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WHO AM I AND WHAT DO I WANT?

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis To
Investigate the Experiences of Young Men Growing Up in a
Rural Community:
Reflections on Identity and Aspirations.

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I confirm that this is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, sources are cited and referenced in accordance with legal and University of Newcastle requirements.

Signed-----*R. A Hayton*-----

Date-----*23.10.09*-----

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Abstract

This study uses qualitative methodology with five male participants, aged between 14 and 18, to obtain their perceptions of what it is like to be a young man growing up in a rural community.

In preparation for the research element of this piece, literature from developmental and social psychology, human geography and social policy was considered. Previous research from other countries with large rural populations, Canada, Australia and the United States was considered along with other British and European studies.

Main topics of focus include notions of identity, aspiration and attachment to place, together with other concepts relating to social capital, positive youth development and subjective well-being.

Current and previous UK government policy is debated together with a review of the role of educational psychologists. There is also discussion over their potential role in post school transition, with particular reference to their development in Scotland.

A pilot study and main study were carried out with homogeneous populations. The findings from both pilot and main study are discussed.

Data generation methods were photo elicitation and semi structured interviews. Participants generated and selected images that they wished to discuss to illustrate the research question. The research question was 'What is it like to be a young man growing up in a rural community?' Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to examine the data.

Findings from this study indicated that, for these participants, the experience of growing up in a rural community is complex with many factors playing their part, including family support, feelings of attachment to the locality, out of school experiences and how happy they feel about themselves. Their revelations about aspiration show that it is an holistic construct for these participants encompassing more than economic and academic goals.

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The Adventure Begins

The topic is introduced and focuses on how and why I became interested in researching with young men growing up in rural areas. It also touches on the ideas that policy makers have an impact on young people. Some terms are defined to assist the reader's understanding of the piece. A range of sources is included to illustrate the topic area and includes current government policy, news items from British and American News media and anecdotal statements from parents and people who work with young people.

I became interested in the aspirations and occupational identities of young men from rural communities when my own step-son, having done well at GCSE, performed poorly at A level, subsequently failed to complete his university course and continues, 10 years on, to drift in and out of various un-skilled employment posts. Most of the time he appears quite contented. On recounting this story, people comment on their own similar experiences with their own sons or know of boys and young men for whom this scenario seems true.

Since moving to Cumbria I became aware of 'Cumbria-syndrome' (J. French, personal conversation, October 2005). This refers to the reluctance of young people to leave the county, and in some

instances the local administrative area within the county. Those that do leave intend to return at a later date. It seems that areas such as Norfolk, (S. McCarter, May 2007, personal communication), Northumberland, (D. Lumsdon, February 2008, personal communication) and Cornwall, (J. Hughes 17 February 2009, personal communication) experience the same sort of behaviour.

I wondered whether the young people who were likely to follow this path could be identified and whether there would be any benefit in that for the young person concerned. I also questioned whether young people would be able to provide this sort of insight or whether they would need to develop tools by which this insight could be communicated. We all communicate but how competent are we, as humans, at verbalising exactly what we mean so that the recipient of our discourse understands exactly what we are trying to convey?

My intention was to look at young people who had no identifiable, recognisable need, such as a learning difficulty or who might be labelled with any other descriptor by which children and young people can find themselves categorised. I was interested in looking at the lived experience of growing up in a rural

—
environment for young people today and the implications, if any, of that rural background on future aspirations.

My interest around young men, in particular at the point of transition, is partly because all the anecdotal information I have collected from parents, teachers and others who work with young people has identified young men as being most likely to 'drift', (Damon *et al*, 2003). Judith Kleinfeld (2008) in an opinion piece about William Damon's (2008a) research into purposefulness, conducted her own *vox pop* with youngsters in Alaskan high schools and reflects that 'I came across so many directionless young people...Most of them were guys' (Kleinfeld, 2008). I acknowledge that this anecdotal information about young men may have been offered to me because of my interest in young men rather than that this is the only group that experiences drift. Damon characterises 'drift' as purposelessness; he remarks 'Without a sense of direction, opportunities are lost, and doubt and self-absorption can set in. Maladaptive habits are established and adaptive ones are not built' (Damon 2008b online). —

When comparing the number of young men who complete their higher education studies with their female counterparts the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2005) notes that not only are fewer men likely to start a higher

education course but of those that do they are less likely to complete their course of study.

Non-qualification rates are around two-thirds higher for young male entrants than for young female entrants. This means that the inequality between the sexes in effective participation is higher than the already substantial inequality in young participation: the participation advantage of women increases from 18 per cent to 27 per cent once qualification rates are considered. (HEFCE, p139)

Young men in our society appear to be more likely to commit suicide (BBC News. 4/2/08), commit crimes (NAO. 2004 p 10), succumb to some mental illnesses (MIND 1998/2005) or fare poorly in education (DfES, 2007), than their female counterparts.

Erik Erikson (1968) in considering the tasks of adolescence identified 'occupational identity' as a key developmental goal. In the 21st century this should perhaps be refined and re-defined as 'sense of purpose' (Damon 1995, Layard 2009), Nathan Glazer, in referencing Damon, quotes the definition of purpose as, '... a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at the same time meaningful to the self and consequential for the world beyond the self ', (as cited Glazer, 2009, online book review).

This study attempts to show how some young people appear to be motivated to achieve certain self-determined goals. It also illustrates the conflicts and dissonance that many young people experience when they determine that they have to leave the rural locality to which they are attached, in order to achieve those goals.

My questions here are various: Does rurality have any impact upon young people's aspirations? How do young people in rural areas construct their identities? How can growing up in a rural community affect a young person's sense of well-being? How do young people in rural areas succeed in becoming independent? What conflicts, if any, do they experience at the point of transition and how are they supported in those? How well equipped are young people in rural areas to make decisions about themselves and their futures?

In order to try to shed light on some of these questions I decided that I would ask young men, in Key Stages 4 and 5, moving towards points of transition from compulsory or full-time post-compulsory education to reflect on their experiences of living and growing up in Cumbria.

Taking ideas from positive psychology (Seligman & —
Czikszentmihalyi, 2000) I am interested in finding out what
works for those students who have successfully found a sense of
purpose as well as those who are working towards finding one. I
propose consulting with young people in order to gain some
insight into what works for those who are engaged in actively
planning their futures.

*The topic was introduced and focused on how and why the
researcher became interested in finding out about how life is for
young men growing up in rural areas. A range of sources was
included to illustrate the topic area and included current
government policy, news items from British and American News
media and anecdotal statements from parents and people who
work with young people.*

Where are we now?

Government initiatives for education and skills from the previous twelve years are reviewed. The need for a new generation of tax-paying workers is balanced against the needs of young people. The over-arching policy of Every Child Matters is discussed. The role of educational psychologists in England and Wales is considered.

The 14-19 Agenda

In order to give this study some context it is important to locate it within the current education reforms around the curriculum for those young people aged between 14 and 19. Since the election of the New Labour government in 1997, and before that under the Conservative government of John Major, reform of education and training provision for older pupils has been an on-going issue.

Since 1996 there has been a plethora of government papers, policy announcements, bills and reports which focus on secondary education and training in England. These include the White Papers Learning to Compete, (1996), Schools Achieving Success, (2001) and Opportunity and Excellence, (2002). This was followed by the Extending Opportunity, Raising Standards Green Paper, (2002) The Tomlinson Report in 2004, Further

Education Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances (2006), The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures, (2007), The Education and Skills Act (2008) and continues with The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill, (2009) currently passing through the House of Commons.

Initially the challenge appeared to be to encourage more young people to continue in education, seek to access training or education through a broader range of academic and vocational studies after the age of sixteen. Ogunleye (2007) identifies 'the need to underpin the nation's economy with the highly skilled workforce needed to raise national productivity and external competitiveness' (p70) as being the principle driver of the government's policy into education and training.

Historically there has been a common understanding by parents and young people (Ogunleye, 2007) that formal education ends at the age of sixteen. Whilst it is possible, and perhaps even desirable, to continue in some form of education after the age of sixteen the perception is that this is optional. For many young people, particularly those not achieving within the desired parameters of five GCSE qualifications at grades A-C, the opportunity to leave school can come as a great relief. Others

effectively leave earlier through truanting, (Wilson *et al* 2008) teenage pregnancy (Fletcher *et al*, 2008) and school exclusion (Kane, 2006). For these young people reform of the Key Stage 4 and 5 curricula seemed essential if they were to be engaged in learning beyond the age of sixteen.

The initial reforms of the 14-19 phase of education were introduced by the Conservative Government in 1996 with their paper *Learning to Compete: Education and Training for 14-19 Year Olds* (DfEE, 1996). Through this paper the lack of relevant vocational options available to the younger pupils in this cohort became apparent and a subsequent paper, *Equipping Young People for Working Life* (DfEE, 1996a) was produced. The second paper sought to introduce more partnership working between those who had the resources and teaching expertise, the FE college, and those with the pupils, the schools, (DfEE 1996a).

Reforms in the 1992 White Paper introduced courses with a more work-related angle through the introduction of qualifications such as the vocational GCSE (VGCSE). Similarly, the introduction of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) in a range of occupational areas such as leisure and tourism, health and social care and business studies appeared to

be a viable alternative to encourage some young people to stay on at school. These were available at different levels which corresponded to the range of GCSE qualifications it was possible to attain. In other words a student could follow a lower level GNVQ course with two GCSE passes or the higher level course with four or five GCSE passes at grades A to C. The higher level GNVQ was to be equivalent to two passes at Advanced (A) Level. As well as GNVQ courses schools were still running the more traditional A level courses. This continued to be the most popular route for entry to university, particularly among the more prestigious and older universities who would not countenance GNVQ qualifications without any supporting A Levels, (Williams, 2000). Running alongside the new vocational courses were the old National Diploma and National Certificate courses, traditionally run through further education institutions and valued by employers. The general entry qualification for these courses was, again, five GCSEs at grade C or above. Other options open to young people at the age of sixteen include employment or training through a training provider place leading to NVQ qualifications.

