups of young people over a prolonged period of time: the approach gave rise to insightful observations, including physically active games in the street, park, and youth centres. The lengthy duration in the field also enabled me to build relationships with young people that may otherwise have been considered 'hard to reach'. My ethnographic approach facilitated attention to the young people's circumstances, biographies, and socioeconomic contexts, as well as to their nuanced understandings and daily practices of physical activity. This led to discovering the contradictory, contingent, and dynamic place of physical activity in young people's lives. The writing of this thesis bridges the voids between physical activity literature, and, anthropological, geographic, and sociological perspectives of 'childhood', 'youth' and 'health', and the critical analysis presented is unique: I have provided new re-conceptualisations and insights into how physical activity changes occur in young people's complex lives, I have shared insights about how young people are innovative in negotiating their socio-material environments, and I have presented an analysis of how, for many Black and minority ethnic boys in particular, the place of physical activity in their lives is heavily intertwined with how they need to present themselves as fearless in spaces where they are marginalised.

This is the first ethnographic study to be conducted in youth centres with a focus on young people's daily physical activity. The findings offer a new perspective on young people's physical activity, which could help change how young people are viewed within public health, influence how adults consider increasing young people's physical activity levels, and spur others to embark on ethnographic investigations of daily physical activity.

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Appendix A: Information Sheets and Consent Forms

The following information sheets have been altered to pseudonym names or blurred in parts to ensure the anonymity of the youth centres and therefore the young people.

i) Parent information sheets and consent forms (In English and Czech)

Durham University

A research project about young people's lives in the East End

Dear Parent, my name is Steph and I am student from Durham University doing a research project with SPACE1 and HIDE2 in your local area. I volunteer at SPACE1 and your son/daughter has met me through SPACE1 over the last few months. The research project has been explained in person at Space1 and your son/daughter has suggested they are happy to become part of the project. Below is some information about the research project. Please return the form if you are happy for your son/daughter to be involved. **If you have any further questions about the research I will be hanging out at Space1 seniors' sessions and HIDE2 most evenings and will answer any questions you have. Or you can call me on 07803331107 or email me at stephanie.morris@durham.ac.uk.**

What is the research about?

This research is for my course at Durham University. It is about how young people engage with youth projects and out-of-school activities, and why young people participate in physical and outdoor activities in the local area or not. To find out about how a variety of spaces and activities fit into young people's lives I also wish to learn about young people's daily lives in the East End, what young people do with their time, and what young people would like to do with their time.

What will the research involve?

I am volunteering at SPACE1. When at the youth sessions I take notes, and occasionally photographs, which highlight how young people use the space, what goes on at the centre and what young people do on a day-to-day basis.

If you are NOT happy for your son/daughter to be included in my observations please contact me and SPACE1.

I am also writing to you as I would like to invite your son/daughter to take part in the following activities, which will be held during youth sessions at SPACE1:

- An informal interview (individual or paired) about life in the East End, involvement with youth activities, and out-of-school activities.

- A few group discussions about health, physical activity, youth centres and the local area.

- A video tour of the local area

- A photography session about important places for activity in the local area

If you are happy for your son or daughter to take part in all or some of these elements of the project please complete the consent form attached.

Ethical practice

The research project will be fully explained to your son or daughter and they will only be included in the research project activities if they wish to take part. They can stop participating at any time without giving any reason for doing so. The identities of all young people included in the research will only be known by me. Fake names will be used in the final research publications, presentations, exhibitions or online resources to ensure identities are hidden. Photographs and video will only be used with your son/daughter's permission and will only be used for research purposes or by SPACE1. If featured in exhibited photographs your son/daughter's identity may not remain unknown to the audience and this will be fully explained to your son/daughter. All field notes, digital recordings and notes from talking to your son/daughter will be securely kept on my locked computer where no person other than myself will have access to them. The information gathered in the research will only be used by myself for research purposes and I guarantee not to disclose any information to third parties. All research will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you have any further questions about the research I will be hanging out at Space1 or the HIDE2 most evenings and will answer any questions you have. Or you can call me on 07803331107 or email me at stephanie.morris@durham.ac.uk.

Many thanks for your participation,

Steph Morris

Durham University Research Student

Research Project Consent Slip

Please tick the following boxes and sign and date the slip below.