There was considerable confusion around transition at the end of Key Stage 4 for many young people and parents at this time.

Similarly employers did not rate some of the GNVQ qualifications as highly as the National Diploma qualifications.

Consequently there was a considerable need to raise the nation's productivity and improve the skills base by making sure 'the skills benefits of (the) education system match the needs of the knowledge economy' (Morris 2002 p5).

From September 2008 the UK government through, Department for Children, Schools and Families has made changes in the secondary school curriculum. This has included extending pupils' time in education and learning to 18 by 2013 and streamlining qualifications. The stated aim of these reforms in The Children's Plan (DCSF, 2008) is to make this country 'the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up', (p1.) This would appear to be a particularly challenging ambition in the light of the 2007 UNICEF report that cited the United Kingdom as one of the poorest places for children to grow up. The UNICEF report rates the UK as bottom in two of its indicators, for peer and family relationships and how they might respond to taking risks and risky behaviour such as substance abuse, premature sexual activity, gambling. It went on to suggest that UK children were the lowest for their subjective well-being, in other words they

were the unhappiest children and young people in the wealthier countries of the world, (UNICEF, 2007).

The stated aims of education reforms for young people are to tailor learning to their needs in order to enable them to make choices about their future. (DCSF, 2008) The underlying message, however, is one that tells young people they need to think about what they are going to do at an earlier age and become active contributors to the national economy. Whilst supposing that all people have the same goals for many young people aspirations and goals are more fluid, holistic and open.

Every Child Matters

I have included a section on Every Child Matters (ECM) as it has major implications for the way in which psychologists in England and Wales work with children and young people. This policy initiative was introduced following Lord Laming's inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. In the case of Victoria Climbié local authority agencies had failed to work, together with health, to identify a child at risk. The resulting inquiry made recommendations requiring more multi-agency working and better communication between agencies. The Children Act (2004) followed and the Every Child Matters initiatives came in its

aftermath. Through the ECM agenda Children's Services directorates were created combining the previously autonomous social services and education services.

Greater communication and joint working was just one of the features to emerge from the ECM agenda. The outcomes were generated through consultation with 'partners from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors'. (DfES, 2005, p.10) The new framework provided five outcomes for all children and young people within the following headings;

Be healthy- the thoughts behind this outcome appear to be concerned with promoting physical, mental and sexual health and to help young people develop ideas about what a healthy lifestyle would be.

Stay safe – this outcome refers to the right of children and young people to be able to access education and learning, to live in a safe environment where they are free from harm or maltreatment. It also seeks to ensure that children and young people are loved and cared for.

Enjoy and achieve – encompasses objectives to do with school achievement in line with national targets. The enjoyment element is encompassed in statements relating to the increase in up-take

of sporting and cultural opportunities. The emphasis seems to be firmly on the 'achieve' part of this outcome.

Make a positive contribution- on closer investigation this outcome seems to be more concerned with not making a negative contribution. Within this outcome are targets for reducing youth offending and anti social behaviour as well as some work with young people on their personal development.

Achieve economic well-being – to some extent this outcome demonstrates some of the difficulties inherent in merging social and education services. The majority of measures within this outcome are concerned with housing and accommodation of vulnerable families and to ensure that unemployed parents have access to good quality affordable childcare. Within this outcome there is a mention of a coherent strategy for 14-19 education and a commitment to prepare children for working life, (DfES, 2003). My study considers all of the ECM outcomes.

The role of Educational Psychologists

Educational psychologists have been questioning their role for several years (Norwich 2005, Gersch 2004, Farrell 2006, Stoble et al, 2000). This is in part due to a growing number of professionals in allied disciplines, such as behaviour intervention advisors for example, who may be able to carry out some of the

traditional roles of the educational psychologist such as providing behaviour management advice and strategies for the classroom or playground. It also owes something to the fact that the psychologist's role is protected by the on-going need to provide psychological advice for statutory assessment of children.

Although there continues to be a need for educational psychologists to be involved with teaching and learning as well as with children, families and schools, the need for statutory assessment is diminishing. This means that the protected role of educational psychologists could be on the wane, (Norwich, 2005).

Research carried out by psychologists at the University of Manchester under Peter Farrell made several conclusions not all of which was been well-received by practitioners. His 2006 review into the contribution of educational psychologists in England and Wales stated that the role for educational psychologists within the ECM agenda was significant in that by combining social services and education educational psychologists were no longer sidelined in education but have a more significant role to play in the wider community with work in schools only being a part of the wider remit.

Almost a forerunner to Farrell's work, Brahm Norwich (2005) of Exeter University questioned the role of educational psychologists and concluded that there was a lifelong role for educational psychologists, in line with lifelong learning, and that the role should be more than 'the current mainly teacher advisory role' (p397).

This is reflected, to some extent, in the new training route for educational psychologists in England and Wales. A previous requirement to access a training programme was at least two years of experience and a qualification as a teacher. In recognition that the teaching qualification was perhaps not an essential requirement it was replaced in order that others, with equally valid experience of work with children and families, could be encouraged to enter the profession. It also enabled practitioners to focus on applying psychology to the situation in hand.

In reviewing the work of educational psychologists Farrell *et al* considered three elements in light of the ECM agenda. These included seeking the views of stakeholders around how educational psychologists work with special educational needs assessment, multi-agency working and strategic work with

schools 'to promote school improvement and pupil achievement' (p7). The research team also sought the stakeholders' opinions on the distinctive contribution that educational psychologists bring and what facilitates or obstructs that contribution.

In Scotland the scope of educational psychologists has broadened following the implementation of recommendations made by the Currie Report (2002), to extend the service to include young people up to the age of twenty-five. The approval by the Scottish Office (Scottish Executive, 2003) to set up pathfinder services providing post school psychological services (PSPS) was to 'apply psychological knowledge and skills to support key stakeholders and clients to enhance lifelong learning through the effective deployment of the full range of professional roles' (p1).

An evaluation of this extended service by Tommy MacKay, (2006) concluded that those who had received educational psychologist input as a result of being involved with a pathfinder (pilot) service reported better outcomes for young people. These improvements occurred through:

- supporting the young person's transition to post school by enhancing continuity and progression, complementing the assessment and advice of Scotland's Colleges and other service providers, improving the understanding

skills and effectiveness of service providers through consultation, training and action research and contributing to strategic developments locally and nationally, including policy developments, (p3).

There is currently an interest in defining a unique role for educational psychologists. The uniqueness lies in their ability to apply psychology to a variety of situations and settings and to base interventions on empirically based research, (Gersch, 2004). Part of my interest in this piece of research is to find out whether there might be a role for educational psychologists within the wider remit of young people's subjective well-being. Up-skilling school, college staff and staff from other agencies may be an appropriate manner in which educational psychologists could contribute to the transition from school for young people through the application of psychology. Similarly there may be opportunities for collaborate action research around this topic.

Finally it was important to me to hear the opinions of my participants in their own words. Narrative psychology and the philosophical theory of phenomenology give an insight into why obtaining information in people's own words is potentially so powerful. Own word accounts have become so commonplace that they are what we expect in a variety of situations, in legal

proceedings for instance, witnesses are asked to give their account in their own words. This is mirrored in educational settings where in order to establish a student's understanding of a situation they are asked to produce something in their own words and to credit other people's words. Doctors ask patients to describe their symptoms, give accounts of when a phenomenon happens or does not happen. Research is full of own word accounts. A literature search to establish what people were prepared to talk about in their own words topics ranged from experiences of being socially excluded because of their disability, (Susinos, 2007), what it is like to be a victim or a perpetrator of domestic violence, (Felson & Pare, 2007) what is it that makes undergraduates plagiarise the words of others (Devlin & Grey, 2007) and how pupils regard their learning mentors (Rose & Doveston, 2008). The General Teaching Council for England (2005) outlines the benefits of seeking pupils' views of school with regard to teaching and learning. They state that pupils feel more valued by staff if they feel that their views have been listened to.

There are two factors here, people giving their narrative accounts and other people listening to them. Jerome Bruner in his discourse on the narrative construction of reality concludes that 'psychologists became alive to the possibility of narrative as a

form not only of representing but of constituting reality', (p.5).

In other words something is true because the speaker believes it to be true. Although complicated, this is the nub of the argument for the use of own word accounts of events. To illustrate this point we can imagine that a handful of people witness an event. Although the people all saw the same event their perception of what took place may be different but is nonetheless true for the person who experienced the event.

In the twenty-first century it has become a commonplace to ask people what they made of their experience of a situation and there is a common understanding that by asking people what a situation is like for them a greater insight and understanding of the subject will become clearer to the researcher.

For this piece of work I was interested to hear of how my participants viewed their lives, the opportunities they envisaged for themselves and the limitations they imposed upon themselves.

The topic was introduced and focused on Government education initiatives since 1997 This includes the 14-19 agenda and Every Child Matters which form major planks of local authority planning for schools. It also touched on the ideas that policy makers have

that have an impact on young people. The current role of educational psychologists was also highlighted in order to discover whether their role could be developed to work with post-school transition. A discussion of the value of narrative, or 'own word', accounts followed.

Some adventurers have trodden this path before.

The literature review discusses previous studies that have looked at aspects of this investigation. Literature includes perspectives on identity theory, attachment to place, aspiration theory, post-school transition, adolescence and emerging adulthood, subjective well-being and rural life for young people as well as looking at the rationale for current national education policies. After considering previous literature the research question is posed.

Literature review

Identity

Erikson, writing in his seminal work *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (1968) describes the process of exploration as a series of crises, of varying severity and challenge, that confront young people on their journey from childhood to adulthood. Identity can be described through different filters; sexual identity, gender, ethnic identity and social identity. Young people may also be considering their political identity, where they stand on environmental issues and whether they have any religious beliefs, (Bynner, 1992.) All these filters provide pointers for young people

to answer the question of whom they are, (Erikson, 1968) and whom they want to be.

Adolescents are nascent existentialists (Fitzgerald, 2005) trying to create and find meaning in their lives. It is at this stage of development when young people are likely to start asking why they are here and what life is all about. Existential philosophers were concerned with the themes of authenticity, dread, alienation and freedom as well as the absurd, commitment and nothingness (Fitzgerald, 2005) In order to try to answer these questions young people may try on different identities until they find the one that is most comfortable for them (Erikson, 1968).

James Marcia's (1966) paper based on Erikson's work on ego identity sought to categorize adolescents' development of ego identity. He devised a measure for establishing what phase of ego identity a young person was at by asking semi-structured questions and sentence completion tasks. He found four phases of development could be identified, these included ego identity, moratorium, foreclosure and identity diffusion. The phases, according to Marcia, are worked through sequentially.

'Identity diffusion' is characterised by a young person's lack of commitment to any choices made so far. 'Foreclosure', the second

phase of identity development, is marked by deference to parents' and teachers' ideas with the young person having no ownership of the choice. The 'moratorium' phase describes the young person wrestling with choices and ideas but actively engaged in the process of exploring who they are. The final phase, ego identity, has young people making decisions about occupational choice and career orientation on their own terms, (Marcia, 1966). Marcia claims that the individual interview was more successful as a measurement of ego identity than the sentence completion task. His observations about the impact of each phase of identity status could be interesting to educational psychologists and other educators because they suggest a progression that could be worked through with young people at the point of transition from compulsory education to the post compulsory phase.

The interpretation of Erikson's identity theory by Marcia (1966) into a positivist, measurable developmental process has been challenged by other authors writing about identity. The neo-Eriksonians sought to take Erikson's theories in new directions, (Berzonsky 1990, Adams & Marshall 1996, Waterman 1988, Côté 1997). An appreciation of the role of others in the construction of an individual's identity was voiced by Berzonsky (1990), who stated that 'personal identity was constructed through social

interactions', (Berzonsky 1989). His identity style model was based on how people coped with current situations rather than with actions they had taken previously. In this way it was different to Marcia's 1966 ego identity theory and posited identity as a characteristic rather than as a skill or set of skills to be learned, (Schwartz, 2001). Adams and Marshall (1998) suggested that there was an element of social psychological development through the formation of identity. They believed that identity was formed at an individual level and at a cultural level. In other words there was a personal identity that was evident in intimate settings such as in conversation and through individual interactions with other people but then another, larger identity which was the individual as part of a larger movement or organisation on a social and cultural level. It is possible to think of national and corporate identities where a collection of individuals can be moulded and infused with a common shared identity.

As well as psychologists developing definitions and broadening the scope of Marcia's understanding of identity, writers and researchers from other disciplines have been writing about identity. James Côté, a sociologist talks about identity through the construction of the social capital model (Côté, 1997). The

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social capital model refers to how socially appropriate or acceptable one's identity might be, (Schwartz, 2001).

Current thinking on identity differs from the Eriksonian viewpoint that there is one 'core' identity and other strands that make up the individual's central identity. Phoenix and Rattansi (2005) identify different identities or multicultures as being part of an individual's psychological make up. In other words a young person may have a school identity, a peer group identity, a different identity in their home community and an identity relating to their role as male or female and an array of other identities besides. They also stress the development of identity as being formed within the constructs of the society into which that person is born. In other words identity formation is not a process that happens in an individualized way but rather one in which the communities that a person finds themselves in have an influence, (Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005).

Other psychologists, (Weigert & Gecas, 2005, Schachter, 2005, Kroger, 2007 Berzonsky, 2005) and researchers on identity, who still associate themselves with Eriksonian or neo-Eriksonian identity theory, disagree with aspects of Rattansi and Phoenix's work. Weigert and Gecas (2005), for example, argue that there is

a difference between the concepts of 'self' and 'identity'. They say that 'Identities are objects referenced to an embodied self...'

(p.164) they also believe that multiple aspects of identity are a feature of modern life (Weigert & Gecas 2005). This differs from their definition of self which claims that 'self is concomitantly aware of itself and feels itself as substantively more than what others know or see' (p164), and they see identity formation as fluid, responsive to social and cultural environments and dynamic.

Whether approaching identity formation from an Eriksonian or neo-Eriksonian perspective it seems that there are areas of consensus between authors on the subject. Identity pertains to how an individual sees themselves and to the view of themselves they wish to be projected to the wider communities that they move within. Identity occurs not only for individuals but also for larger groups, there may be a school identity, a team identity and a village identity to accommodate.

Following on from the literature around identity development I am interested to find out how young people growing up in rural communities might develop their identities. In order to take this line of enquiry further I have read around research concerned

with attachment to place (see p.32) and rural adolescence (see p.29).

Well-being

Policy makers at international, national and local government level are concerned with promoting well-being, particularly that of young people. The concept of well-being is nebulous and usually defined through a health lens (Morrow, 2004) although recent developments in policy have subsequently included social support and participation and financial well-being as well as mental, physical and emotional health.

Although some young people are more physically active in rural areas because they are involved in practical land-based activities such as animal husbandry, there are others whose involvement in physical activities is limited to what they access in school. People are more likely to walk to the shop, post office, youth club or gym in an urban setting whereas for young people in rural areas the nearest public amenities and social spaces may be a car journey away. (Sjolie & Thuen, 2002; Watkins & Jacoby, 2007; Joens-Matre *et al*, 2009.)

Carol Ryff (1989), suggests six indicators of well-being; self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Other authors have different conceptualisations of well-being. For instance for Sagiv and Schwartz (2000), and Triandis (2000), subjective well-being comprises two main elements; how satisfied a person is with their life and how happy they feel. (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000; Triandis, 2000).

Other researchers (Diener, 2000; Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004; 2008; Haller & Hadler, 2006), also include unhappiness and what factors or features can lead to a reduction in happiness. For some researchers, (Cummins, 2000; Trzcinski & Holst, 2008) well-being is linked to personality and for others, (Duroy, 2008; Howell & Howell, 2008; Diener *et al.*, 1995), tied to external factors such as age, attractiveness and income.

A recent study into the meaning of subjective well-being in rural Australia (Bourke & Geldens, 2006) suggested that for older teenagers in their study goal setting, family and 'supportive relationships regardless of family structure' (p182) were of primary importance in determining a young person's well-being. The Bourke and Geldens study pointed out that, 'The young

people in this study did not think about their lives, their health or their well-being in singular terms; they had very holistic perspectives of what well-being means and viewed all aspects as interconnected.' (p182).

The Bourke and Geldens (2006) study required the young participants (16-24 year olds) to identify well-being for themselves. These participants not only included relationships, feelings and goals they also included ideas about family, safe environments and health as well as feelings about themselves, pressure and happiness. Further elaboration through interviews by the researchers demonstrated the 'importance of social environments in young people's lives as their feelings, relationships and goals were related to family environments, school results, employment, friends and broader expectations and opportunities'. (p183).

Adolescence and emerging adulthood

Adolescence itself is a construct as is childhood. Margaret Mead in her work *Coming of Age in Samoa* questioned whether 'the disturbances that vex our adolescents (were) due to the nature of adolescence itself or to the civilization?' (Mead, 1928 p10). Some

psychologists describe adolescence as beginning with puberty and finishing at the end of the teenage years. The World Health Organisation defines adolescence as the period of life between 10 and 19 (WHO, 1995) although in various cultures around the world adolescence begins and ends within these loose ages or does not exist at all. Adolescence is defined differently according to the philosophical and epistemological tradition that the researcher comes from. Rattansi and Phoenix (2005) point out that differences in defining adolescence occur according to the research discipline and theoretical paradigm from which the researcher come. Generally speaking sociologists refer to 'youth' rather than 'adolescence' which is the preferred term for medical and psychological writing. Some authors focus on the biological and neurological changes that occur during the transition from childhood to adulthood, (Sujoldzic & de Lucia, 2007; Teitelman, 2004; Wade, 2004) others focus on the psychosocial aspects of this aspect of the life course, (Busseri *et al.*, 2006).

Recent research (Schwartz *et al.*, 2005; Arnett, 2003; Arnett, 1998; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) describes transition to adulthood outside the usual time-bound definitions of adolescence. They identify the phase of 'emerging adulthood' (Arnett, 2003) a phase between adulthood and adolescence which continues until the

person feels they have achieved adult status. This status is reached when the person achieves certain emotional, social or moral milestones such as, taking responsibility for their actions and decisions, for instance. For psychologists there are different developmental tasks and milestones which are reached within adolescence. These include the 'formal operations' phase of Piaget's theory of development in which young people are capable of abstract thought and are able to use their cognitive abilities to think about the wider world. As well as achieving cognitive goals adolescence is a period during which young people challenge, accept or reject cultural and social norms. G. Stanley Hall defined adolescence as a time of 'storm and stress' when young people can be seen to move widely between opposites of behaviour. (Bergevin *et al* 2003, in Slater & Bremner, 2003). Criticisms of Hall's notions of adolescence include newer studies that suggest that the conflict experienced by adolescents could be caused by competing goals. Emotional tension displayed by adolescents might include shyness, aggression and sensitivity, (Bergevin *et al.* 2003). Characteristics of adolescent behaviour include the need for peer validation and support. Adolescents are very social and need the support and recognition of their peers in order to aspire and achieve, (Festinger, 1954; Quaglia & Cobb, 1996).

The rural issue

Attachment to place is an idea that human geographers have been debating for almost forty years and relates to 'the emotional significance that geographic spaces are able to take on in human experience that transforms them into "places".' (Giuliani, p.146)

Because most of the people working in this area of study are human geographers, anthropologists or sociologists it is very difficult to find a psychological definition of attachment to place.