I give my permission to be involved in the research project outlined in the information sheet and discussed in person. ☐

I understand the aims of the project and what will happen if I part, and what the findings will be used for. ☐

I understand I can withdraw from the project and evaluation at any time without needing to give any reasons for this. ☐

I give permission for Steph to take photographs or video footage during activities and project sessions and to use them in the research reports. I also give permission for Steph to use an audio recorder during any chats as a memory aid. ☐

Date: ....

Participant (son/daughter) signature...

Participant (son/daughter) name...

Parent Signature...

Parent name...

Thank you very much for taking part!

Parent informace:

Výzkumný projekt o životě mladých lidí ve East Endu

Vážení rodiče, jmenuji se Steph a jsem student z Durham University dělá výzkumný projekt s povídáním Důvěra ve vaší oblasti. Váš syn mě potkal na HIDE2, za posledních několik měsíců, a je rád, že se stal součástí výzkumného projektu, který byl vysvětlen osobně v chatu. Níže jsou některé informace o výzkumném projektu. Máte-li jakékoli další otázky, týkající se výzkumu, který jsem se potloukal na HIDE2 důvěry většinu večerů a zodpoví všechny otázky, které máte. Nebo můžete mi zavolat na 07803331107 nebo napište mi na stephanie.morris@durham.ac.uk.

Co je to výzkum o?

Tento výzkum je pro můj kurz na Durham University. Jde o pochopení toho, jak mladí lidé zapojit s projekty v oblasti mládeže a out-of-školní aktivity, a jakým způsobem se mladí lidé účastnit fyzické a outdoorových aktivit v okolí. Chcete-li zjistit více o tom, jak celá řada míst a aktivit se vešly do života mladých lidí jsem také zájem dozvědět se o každodenní život mladých lidí ve East Endu, co mladí lidé dělat se svým časem, a to, co mladí lidé chtěli dělat se svým časem.

Proč je tento výzkum důležitý a liší?

Tento výzkum si klade za cíl dát hlas mladé lidi a podělit se o své skutečné životní zkušenosti z bydlení ve East Endu. Out-of-školní sezení, fyzickou aktivitu a outdoorové aktivity mohou být prospěšné pro mladé lidi, ale znalosti o tom, co formy činnosti se nejlépe hodí do každodenního života mladých lidí chybí. Centra mládeže může hrát velkou roli v životě mladých lidí, ale výzkum zřídka odhaluje, jak a proč se mladí lidé používají center a aktivit, které nabízí.
To je forma reálného života výzkumu, kde se čas strávený visí v prostorách mladí lidé používají v každodenním životě. To se liší od většiny typů výzkumu, neboť je vedena především mladých lidí zapojených a je schopen vzít v úvahu mnoho různých aspektů života mladých lidí. Díky tomu se výzkum bude flexibilní a v průběhu času se může mírně měnit. Tento výzkum bude také přínosem pro HIDE2 důvěry pomůže dokument, který činnosti pracovat nejlépe a proč, a případně pomoci s budoucím financování.

Co bude výzkum zahrnovat?

Jsem visí na dvou mládežnických organizací ve East Endu, včetně HIDE2 svěřeneckého až do léta příštího roku. Když se v těchto místech budu dělat poznámky, a občas fotografie a videa o tom, jak mladí lidé používají prostor, co se děje v centrech, a to, co mladí lidé dělat ze dne na den. Budu také pozorovat účast na různé outdoorové aktivity provozované různými organizacemi spojenými s středisek mládeže, včetně Sustrans. Pokud nejste spokojeni pro svého syna / dcery mají být zahrnuty do mých pozorování, prosím, kontaktujte mě a daleko nebo chat důvěru.

Budu se také zvát váš syn / dcera se mnou mluvit o svém životě ve East Endu, jejich zapojení s povídáním Trust a jejich účasti v různých pohybových aktivit. To bude prostřednictvím neformálních chatů na HIDE2, nebo při různých činnostech. Budu se také zvát svého syna / dceru a jeho / její přátele, aby mě na zaznamenané video prohlídku místní oblasti ve dvojicích a podílet se na fotografování zasedání na HIDE2. V těchto zasedáních bude váš syn / dcera požádala fotit v centru mládeže a místní oblasti o jejich život, mluví trochu o své fotografie, a doufejme, že se jim zobrazí v chatu. Chcete-li získat široký přehled o fyzickou

aktivitou a svého syna / dcery výhledem na místní oblasti budu s dotazem, zda jsou šťastní, dokončit dva krátké dotazníky se mnou také. Pokud nejste spokojeni pro svého syna či dceru k účasti na těchto prvků projektu, prosím kontaktujte mě nebo CHAT důvěru.