Topophilia was the word coined in 1974 by Tuan Yi-Fu in his consideration of his study into of environmental perception, attitudes and values. Tuan suggests that the combination of values, attitudes and environmental perception make people who they are and are reflected in the space around them. (Tuan, 1974). The notion of environmental perception suggests that characteristics are attributed to an environmental space which can make it a good space or a bad space. In educational psychology for example we are familiar with an understanding that coming into schools can be a bad experience for some parents because of their own experiences of schools and of their individual perceptions of what a school is. Similarly people can

hold perceptions that areas of towns or cities are bad places to be at certain times of the day or that other spaces, such as by the sea or on top of a hill, are good places to be. Thinking about the attributes given to a space by people begins to address some of the concepts pertaining to attachment to place.

Schumaker and Taylor (1983) devised a model of attachment to place and describe attachment to place as 'a positive affective bond or association between individuals and their residential environment' (p.233). This is slightly different to Tuan's earlier — definition which acknowledges that positive and negative emotions can be associated with an environment and that the environment can be as small as a room rather than a dramatic landscape. This idea finds resonance in literature too, Virginia Woolf (1928) in *A Room of One's Own*, notes that in order to write women need to be financially independent and have the space in which to write, in this case in a room of her own (Woolf, 1928/2000). This could be conceptualised as her own space in which she feels comfortable and able to be creative, that her space is not impinged upon by the clutter of other people's belongings which compromise her space.

Caitlin Howley, writing about rural children's aspirations and education observes that 'evidence indicates that connection to place, for example, provides youth with a significant sense of identity, commitment, and social connection', (p63).

As well as the psychological theme of perception, attachment to place is connected with affect, or the feeling of emotion that is connected to being in that place. Giuliani points out 'we have all experienced some affective bond either positive or negative, pleasant or unpleasant, with some place or other – a place that can be related to our past experience...sometimes to the future...and more or less restricted in scale', (Giuliani p137).

In their study of young people growing up in rural Scotland, Jones and Jamieson (1997) wrote 'while some young people are too attached to the area to leave even if they could do better elsewhere, others cannot wait to get away' (p1) They go on to observe that, 'A sense of belonging to, or detachment from the local community forms part of a developing individual identity during youth,' (p4).

More recently a report by Green and White (2007) which addressed youth employment seeking and place attachment in deprived urban areas. They observed that, 'local place-based *social networks* affect aspirations and behaviour – for some young people, attachment to place is an important factor (possibly the most important factor in some cases) in their decisions about life choices,' (p97).

A study by Glendinning *et al* into young people's perceptions of growing up in rural Scotland, highlights some of the major dissonances between the reality of living in rural communities and widely –held perceptions of what living in rural communities is like, (Glendinning *et al*, 2003). Whilst there appears to be a universal acceptance that rural communities are positive environments in which to bring up children the very factors that make them good for younger children make them less positive for older children and adolescents (Glendinning *et al*, 2003). Other writers (Shucksmith, 2000; Shucksmith *et al*, 1996; Ni Loaire, 2000; Cartmel & Furlong, 2000; Little, 2003) have identified features such as low social capital, high visibility, isolation, low availability of age-appropriate social opportunities, poor local employment prospects, highly constructed views of gender and

transport difficulties as contributing to the negative experience some young people have of growing up in rural communities. Young people have little input into what happens within their communities that may directly affect them. Shucksmith (2000) identifies young people as having no 'voice', no way of expressing their views and making their needs known. One of the tasks of adolescence is to try out different roles and to develop an identity. (Erikson, 1968; Marcia 1981). Instead of feeling safe and supported by the community young people can feel themselves to be highly visible and unable to be themselves (Bell, 2000; Midgely and Bradshaw, 2006; Meek, 2006).

Matthews *et al*, (2000) identified young people in Northamptonshire as feeling excluded by their environments. They describe 'disenfranchisement' dislocation and detachment as feelings articulated by young people particularly the least affluent. This is in direct conflict to the embrace that adults and younger children identify as one of the positive features of living in rural communities: a feeling of belonging. There is a dissonance experienced by many young people; they may be told that they are living the 'rural idyll' (Mingay, 1989) but their own experience of living in rural communities may be very different to

that. They find their interests marginalized, that they have become invisible or too visible, socially isolated and excluded. Glendinning *et al.*, 2003 found that 'young people's beliefs about future employment and educational opportunities in the local area were linked to emotional well-being...' (Glendinning *et al.*, 2003). One of Glendinning's observations is that the difficulties of living in a rural environment are related to the young people's experience of themselves as young people, as opposed to when they were children, (Glendinning *et al.*, 2003).

Skorikov and Vondracek noted that adolescents from rural communities have fewer employment opportunities and fewer role models which suggests that they devalue work as a means to 'self-actualization' (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2007). Self actualization is the zenith of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In other words when basic, and more complex, needs have been met the goal for personal motivation is self actualization. This has implications of developing personal creativity, morality and spontaneity once the need for love, safety, esteem and physiological needs have been met, (Maslow, 1943). Skorikov and Vondracek observe that adolescents from rural communities may be vulnerable because of the limited opportunities available

to them to help them adjust successfully after compulsory schooling, (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2007).

Shucksmith (2004), notes that all young people, whether urban or rural have similar concerns relating to employment opportunities, access to education and housing. He believes that young people growing up in rural areas could be further marginalised by having limited access to transport and fewer opportunities for social and leisure activities. He goes on to say that young people from rural communities have 'issues of identity and the visibility of living in small communities'. (Shucksmith, 2004, p45) This echoes the findings of Davis and Ridge (1997) who comment that young people from rural areas can find themselves demonised by affluent incomers who appropriate power within villages and use it for their own ends. This leaves young people with nowhere to congregate where they are not highly visible, (Davis and Ridge 1997, cited Shucksmith, 2004).

Midgely and Bradshaw (2006) conducted research for the Institute of Public Policy Research with young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), in the North of England. They found that young people in rural communities in the North East and the North West are more likely to be involved

in work based learning than in other areas of England. Other findings that they observed included the notion that the cost of accessing opportunities in rural areas was higher than in urban areas, because of transport costs, and that the choice available was much more limited with maybe only one training provider or college offering a desirable course of study or training.

Aspirations

In order to discuss aspiration it is necessary to establish what is meant by aspiration. Psychological studies into aspiration can be dated to the 1930s so the notion of aspiration is not new.

Festinger's (1954) work on social comparison theory suggests that people are searching for a degree of conformity, to achieve within certain boundaries determined largely by peers. —

MacLelland's (1961) work on achievement motivation echoes that of Festinger in that he agrees that achievement motivation can be influenced by peers. He also highlights that 'the drive to achieve is acquired', (Quaglia & Cobb, 1996).

Marcia (1966) found that his measure of aspiration gave interesting results. Young people in the 'foreclosure' phase were more likely to have unrealistic expectations despite evidence to the contrary, such as poor test results. He found that all his participants set goals higher than their attainment and could

therefore be found to have aspiration. (Marcia 1966). This is similar to the definition offered by Quaglia and Cobb (1996) that 'Aspiration can be defined as a student's ability to set goals for the future, while being inspired during the present to work towards those goals.' (Quaglia & Cobb 1996).

Bajema *et al*(2002) commented that the 'aspiration level of youth in rural communities is more vulnerable to the social influences of a community' Bajema *et al* 2002). This is in agreement with the notions of high visibility, rigidity of role and gender identified by other authors, (Bell, 2000; Midgely & Bradshaw, 2006; Meek, 2006).

Midgely and Bradshaw (2006) report that young people living in rural communities do not have limited aspirations but rather that they are limited in the opportunities to achieve those aspirations and remain in their own community. Young people also commented on the lack of choice available to them with regard to college courses, university opportunities and training or work placements. (Midgely & Bradshaw, 2006). This is further reported by Howley (2006) who challenges the notion that young people who grow up in rural communities have limited aspirations but comments that high -earning roles are few and far between in

rural communities. Rural towns may offer a few opportunities for those working in the traditional professions of law, accountancy and medicine but they will not compare to what can be undertaken in larger conurbations. Howley agrees with Midgley and Bradshaw that one of the aspirations of many young people growing up in rural communities is the desire to stay and achieve within their local area and that this is an appropriate aspiration (Howley, 2006). This is further borne out by the work of the Moving Mountains project which ran workshops and interviews with young people in rural parts of England and Wales. There was an acknowledgement, by those who took part in the project, that the countryside could not meet their needs as young people. This leads to the question of who decides what is an acceptable aspiration and why aspirations need to be raised. Recent government proposals have focused on raising aspirations and this has been synonymous with continuing participation in further and higher education in order to meet commercial and business goals. A more positive position on the need to raise the aspirations of young people was put forward by TEDCO (the Tyneside Economic Development Company) whose state that:

Raising the aspirations of young people is essential if we are to get them to aim higher and reach their full potential. Many young people need help in recognising their own abilities as well as the opportunities that now exist to

develop them. TEDCO presents these opportunities to young people and allows them to discover hidden abilities, giving them the chance to develop them in 'real life' situations. Being involved in a project can also open doors to future career possibilities. (McShane ND)

Their stated aim is to generate economic prosperity across Tyneside. (TEDCO)

When asked in the Ipsos-MORI study 'Creating a High Aspiration Culture for Young People in the UK' what had prevented young people achieving their aspirations one of the most frequent answers given by young people when their aspirations were not met was that there were 'no/few jobs of that kind in my area'. An ECOTEC survey into the aspirations of young people in the rural West Midlands reports that the young people it surveyed did not differ greatly to those of other young people but that they observed a lack of opportunity for some jobs, training and career options in their areas which needed to be addressed if out-migration was to be reduced (ECOTEC, 2006).

This leads to a conflict for young people who are caught in between their role as the life-blood of their community (Glendinning *et al* 2003 p131) and their role in achieving, aiming

higher and reaching their economic potential. At the moment these two aims seem to be in conflict.

Some local authorities with largely rural populations cite raising aspirations as one of their key strategies (Norfolk County Council, 2006; Somerset County Council, 2004; Devon County Council, 2004; Cumbria Connexions, undated). Some authorities use agencies other than schools to raise aspiration. Somerset, Devon and Cornwall for example are engaged in 'raising aspiration through progressive interventions'. The raising of aspiration focuses on encouraging young people into higher education who might otherwise not have considered this option. In Cumbria Aim Higher used drama to raise awareness of post-16 options and qualifications. (Aim Higher website, 2007). The nature of Aim Higher is to encourage more young people into further study although much of its work seems to be concerned with promoting knowledge about opportunities and routes forward with little if any focus on developing the person's self awareness. Norfolk has a strategy within Every Child Matters for raising aspiration. It claims that aspirations need to be raised in order to raise achievement. Norfolk cites low aspiration and low achievement as having a 'negative impact on the economic and skills base of the county...' (Martin, undated). In April 2007, Minister of State,

Department of Work and Pensions, Jim Murphy, talked about the 'significant task ahead concerning the skills and aspirations of many young people' (Murphy, 23rd April 2007 in Hansard). He went on to suggest that raising the school leaving age to 18 might be one of the ways to meet the challenge. From reading local and national government policies on raising young people's aspiration the main thrust and motivation for the policy appears to be primarily economic and political. There is little or no emphasis on the social and cultural benefits of raising aspirations, how to be an effective parent, or playing a fuller role in the community for example.

A question that this raises is whether attachment to place, as defined in the previous section, contributes to career indecision in rural young people.

Human geographers and rural sociologists identify attachment to place and space as being a significant factor in out-migration of young people from rural areas. Where adolescents can be described as being in the 'moratorium' phase of career decision making (Marcia, 1966) they are more likely to stay within their rural community. They have not yet challenged their parents' view of the world and made their own choices but have deferred

the decision-making process, (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This could be supported by the study by Johnson *et al* (2005) into Iowan adolescents which suggests that 'residential preferences (are indeed) related to adolescents' academic achievements and future educational plans, their relationships with parents and perceptions of local job future opportunities', (p99).

Social Capital

Social capital is a term that is used increasingly in sociological studies, human geography and economic studies. It is referred to as an important measure of how well communities cooperate to achieve mutual goals. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) describes social capital as 'networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or between groups' (Cote & Healy, 2001, cited ONS, 2003). It appears to fall into three types, bridging, bonding and linking social capital. Researchers argue that it is of relevance to young people in education in facilitating their mobility and goal-setting.

There is a wealth of literature concerning the role of social capital and the influence different types of social capital can have on the

lives of young people and adolescents. Studies have been carried out in diverse rural communities around the world and have considered the effect of social capital on civic involvement (Duke *et al*, 2009; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007) adolescent risk taking (Boyce *et al*, 2008), delinquency and anti social behaviour (Hoffmann & Dufer 2008) and substance use (Curran, 2007).

An American study of the social networks of young people growing up in rural communities, (Singh & Dika, 2003) suggests that the more adults a young person can name as someone with whom they have a positive relationship, the more likely that the young person is to achieve educationally, aspire and be academically engaged, (Singh & Dika, 2003). They point out that in rural areas young people are less likely to know people who are not already part of their extended family network and that very often adult members of the support network will be engaged in similar level employment.

This is not necessarily the state of the situation in the UK at the moment although youth groups such as the Young Farmers Clubs tend to attract those young people who have aspirations towards an agricultural future or parental ties linking them to farming. Although there has been a broadening of the remit of

Young Farmers Clubs to include support for migrant seasonal workers and opportunities to take part in public speaking competitions and involvement with the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, the bedrock of activities continue to be rooted in agricultural activities such as stock judging and ploughing. (NYFC, 2009). There is a trend for affluent, professional families to move out of the urban space to enjoy the 'rural idyll' although there is not much evidence to demonstrate how this positively impacts on the more deeply rooted rural youth. Many professionals living in rural communities are now using technology and advances in information and communication technology to continue to carry out their city-based work from home, or commute to Manchester, London and Birmingham (Davies, 2008; Gilligan 2005). Best and Shucksmith (2006) suggest that that this inward migration to rural communities by wealthy, older professionals is likely to lead to 'the 'cleansing' of poorer, middle income groups from rural England', (p6).

Virginia Morrow's (1999) research into the social capital of children identifies children as agents of social capital generation. Through their loose friendships, involvement with other children and families in the community they open up opportunities for their adults to network and socialise.

Morrow also points out that in UK and USA the definitions offered by Coleman and Putnam are not particularly helpful in that they portray children as the property of their parents and seek a deficit-model, looking at individuals rather than communities. This has particular importance for families in rural areas, however they are constituted. In established rural communities the extended family and members of the wider community are more likely to play a role in bringing up children (Morrow, 1999.)

Bridging social capital is concerned with building loose ties that can facilitate movement. This could through belonging to civic community-based groups such as a choir or film club, for example. This type of low level inter personal connection may make it possible for a person to secure a work experience position in the future, or be able to recommend a plumber or keep an eye on an empty property thus building community.

Bonding social capital on the other hand is less to do with building communities that can get along harmoniously than building networks that are symbiotically related. Green and White (2007), highlight the difficulties some young people find in

—
leaving a community with which they have bonded strongly. In urban areas gang culture fosters the idea of a strong bond which for some may seem to recreate the sense of family and belonging. In this sense bonding social capital can be limiting and difficult to break away from (Jordan, 2008; Taylor 2007).

Gewirtz *et al* (2005) point out the central position given to the importance of developing social capital by the New Labour UK government. It has permeated social and educational policy since 1997 with a particular focus on engaging parents, forming community groups and developing parenting skills (Gewirtz *et al*, 2005).

Gewirtz *et al* (2005) go on to argue that rather than building loose social links that typically middle class families develop, the Government's development of social capital has focused on building multi-agency teams of professionals, grouping families with similarly perceived difficulties together and helping them to help each other but crucially not developing the strategies which will move families out of the cycle of deprivation they may find themselves in. Many families and communities that might be defined as 'hard to reach' by Government do not recognize

themselves as fitting the client group that agencies are seeking to work with.

Post school transition

Skorikov and Vondracek found that young people with a positive career orientation were less likely to be involved in incidents of bad behaviour (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2007). Positive career orientation melds career and attitude to school along with the young person's belief that they will be able to express themselves successfully through an occupation or career. Skorikov and Vondracek go on to say that 'these attitudes include valuing work as a means of self-actualization, perceiving few barriers to pursuing an occupational career, and maintaining a positive attitude toward school' (p133).

Law *et al.*, (2002), suggest that the concept of identity needs to be revisited. They claim that government policies relating to careers education have failed to recognise 'the significant relationships between career and identity' (p431). They see developing a vocational identity as a learning process with several distinct tasks. These include drawing upon personal feelings, differentiating self from others, developing a personal narrative, representing experience in one's own terms, focusing a point of

view, building an inner life and relating all to one's own purpose (Law *et al.*, 2002).

Lopez and Andrews (1987, cited Santos & Coimbra, 2000) believed that 'career development and choice in adolescence cannot be separated from two important developmental tasks of this period: the construction of identity and psychological separation from the family', (p347).

Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development was defined by Catalano (2004) and his confederates in the following way; '...themes common to success involved methods to strengthen social, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and moral competencies; build self-efficacy; shape messages from family and community about clear standards for youth behavior; increase healthy bonding with adults, peers, and younger children; expand opportunities and recognition for youth; provide structure and consistency in program delivery; and intervene with youth for at least nine months or longer', (p114).

Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) talk of 'healthy, happy, competent adolescents on their way to productive and satisfying adulthood', (p198).

William Damon (2004) suggests that Positive Youth Development (PYD) was developed by professionals working with young people as a protest against the way in which young people were consistently overlooked and underestimated, (Damon, 2004). Positive youth development focuses on developing young people's strengths and interests rather than concentrating on correcting maladaptive behaviour. Damon stresses the importance of focusing on the positive qualities that young people bring and nurturing or appreciating those qualities rather seeking deficits to correct. As Damon says 'Every child has talents, strengths, and interests that offer the child potential for a bright future. The field of positive youth development focuses on each and every child's unique talents, strengths, interests, and future potential', (p592).

Lerner *et al* (2000) identified five factors that should contribute to successful PYD. These are competence in academic, social and vocational areas, caring and compassion, confidence in themselves and their abilities, community involvement and moral commitment or personal values and integrity (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

Gomez and Ang (2007), describe the importance of positive people, positive places and positive opportunities (p97) as well as adding that young people can be encouraged to make a contribution to society. Edwards *et al* (2007) look at the contribution positive youth development can make to children and young people at risk of school failure and others at how mental and physical health benefits can be encouraged (Duncan *et al*, 2007; Browne *et al*, 2004; Sandford *et al*, 2008).

The concept of positive youth development is gaining an audience in the UK at the moment and features in several strands of government policy. Aiming High for Young People (HM Treasury, 2007) outlines its ten-year strategy for developing and embedding positive youth activities. These now offered as a statutory requirement following the implementation of Youth Matters and various strands of the programme are being rolled out over the next decade.

A brief internet search of what English local authorities are doing with regard to youth development is interesting. HM Treasury in its document outlining the ten year strategy talks about positive youth activities, rather than development. Although it does talk about the development of skills, resiliency, self awareness and

agency through activities these do not seem to have been taken up by local authorities. Wakefield focuses on Positive Youth Engagement (Wakefield 2007), as do other councils (Gateshead, Torbay) who have been awarded Beacon Status for consulting with young people in shaping policy.

Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000), identify work-like play as being crucial to developing a sense of occupational identity. This sort of experience may be gained by helping put on a dramatic production for example. As well as directing, stage managing, acting, and performance skills there is an opportunity for those with an interest in construction, electrical skills, sound engineering, set design, and customer care as well as costume, hair-design, make-up together with advertising, promotion and marketing and this does not include the creative skills of writing the script and scoring the music. These skills and experiences would be almost impossible to sample on a one or two-week work experience programme or to acquire in a weekend or after-school job. Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider argue for more work-like play activities to be incorporated into secondary education, (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). Different skills could be developed or acquired through debating societies, school councils or building and maintaining a year group common room for

instance. Some other research (Hardie *et al*, 2007), suggests that students who are involved in team building activities through music making develop valuable skills. Those who make music together whether in a pop band, school orchestra or church choir develop social and cooperative skills that those who are not involved in intense teamwork activities have not had the opportunity to acquire.