etické praxe

Výzkumný projekt bude plně vysvětlena na svého syna nebo dceru a budou zahrnuty pouze činností v rámci výzkumného projektu, pokud se chtějí zúčastnit. Mohou-li účast ukončit kdykoli bez udání důvodu pro dělání tak. Identita všech mladých lidí zařazených do výzkumu, bude znám jen já. Falešná jména (které mohou být zvoleny podle vás / váš syn / dcera) budou použity v závěrečné výzkumných publikací, prezentací, výstav, nebo on-line zdroje pro zajištění identity jsou skryté. Fotografie a videa budou použity jen se svolením svého syna / dcery a budou použity pouze pro účely výzkumu nebo HIDE2 důvěry. Pokud je k dispozici ve vystavených fotografiích identity svého syna / dcery nesmí zůstat v anonymitě, a to bude plně vysvětlena na svého syna / dcery. Všechny poznámky, pole digitálních záznamů a poznámek z porady se svým synem / dcerou budou bezpečně uchovávány na mém počítači uzamčen, kde nikdo jiný než sám člověk bude mít přístup k nim. Informace získané při výzkumu budou použity pouze sám pro výzkumné účely, a já zaručit nesdělovat žádné informace třetím osobám. Veškerý výzkum bude v souladu se zákonem o ochraně osobních údajů z roku 1998.

Máte-li jakékoli další otázky, týkající se výzkumu, který jsem se potloukal na HIDE2 důvěry většinu večerů a zodpoví všechny otázky, které máte. Nebo můžete mi zavolat na 07803331107 nebo napište mi na stephanie.morris@durham.ac.uk

Many thanks.

Steph

Durham University Research Student

Research Project Consent Slip

Pokud s tím souhlasí následující Přihlašte se prosím a datum následující skluz.

Dávám svolení zapojit se do výzkumného projektu popsaného v informačním listu.

Chápu cílů projektu a to, co se stane, když jsem se rozloučit, a jaké výsledky budou použity pro.

Chápu, mohu odstoupit od projektu a hodnocení kdykoliv, aniž byste museli dát nějaké důvody.

Dávám svolení k Steph, aby se fotografie nebo video záznam při činnostech a zasedáních projektů a jejich využití ve výzkumných zprávách.

Také dávám svolení k Steph používat záznamník zvuku při všech chatech jako pomoc paměti.

Datum: ....

Účastník (syn / dcera) podpis ....

Účastník (syn / dcera) Název ....

Parent Signature ....

Parent název ....

Velice vám děkuji za účast

232

ii) Information sheet discussed with Space1/HIDE2 young people (displayed on walls too)

A research project about young people's lives in █████

Durham University

This research project is for my course at Durham University – I have to produce a big report/book. The research project will be about:

- youth projects
- Physical & outdoor activities
- Daily lives
- Health and the █████

I'm Steph and I will be hanging out at █ during seniors sessions. I will be taking notes, and occasionally photographs and video, on what young people do in the sessions. I will be chatting to people about what they do with their free time and what you use the seniors sessions for. If you are NOT happy to be noted in my observations please let █ staff or me know.

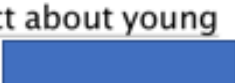Please be more involved in the research by doing the following:

- Talk to me about what you do in your spare time
- Do a video tour of the area
- Do some photography sessions about the local area and what you do
- Complete a couple of short questionnaires

All these things will take place in and around █████!