Contribution of Support Professionals

Although ostensibly working with young people between the ages of 0 to 19 in the UK, little work has been carried out by educational psychologists with young people at the point of transition from compulsory education. The exceptions to this are work with young people with identified additional support needs and the on-going development of post school psychological services for young people up to the age of twenty-five in Scotland.

The review of the twelve pathfinder services in Scotland found that involvement by Educational Psychologists in facilitating transition, delivering training to careers service and college personnel, improve 'the understanding, skills and effectiveness of

service providers through consultation, training and action research' (MacKay, 2006, p111).

Educational psychology services in England and Wales tend to work with those young people in key stages 4 and 5 around providing evidence of their need for additional support around formal examinations (Fread, 2008), the facilitation of transition for those young people with additional complex difficulties who may be going to join a college or residential placement that could meet those needs, (Dee, 2006: Smart, 2004), and educational psychologist attendance at review meetings for children with on-going statements of educational need.

There is a need for schools, careers services and other agencies working with young people to provide a co-ordinated range of appropriate services in preparation for the transition into adult life. In order to do so most effectively these agencies will benefit from forms of support that fall within the knowledge, expertise and remit of educational psychologists.

A recent investigation by Foskett *et al* (2008), suggests that to a large extent schools abdicate responsibility for providing effective careers education and guidance by giving young people access to

information marketed to them but often without the knowledge or the expertise to dispense information, advice and guidance. They comment that 'the accuracy and reliability of that knowledge is questionable' (p.39). Schools do not really address the issues of personal development with regard to transition from compulsory schooling. By and large careers education is delivered in school by teachers rather than specialist staff from careers agencies. It may be covered as a topic in lessons relating to the personal and social development curriculum, but to no great depth and often amounting to little more than letting young people know what their immediate options are and completion of a computer-aided guidance session (Foskett *et al.*, 2008).

Rather than match young people to careers, the role of professionals in preparing for the transition to post-compulsory education should involve encouraging them to identify and construct a portfolio of skills, experiences and attributes that could be useful in a variety of vocational and educational settings. Educational psychologists can contribute to curriculum development within schools for this purpose and also to supporting staff in helping young people to develop self-awareness. Young people's knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, values, dispositions and abilities

is crucial to them being able to make any kinds of decisions about themselves. Psychologists have a wide range of tools and interventions that could be used strategically for this purpose in supporting teachers and other professionals. These include, for example: narrative therapy, which might involve the young person in telling their own story (Law, 2006) and being supported in the development of their core beliefs and sense of identity; personal construct approaches, to elicit self-exploration; coaching approaches, combining mentoring, counselling and advocacy; and guided reflection, to provide young people with the tools to think about themselves in a focused way and to carry out this type of reflective, evaluative task throughout their life.

In summary, educational psychologists can play a key role by working collaboratively with schools, careers services and other agencies in supporting young people in the transition from school into adult life. The value of such a role and its positive impact on the practice of professionals in schools, further education colleges, careers, training agencies and other settings has been demonstrated by MacKay (2006) in his evaluation of post-school psychological services across twelve education authorities in Scotland.

Conclusion to Literature Review

From considering a range of literature on the differing aspects of this topic it seems that there are several observations that can be made. Although rural life is depicted as 'idyllic' the experience can be far from idyllic to adolescents and emerging adults growing up in those communities. Shucksmith (2004) identifies their high visibility and lack of collateral or voice. Bell (2000) and Ni Laoire (2001) point to the strongly gendered identities that exist for both males and females which allow little in the way of identity exploration; a task that is a crucial element of the developmental task of adolescence. Attachment, not only to family but also to place, is identified as a factor limiting choices and decisions made by young men who fail break from their adolescent pasts to successfully develop as young adults.

It appears from reading various papers that career or vocational choice is intertwined with young people's perceptions of their own identity. (Law 2005, Law, et al 2002, Erikson, 1956, 1968, Marcia 1965, Vondracek 1992) From Piaget's theories of development adolescents are at the formal operations stage where they can ask abstract questions about the life they want to lead.

Many of the constructs under consideration are slippery and it has been difficult, if not impossible, to find absolute definitions

them. The widely used terms of identity and adolescence can carry different meanings depending on the discipline from which the researcher comes. Similarly the concept of attachment is quite commonly used in psychological and sociological research the notion of attachment to place is perhaps a little more nebulous and less well researched.

Aspects of the literature reviewed here appear to relate to each other and to some extent there is an overlap between some of these areas. Notions of identity, adolescence and emerging adulthood contain similar themes of seeking a sense of purpose, gaining insight into the sort of person they want to be and defining ethical and philosophical standpoints.

Similarly well-being, aspiration, post-school transition and positive youth development have common themes to do with autonomy, developing independence, making and maintaining friendships and purpose in life.

A further cluster of themes emerges around the issue of rurality, social capital and attachment to place. Authors highlight the rapidly- changing cultural and political understanding of rurality. The meaning of 'rural' can be not only different within research disciplines but also holds diverse meaning for people of different generations, for people within the culture but from differing

geographical backgrounds and perceived differently by those who use rural spaces in different ways.

This paper has considered psychological perspectives on the issues faced by young people in their development from adolescence into adulthood, and it is proposed that by helping to develop a positive sense of identity, to promote a positive career orientation and to raise aspirations, educational psychologists can assist in addressing the particular issues faced by young people growing up in rural communities, as well as in making a contribution to meeting the wider needs of young people in general.

Research Questions

Main question

How does the experience of growing up in a rural community impact on a young person's identity and future aspirations.

Sub questions:

Could the young people I researched with be engaged with to reflect on their lives and experiences?

What skills might young people develop that could enhance their ability to take more control over their decision-making?

The literature review considered previous studies that were germane to this investigation. Literature included a variety of perspectives on identity theory from the seminal work of Erikson through to twenty-first century thinking. Literature from disciplines other than psychology was discussed. Issues raised focused on young people with regard to attachment to place, aspiration theory, post-school transition, adolescence and emerging adulthood,

subjective well-being and rural life. After considering previous literature the research question was posed.

The Route Map for a Mystery Tour

Methodology

This chapter explores the methodology most appropriate to the research question. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies are considered. The researcher seeks to clarify her own position as an influence within the research. Transparency, ethics, epistemological and personal reflexivity are explored.

Three Epistemological Questions

Using Carla Willig's (2008) book on qualitative research methodologies as a starting point I sought to answer her three epistemological questions in order to make explicit the epistemological standpoint of this piece of research. The three questions are:

What kind of knowledge does the methodology aim to produce?

What kind of assumptions does the methodology make about the world?

How does the methodology conceptualise the position of the researcher in the research process?

This piece of research seeks to elicit the views of school-age male students in relation to their notions of who they are and how they

see themselves in the future. Using the students' selected images, listening to their interpretations of their lived situations and listening to them making sense of their world gives the researcher an insight into the hopes and aspirations that the participants hold as well as an insight into how they construct their identities.

I am looking for the young people's sense-making and perception of how they see their world, how they perceive their futures and what they perceive as the barriers to helping them achieve their ambitions.

The methodology assumes that the world is accessible to the participants, that there is nothing closed to them. The participants are all at a point of transition and the methodology seeks to explore their world with them and to facilitate them in interpreting the world in their own way.

The researcher also has the role of interpreter in this methodology. As well as facilitating the exploration of the world of the participants the researcher has a reflexive role in her interpretation of the participants' interpretations.

In order to find out how young people feel about their futures, it seemed that one course of action would be to speak to those young men and ask them how they saw their situation. The drive towards obtaining pupils' views (Spicer & Evans, 2006) is timely since much of government social and education policy is focused on 'improving outcomes for children and young people', (DCSF, 2008.)

It is interesting to look at how children and young people are involved in policy making. Spicer and Evans (2006) concluded that rather than being participants within the process of policy development children are involved in consultation. In other words they are responding to the agenda of the adults who are leading the policy making rather than being involved in giving undirected observations or opinions. Rather than empowering children and young people by offering an opportunity to participate and make a contribution that will be valued, the use of consultation serves merely to agree an undisclosed adult-led agenda, (Spicer & Evans, 2006).

It is not only the child or young person's view that is important however. It is probable that more consideration should be given to how that view is interpreted. Although a child's view can be

obtained it may be that the interpretation of the child's view by the researcher appears to support the researchers' hypothesis when if the child were able to expound on their thoughts further this may not be the case at all.

I acknowledge that there will be some slippage between speaker and hearer and between researcher and writer where words spoken or written do not quite carry the same nuance for the listener or reader as was originally intended. I can recount various occasions where I have misunderstood something or thought that somebody had meant something other than what was actually meant and believe that I am not alone in that.

If this task of interpreting the meaning of what people with a similar level of understanding to oneself is so difficult it would appear reasonable to assume that interpreting the meaning of what those with different understandings of words, language usage, cultural background, age and gender could prove challenging.

In order to address the research question, it was essential to choose an appropriate methodology by which the research question could be investigated. In psychology the most usual

methodologies are either quantitative, qualitative or a mixture of both. Quantitative methodologies are usually concerned with counting, categorizing and looking for causal relationships between data.

Qualitative research, on the other hand, focuses on eliciting reflections on subjective experiences from participants who seek to make sense of their situations. Qualitative researchers are interested in the quality and depth of these experiences and seek to investigate the meanings given to events by research participants (Willig, 2008). This in turn generates rich data that can be analysed by a variety of methods to illuminate a topic.