Ethical Statement: Your identity will remain hidden in the research report/book. Fake names will be used in the final research publications, presentations, exhibitions or online resources. Photographs and video will only be used with your permission and will only be used for research purposes or by █ If you feature in exhibited photographs or films your identity may not remain unknown.
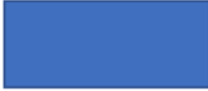
Please take the information sheet home to your parents. If you or your parents have any questions about the research project I will be hanging out at senior sessions and will answer any questions. Or you can email me at stephanie.morris@durham.ac.uk. Cheers, Steph.

iii) Additional information sheet for young people participating in HIDE2 bike rides:

A research project about young people's lives in [REDACTED]

Durham University

This research project is for my course at Durham University – I have to produce a big report/book which will be about:

- Youth projects
- Physical & outdoor activities
- Daily lives

My name is Steph and I have been hanging out at [REDACTED] over the past few months talking to people about their lives and getting to know the organisation. This weekend I am going to be participating in and observing what goes on during the bike ride w[REDACTED] by taking video footage and photographs on the ride. I hope to talk to your son about his participation in physical activity, any other activities he takes part in, and his experiences of the bike ride. I would also like to invite your son to talk to me on other occasions by participating in focus groups and informal chats at [REDACTED]

Ethical Statement: Your son's identity will remain hidden in the research report/book. Fake names will be used in the final research publications, presentations, exhibitions or online resources. Photographs and video will only be used with your son's permission and will only be used for research purposes [REDACTED]. If your son features in exhibited photographs or films their identity may not remain unknown.

CONSENT FORM - Please tear off and return this slip

I give permission for my son to be involved in the research project outlined in the information sheet above and discussed in person.

I understand the aims of the project and what will happen if my son takes part, and what the findings will be used for.

I understand my son can withdraw from the project at any time without needing to give any reasons for this.

I give permission for Steph to take photographs, audio recordings or video footage and to use them in the research reports and as memory aids.

Son's name...

Son's Age ....

Parents Signature...

Date: ....

Thank you very much for taking part!

iv) Information sheet/consent form for young men on the charity bike ride:

Durham University

A research project about young people's lives in the East End

What is the research about?

This research is for my course at Durham University. It is about understanding how young people engage with youth projects and out-of-school activities, and in what ways young people participate in physical and outdoor activities in the local area or elsewhere. To find out about how a variety of spaces and activities fit into young people's lives I also wish to learn about young people's daily lives in the East End, what young people do with their time, and what young people would like to do with their time.

Why is the research important and different?

This research aims to give a voice to young people to share their real life experiences of various aspects of their lives. This is a form of real life research, where time is spent hanging out in spaces young people use in daily life or activities young people participate in. This is different to most types of research as it is guided primarily by the young people involved and is able to take into account many different aspects of young people's lives.

What will happen if you become involved in the research?

I have been hanging out at Space1 and HIDE2 over the past few months talking to people about their lives and getting to know the organisations. This weekend I am going to be participating in and observing what goes on during the bike ride. Over the weekend I hope to chat to you about your life, your participation in physical activity and cycling, and your motivations and experiences of the bike ride!

Ethical practice

Anonymity of all participants will be ensured within the research. The identities of people included in the research will only be known by me. Photographs and video will only be used with your permission and will only be used for research purposes. All field notes, digital recordings and transcripts of chats will be securely kept on my locked computer where no person other than myself will have access to them. The information gathered in the research will only be used myself for research purposes and I guarantee not to disclose any information to third parties. All research will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Want to contact me? Email stephanie.morris@durham.ac.uk or call 0780 3331107

Research Project Consent Slip

Please tick the following boxes and sign and date the slip below.

I give my permission to be involved in the research project outlined in the information sheet and discussed in person. ☐

I understand the aims of the project and what will happen if I part, and what the findings will be used for. ☐

I understand I can withdraw from the project and evaluation at any time without needing to give any reasons for this. ☐

I give permission for Steph to take photographs or video footage during the bikeride and to use them in the research reports, publications and presentations. I also give permission for Steph to use an audio recorder or video camera during any chats to act as a memory aid. ☐

Date: …………………………………

Participant name……………………………………………….

Participant Signature………………………………………..

Thank you very much for taking part!

U map&snap

What is the project about?

The project is about YOU, YOUR local area, and what YOU think. It is about how you get around Fenham and Newcastle, and how you are active in your daily life. Most of all it is about having fun, and joining in with trips and outdoor activities too.

Why is the project important?

It is important for you to have a voice and tell other people what you think: Your photos and are one of a few ways you can express your concerns, likes or dislikes about the area you live in. You will also learn new skills and play an important role in the project evaluation.

How do I get involved?

Come along to the first introductory session on 12th May:

Questions?? Contact Steph on
stephanie.morris@durham.ac.uk

What will happen if I take part?