As well as participants' sense -making, qualitative research methodologies place great importance on the effect of the researcher on the research findings. This can manifest itself in a variety of ways; the manner in which the research is conducted, the personal reflexivity of the researcher and how participants' meaning making is interpreted are all taken into consideration by qualitative researchers.

Since my research question is concerned with young people making sense of their experiences of growing up in a rural

community, qualitative research methodology seems to be most appropriate.

Standpoint

As I was interested in finding out what young people thought about their experiences and their hopes for the future I felt that a case study approach was appropriate. I was interested in gaining an insight into how my participants saw themselves but was not seeking to generalize findings in a profound way. Similarities and commonalities may emerge through the process of analysis but I was not seeking to produce a piece of research that offered generalized findings.

The experiences that my participants were reflecting on were contextualized in that they were reflecting on their experiences and their understanding of their experiences within the world as they understand it. There is no attempt at objectivity in this study. The participants relate their thoughts in a subjective manner and although I am trying to employ a double hermeneutic, me making sense of him making sense of his world, by putting myself alongside the participant as he makes meaning from his experiences I have my own female, adult, urban lens through which I experience my participants' sense making.

This study does not aim to find out the truth or acknowledge that there is a truth to find. The interest in this study lies in what the participants perceive the truth to be for them as they make sense of their reality and privileges their meaning-making.

Qualitative researchers are conscious of the need to make sure that their findings are an honest interpretation of what the participants are saying rather than a means of supporting researcher-led impressions by selecting key quotes from the data that support those impressions.

Features of good qualitative research according to Yardley (2000) are that it has 'transparency and coherence, is sensitive to context, has commitment and rigour and has impact and importance', (p219).

Reflexivity

In order to report qualitative research ethically it is important for the researcher to acknowledge the contribution they make in affecting the data and the findings. This contribution is evident not only through the interpretation a researcher may put on the data generated by the participants but also on the effect of the

methodology on the participants and their expectations. However much a researcher tries to mediate those effects they are always present to some extent. It is therefore important to identify and acknowledge researcher effects when reporting qualitative research.

Willig, (2008) identifies personal and epistemological reflexivity as requirements of good quality research.

'Personal reflexivity involves reflecting upon ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research it involves thinking about how the research process may have affected and possibly changed us, as people and as researchers.' (p10).

Epistemological reflexivity requires us to engage with questions such as: How has the research question defined and limited what can be found? How has the design of the study and the method of analysis constructed the data and findings? How could the research question have been investigated differently? To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation?

Transparency

In qualitative research 'transparency' refers to the way in which data is presented so as not to obscure, misrepresent or deny participants' discourses, (Yardley 2000). This is done by including entire transcripts of the verbatim data together with photographs and digital audio copies of participant interviews in this piece of research.

To further aid transparency, within this piece of research, large passages of text are presented within their context in order that the reader can make connections themselves. The inclusion of passages in context rather than in isolation serves to show how the researcher came to the interpretation she has.

The acknowledgement of the researcher's personal influence on the data generated and the analysis through the demonstration of reflexivity constitute part of the transparency of the research.

Ethics

In researching with children and young people ethical considerations should be of paramount importance. Researchers from the Thomas Coram Institute carrying out research on behalf of the DCSF in 2006 commented that 'research should be of clear

benefit to children and young people' (Knight et al, 2006 p6.)

Research should be respectful to the young person and use methods that the participant is confident to use, (*op.cit*). As well as obtaining the permission of the participants' parents it is vital to gain the permission of the young person first and foremost. They can only give their informed consent if the aims, methods and purpose of the research are made clear to them at the outset (ESRC, 2006.)

Within most children's experience talking to an adult means talking to someone with more power or control of a situation than they do (Kirkby, 2004.) In order to mitigate an unintentional power imbalance research should be conducted in situations where the participant feels comfortable. Similarly the ability to withdraw consent should be reinforced so that a participant can withdraw from continuing with the research at any point during the research process.

In this chapter I attempted to identify a suitable methodology that was appropriate to the research question. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies were considered. The researcher sought to clarify her own position as an influence within the

research. Transparency, ethics, epistemological and personal reflexivity were also explored.

Possible Methods of Data Generation

Methods of qualitative data generation including focus groups, questionnaire completion and the use of computer technology in the form of a chat group or weblog are also considered.

My research question was concerned with finding out what it was like to be a young man growing up in a rural community in Cumbria. There were several research pathways open to me. I could have carried out questionnaire-based research, with a ratings scale where I asked specific questions about the participants' experiences. Alternatively I could have used a questionnaire with open questions that required a fuller written response.

I could have used focus groups of participants in order to gain a more generalised picture of the experiences of growing up in rural communities. I also considered setting up a chat room or weblog that participants could access and leave their thoughts.

I decided that none of these methods would provide the information I was seeking. The questionnaire might have been too prescriptive and previous research (Hart & Staveland, 1988)

indicates that there is too much leeway in how participants might have interpreted the ratings scale. Focus groups can become dominated by individual participants who inhibit other participants from putting their point of view. Similarly there may have been topics that the participants were not prepared to raise when there were others present. Facilitating focus groups may have been too difficult too with regard to finding a suitable easily accessible location.

Whilst accessing a website might have been an interesting and informative way of carrying out the research, previous research into adolescents' on line personalities (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008) suggests that this may not have offered the insights I was seeking. A further consideration was that I did not have the research time, knowledge, skill or budget to set up a secure website on which participants could log their observations. The information generated may not have been particularly useful as it would have been more difficult to control participants' homogeneity and maintain ethical considerations.

On the other hand this method may have increased the participation in the project and offered an appealing medium through which participants could put their views. The participants could have been anonymous from each other and

this may have enabled them to make a more free contribution. From the point of view of the researcher there may have been difficulties establishing the authenticity of the post and the poster.

Whilst the open ended questionnaire might have offered an opportunity for the participants to record a richer vein of thoughts than a rating-scale questionnaire, I was conscious that I did not want taking part in the research to be a chore for the participants. I wanted the participants to be engaged in thinking about themselves and to use their own words. Had I required them to write their answers I think that this may have created a barrier to understanding and interpretation, (Oliver et al, 2008).

Methods of qualitative data generation including focus groups, questionnaire completion and the use of computer technology in the form of a chat group or weblog were considered.

Data Collection Methods in this Study

Visual research methods and semi-structured interviewing are discussed as means of generating data.

From reading about different methods for data collection I felt that the use of cameras might be an interesting and effective way of engaging young people to consider their lives in a way they may not have considered them before.

The use of the camera gave the participants an opportunity to step outside of themselves for a while and consider their lives from a different point of view. The camera was not a threatening piece of equipment being relatively inexpensive and had the advantage of containing more shots than necessary in order to offer the opportunity for the participants to take plenty of images.

The use of photography as a method of information collection is a useful way of working with young people. Virginia Morrow identifies several benefits to using photography as a research method. These include giving control of the data gathering to the participants, in other words they choose what they are interested in showing, photography also gives 'a visual way in to

understanding everyday life' (Morrow, 2007). Other advantages of using photography could include that it is a method that engages the participants and that it can be relatively easy to disseminate the findings, (Morrow, 2007; NFER, undated; Prosser & Loxley, 2008).

Photo-elicitation

Previous studies have used cameras to obtain data from children (Matthews & Tucker, 2000; Clark-Ibañez, 2004; Capello, 2005) and in using photographs with men (Oliffe & Bottorff, 2007) with positive results. Capello (2005), stresses the value of using the camera and photographs as a tool to break down the barriers between adults and children, particularly in school settings where all adults are quasi teacher figures. It seemed that using photographs with participants could offer a useful way in to having a conversation with a young person about their perceptions of their own lives.

Matthews and Tucker (2000), suggest that children are not traditionally asked to express their ideas about themselves and that 'if conducted in a supportive and respectful manner interviews can be an empowering experience for children, (p.308). Prosser and Schwartz (1998), suggested that using photographs may offer a means by which to engage those people who do not

find it particularly easy to express themselves verbally, with nuance. In a more recent piece of research Prosser and Loxley (2008), describe the use of photographs as being a means of 'empowering' (p22) participants. They go on to say that using photographs that the participants have taken themselves ensures that the interview process is driven by the participant rather than the researcher (2008 p.22)

In their study, using photographs with men, Oliffe and Bottorff (2007), describe another benefit of using cameras which is that 'the photographs demanded description, detail and explanation – which helped to reduce assumptions about shared researcher-participant understandings of specific phenomena', (p.853).

Since my research was with young people who would not consider themselves as either children or men but with a foothold in both of those camps the use of cameras and photographs was appropriate. Photo-elicitation interviews seem to be appropriate to use with young participants because they allow the researcher to see things from the participants' point of view. The use of photographs also seemed to break down a barrier for the participants in that they were able to explain their pictures and feel comfortable that their explanations had been received and

understood. Had we relied on words alone, particularly for the younger participants interviewed in the school setting, I think that some discomfort may have arisen.

Using a photo-elicitation interview allowed the participants to focus on the images of items, places and people that were important to them. For some of the participants the act of staging a photograph, framing it to give maximum meaning became part of the task, particularly for the older participants.

Semi structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews offer the researcher the opportunity to pursue their area of interest but also to be responsive to the participant. It may be that a participant offers an unanticipated response to a question, for example. The interviewer/researcher is then able to develop that theme further through simple questioning that allows the participant to think further about the topic.

This allows the researcher and participant to explore and develop phenomena together that are of relevance, are generated and explored by the participant and illuminating to the researcher. The process is genuinely collaborative. Smith and Osborn (2003)

state that '...the interview will be guided by the schedule rather than be dictated by it', (p56).

Other benefits of using semi- structured interviews as a technique for data collection include the two-way conversational element of semi structured interviews. This contrasts with fully scripted interviews which are short, unambiguous and very much question and answer sessions.

Because of the way in which the interviewer is able to respond to participants' answers the semi structured interview can feel more natural to a participant. Further probing by the researcher around a topic raised by the participant is for clarification and to aid understanding for both the participant and the researcher.