Come along to Monday night Project session   R (6.30-8.30pm). In the Project sessions you will be able to choose what activities we do.
You can use maps and photos to show important places i   and   and collect information about other peoples' attitudes in your local area. You could also create a project website, video or organise an exhibition? YOU decide.

There will also be lots o   activities to get involved with. These include bike rides   sessions,   bikes, wild walks and much more:

The project will run until October/ November. YOU can give feedback on activities as we go along so YOU get the most out of YOUR project.

U map&snap

Participant Name: _____

Please tick the following boxes to give your permission to be part of the Snap&Map � **project and evaluation.**

I give my full consent to participate in the Snap&map � project and project evaluation conducted by Steph Morr▮ ☐

I have understood the aims of the project and evaluation, what will happen if I part, and what the evaluations will be used for. ☐

I am aware of the confidentiality of the project sessions and my rights to remain anonymous in the project evaluation. ☐

I understand I can withdraw from the project and evaluation at any time without needing to give any reasons. ☐

I give permission for Steph to use my photographs taken for the project in the project evaluation report ☐

I give permission f▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮e Steph to take photographs or video footage during activities and project sessions and to use them in the project evaluation report ☐

I give permission for Steph to use an audio or video recorder during any interviews that may occur during or at the end of the project ☐

Any digital recordings will only be used as a memory aid for the project report and details about your identity will remain anonymous. Any digital recordings, photographs or video footage will be safely kept by Steph until the completion of the project evaluation.

Signed _____

Date_____

Thank you very much!

Durham University

Photo-release form

I give my permission for the photographs I took during the photography session(s) to be used by Steph Morris, the researcher, for the following purposes.

Please sign below if you allow your photographs to feature in the following:

An exhibition/video production/display

A research project webpage

Research publications

Research presentations

I, (the photographer)_____ , agree that the photography session facilitator (Steph Morris) can use my photographs for the above reasons.

Photographers Signature _____

Date_____

Appendix B: Interview guides and resources

All interview guides were formulated after some participant observation. Further questions were added for at different stages of the research, for different people, and for different groups, and conversation flowed in different directions. I have added some of these to the following guides but other topics and questions arose naturally in conversations, and additional informal interviews were conducted during drop-ins about themes that had arisen (eg. gaming and notions of childhood).

i)   Interview guide for young men:

1: HIDE2 and general stuff when young

When and why did you get involved with HIDE2?
Do you do anything else at HIDE2?
What did the project offer you as a teenager?
Do you feel it made it difference to that phase of your life?
What things did you do after school or at weekends when you weren't at HIDE2? Inside/outside?
What things did you do before you joined HIDE2?
Were you involved with any other youth activities in the area?
What kinds of things were there to do when you were growing up?
Other guys have told me stories about trouble and fights. Do you have any fighting stories or not?
(What kind of things happened? Why did they happen? What kinds of conflict? Did you have to be able to fight as a teenager? Do fights still happen?)

2. Local area

Are there any places you used to go to? What did you do there? Who did you go with?
Are there any problem areas or places? If so, where?
Are there any places that were or are important to you?
Was it safe? How safe? What made it safe or unsafe?
Has the area changed? In what ways?
What places do you go now? What do you do there? And who with?
How did you travel around the local area?
Why did you choose that method of transport?

3. Physical Activity: past, present and future

When I say 'physical activity, what kinds of things do you think of?'
 (Have to be a challenge? Walking?)
What kinds of physical activity did you do when you were younger?
(Why? If stopped, why stop?)
Any other physical activity at secondary school? After school? During School? On weekends? Who with?
What were your motivations for doing these types of PA back then?
Did the types of activities you chose to engage with change? If so, how, when and why? Who with?
What different sports or activities have you been involved with?
What kinds of activity do you do now? How often? When did you start?

What are your reasons for doing them/starting? Any other reasons? Motivations? Benefits?
Have your motivations changed in any way form when you were young?
Do you feel anything / anyone stops you from being active?
Do you feel anything or anyone helps you to be active?
Is physical activity important to you? Why/ why not?
Do you think of yourself as active?
Are your friends or family into sports or doing active things? Who?
Is it easy to be active in the local area/ are their facilities? For you and for other young people? Teenagers? Do you use them? Are they accessible?

4. Health/PA general
What do you think when you hear the word health?
Do you think of yourself as healthy? Is it important to you to be healthy#? Has it always been important? Why has that changed if so?
What does an active person look like?
Why do people generally do physical activity? Why not?
How easy or difficult is it to be healthy? Unhealthy? in this area?
What do you see as unhealthy?
Do you do anything that you see as unhealthy?

5. Future

Have you got a picture of your future?
What are you planning for the future?
Is physical activity going to be important in it or not?

ii)   Interview guide for younger participants

-   Out of school

What kinds of things do you after school if you don't come to HIDE2?
What do you enjoy about these things?
Where do you go?
Who do you go with?
Why do you go there?
What kinds of things do you do at the weekend?
What did you do last weekend?
Are you involved with any other youth projects or out of school activities?
If so, what?
Do you feel there is enough for young people to get involved with in the local area?

....

-   Local Area

USING MAP ON KEYNOTE

What do you think about the local area? Likes/ dislikes?
Where do you spend time?
What kinds of things do you do there?
Who do you go with?
How do you get to these places?

How you get to school?
Why do you choose to get about this way?
Are you allowed to go places on your own?
Do your parents play any kind of role in where you go? If so, how?
Do your parents own cars?
Do you feel safe at night walking around these places?
Do you feel safe during the day walking around these places?
Why do you feel safe or unsafe in these places?
Are there any other places that you avoid or that are problem places?
Can you locate them on the map? Good places/ problem places
Are there any other places that you go to hang out?

....

- Physical activity

What do you think of when I say the words physical activity?
Is physical activity organised or not organised?
Are there any benefits of physical activity?
What do you think motivates people to be active?
Is it easy to be active living in the East End?
Is it easy to be healthy living in the East End?

What types of physical activity do you do now after school?
What types of physical activity do you do now on the weekends?
Who do you do these things with?
Where do you do these things?
Do you feel that anything stops you from being active? What kinds of things stop you from being active?
Do you feel like anything helps you to be active? What kinds of things help you to be active?
Do you and young people want to be active or not?
Why do you and young people want to be active or inactive?

PICTURES OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- What do you see?
- What is happening?
- What do you think about what is happening?

(Other questions to pose: What do you like/dislike about them? Would these things fit into your life? Have you ever done any of these things? Can you do these things in the East End? Are there places to go to be active/ do activities? Does anything stop you doing these things? Are these things desirable?)

....

- Czech Republic /Slovakia (added for HIDE2 boys)

When do you how back?
How often?
Why go back? Do you want to go back?
Where live when go back?
Who do you see when go back?

What do you do when there? What kinds of things go on? What types of physical activity did you do in Czech?

What is it like in Czech? How would you describe place?

Where would you call home? What does home mean?

....

iii) **Images used on occasions to prompt discussion about spaces and physical activities (all had arisen in participant observation or informal conversations):**

iv)   Photography activities:

Photo Challenge!

Take as many photographs as you like about the following things:

1)   Something/someone fun
2)   Something/someone that makes you happy
3)   Something that represents you
4)   Something you think is a problem in the area
5)   Something you think is a positive thing in the area
6)   Something/someone that helps you to be active
7)   Something/someone that stops you being active

v)   Focus group plans

Focus groups

Discussions were loosely based around the topic areas and questions; however, further questions were asked depending on where the discussion went.

1) Space 1/HIDE2

Likes/dislikes?
Why attend?
What do young people do when not at youth centres? You?
Can young people spend time with friends in other spaces?
Other activities for young people in the local area?

2) Physical activity and health

What do you think of when I say the words Physical activity?
What kinds of PA do young people do?
Does it have to be structured?
What do you think of when I saw the word health?
What do you think of when I say the word fitness?
Is fitness important to young people?

3) Violence/fighting (added for boys)

Have you ever experienced violence?
Have you ever had a fight?
Reason for it?
How did it make you feel?
What were the consequences?
Is there any conflict in the area?
How does it make you feel?
What do you think about it?
Why do these kinds of scenes happen?

4) Bikes/cycling (added for boys who expressed interest in bike rides)

Why do people cycle?
Would you cycle to school?
Why/why not?
Bike ownership?
What do you use bikes for?
Would you cycle for transport/leisure?
Where would you go on a bike?
Are you allowed to bike?
What kind of things stop you cycling?

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