The use of semi structured one-to-one interviews was used in preference to focus groups because it was important for the research to recognise and value that all participants' life experiences were different yet equally valuable. Had the participants been in a focus group it is possible that one or two participants may have dominated the group.

In order to better understand what it is like to be a young man growing up in rural Cumbria I asked some young men, individually, what they thought. In order to aid our mutual understanding I asked them to take some photographs too.

Visual research methods, specifically the use of participant-taken photographs, and semi-structured interviewing were discussed as means of generating data. The rationale for using these methods of data collection was given.

The chosen method and alternative options

This section gives an overview of the philosophy underpinning interpretative phenomenological analysis. Phenomenology and hermeneutics are discussed. Alternative methods that might have been appropriate to this research are considered together with a resume of why IPA was chosen.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is rooted in the philosophy of phenomenology as developed by Husserl and refined by Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. According to Husserl (1927), phenomenology is concerned with reflecting on one's experience of a stimulus. In other words if the external stimulus were a car, for example, a phenomenologist would consider the car as an entity but would then go on to think about their own experience of the car. This would lead them to distil what comes or 'appears' from the act of reflection.

To some extent we are all phenomenologists and we acknowledge that as individuals we experience external stimuli differently to each other. In a discussion with friends after seeing a film together, for instance, there may well be a range of opinions

voiced relating to each persons experience although the external stimulus was the same.

People are always seeking to make meaning out of the words of others and that the meaning will be more than a literal interpretation of the words used. In other words contexts, feelings, history, physiological factors will be taken into consideration by those interpreting the comment. The act of interpreting or making meaning from written or spoken discourse is called hermeneutics.

The difficulty with interpreting someone else's words relates to the unspoken reasoning that lies behind the spoken words. For instance, going back to the previous example of watching a film together, someone may have been moved to tears by the film because there were characters or situations with which they identified, another may have been irritated or annoyed by the same character. The mood of the watcher, the sort of day at work, whether they are hungry or thirsty, the temperature and comfort level in the theatre may all have had a bearing on how the film was experienced. Similarly life experiences, personal constructs and cultural considerations may have a bearing on how an experience is interpreted.

Although originally a historical term relating to the interpretation of religious tracts, most notably the bible, hermeneutics is concerned with 'people as interpreting and sense making individuals' (Shaw 2008, power point presentation).

IPA employs a double hermeneutic. The participant is making meaning of his situation and experience and trying to interpret his thoughts and feelings whilst the researcher is also trying to make sense of the participant making sense of his life world. '...the Participants are trying to make sense of their world: the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world', (p51). IPA sees research as a dynamic process involving both participant and the researcher. This has been described by Smith (2008) and Finlay (2003) as moving round the hermeneutic circle, (Tietz, 1994). It is the task of the researcher to try to stand alongside the participant and try to understand things from his point of view.

Alternatives considered

I felt that this sort of research question, which relies on participants being able to reflect on experiences, required a qualitative research methodology and analysis, rather than a quantitative or mixed methodology. I was seeking to explore the

feelings, thoughts and perceptions that young people have about the situation in which they are living. It was important to allow participants to explore their own, individual responses to their unique experiences.

I did not want this to be limited by taking part in a questionnaire-based study that allowed answers within certain parameters, or that had such open-ended questions that they might become a chore to complete. I think this would have discouraged some of my participants from taking part.

I considered grounded theory, discourse analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as possible ways in which to analyse my data. According to Paul Flowers (Flowers 2008, IPA internet discussion group), some qualitative methodologies and methods of analysis appear to be points on a spectrum. Whilst more rigorous forms of discourse analysis might seem a distance away from IPA other forms seem to be different only by nuance. Similarly there appears to be some overlap with aspects of grounded theory and features of IPA. In defending the methods used here I seek to explain why I chose IPA and why I rejected other qualitative methods.

Grounded theory

Jonathan Smith (1996) acknowledges many commonalities between grounded theory and IPA. Both methods use thematic analysis to identify themes, emerging themes and clusters of themes for example. Much of the language used in describing both methods is the same and both methods of analysis rely on investigating the experiences of participants.

Grounded theory is rooted in uncovering social processes and its original purpose was to 'develop a theoretical analysis of the data that fits the data and has relevance to the area of study' (Charmaz, 2003, p109).

Although grounded theory has evolved into a widely used method within qualitative research in social sciences it is from sociology and a sociological sensibility that it draws its underpinning theories. The purpose of grounded theory is to 'identify and explicate contextualized social processes that account for phenomena', (Willig 2008 p73). This is unlike IPA which is a psychological method whose aim is to uncover and explore phenomena to establish its core or essence.

Recent developments in grounded theory have led to it becoming more difficult to define, the schism between Strauss and Glaser in the development of grounded theory, the difference between abbreviated and full analysis and variations between realist and social constructionist epistemological stances. These conflicts all add to the confusion, (Willig, 2008).

Discourse Analysis (DA)

DA gives researchers a means by which to think of the use and function of language as a means by which participants express underlying feelings and beliefs about how they construct their lives. I could have used DA to look at my participants' reports of their experiences. I did not think that DA was an appropriate form of analysis for two main reasons. Firstly I think my participants' general use of language does not wholly express their beliefs about themselves. Relatively few words are used and there is a tendency to use extreme forms of language in order to make a point. Secondly, young people often use an argot that they and their friends understand but that, although English, I would not understand. In Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) the speaker is 'positioned by/in discourse', (Willig, 2003 p182). Therefore it follows that the listener or researcher is also positioned by or in discourse. I could not claim to be positioned in the discourse of my participants.

Rationale for Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

In psychology and the social sciences IPA is a relatively recent method of analysis. Assumptions of IPA include the notion that 'People are "self interpreting" beings' (Taylor 1985, cited Shaw powerpoint presentation, 2008) and that making sense of one's life, through interpretative enquiry, is central to one's experience as a person.

IPA, as a research method, was developed by Jonathan Smith in the 1990s and seeks to gain first-person accounts of specific thoughts, experiences and feelings. Data collected is idiographic in that it focuses or sheds light on the specific. Idiographic research makes no claims to make generalisable predictions but rather works at an individual level and can then make specific claims about that particular individual. Data is usually collected through semi-structured interviews although other means of data collection are also possible, such as journals or diaries. Sample sizes are usually small and homogeneous; a case study approach is used. In the analysis phase of the research there should be a balance between inductive (bottom up or generated by the data) and deductive processes. Reaching an understanding through

joint working between the participant and researcher is an important feature of IPA. The scope of the analysis includes descriptions of the data, provides a narrative and offers an interpretation of the findings.

Eatough and Smith, (2006) state that IPA 'shares...a concern with unravelling the relationship between what people think (cognition), say (account) and do (behaviour),' (p486).

Smith claims that IPA is most effective when exploring areas of 'hot cognition' (Smith, 2008). Hot cognition is a fresh understanding or realization about a situation or experience. For this reason IPA is used predominantly in health psychology to explore how people might make meaning of physical, social or medical changes such as becoming a mother (Smith, 1994;1995; 1999), sexual identity (Flowers *et al*, 2000), mental health (Mulveen & Hepworth, 2006) and bereavement (Goldsworthy & Coyle, 1999; 2001).

Since my research question sought to explore the participants' sense-making of their world particularly, was not seeking to make generalisable claims for the population and was concerned with considering each participant as a case study, IPA was my chosen method of analysis.

In order to generate data suitable to be analysed using IPA I followed the steps outlined in the Jonathan Smith and Mike Osborn (2003), chapter on IPA in *Qualitative Psychology: A practical guide to methods*. The first step is to construct a research question that requires the participant to reflect on an aspect of their life that engages them in much thought. IPA is a popular method in health psychology because it requires participants to reflect on their changed status in the light of their illness, pain or disease and make sense of the changes that are happening to them. For this study I have asked the participants to reflect on what it is like for them being a young person growing up in Cumbria. Other steps concerned with sample size, data generation and analysis are detailed in the section on implementation (p97).

Validity

The question of the validity of the findings identified through the use of IPA as a method of analysis is an intriguing one. On one hand the participants are asked to give an interpretation of a phenomenon that they are experiencing. It is openly acknowledged by researchers using this method that a variety of factors can influence the participants' meaning making. (Brockl & Wearden, 2006; Willig, 2008). This can include personal comfort

levels, the weather outside and what else the participant could be doing when they are working with the researcher. It follows therefore that the participant may feel somewhat differently about the phenomenon they are describing on a subsequent meeting. Similarly the researcher has her role to play here too. The researcher may be influenced by her perceptions of the participant, what novel she is reading or what she has seen on television. She is as much a part of the research as the participant in that she is interpreting the participant-generated data.

Since different people might interpret the same situation in a different way triangulation with a third party would not seem to be a viable way of ensuring viability. Similarly since researcher and participant may disagree with their own observations on readdressing the phenomenon under discussion there may not be — much by way of internal validity either.

Validity is best addressed through the examination of similar themes and responses elicited from participants although each participant was interviewed and prepared for the research tasks individually.

‘Validity can be defined as the extent to which our research describes, measures or explains what we set out to describe, measure or explain, (Willig 2008, p16). This suggests that the research is valid if it achieves what it set out to achieve.

Overview

IPA offers a psychological perspective to exploring with participants how they make sense of their life world and how they interpret the meaning of their situations and circumstances. Rather than looking at the social contexts that encapsulate the phenomena being studied IPA offers an opportunity to look at the essence of the phenomena identified by the participants. This method offers a collaborative approach to research into young people's experiences and gives them an opportunity to consider their lifeworld.

Through reflecting on their lived experiences participants and the researcher are able to identify themes that are relevant for them as an individual.

Since my research question specifically set out to explore the participants' sense-making of their world, did not seek to make claims for the population and was concerned with considering each participant as an individual case study, IPA was my chosen method of analysis.

The research is phenomenological in that it requires the participants to reflect on their own situation and the phenomena that arise from it. It is ethnographic to some extent as it focuses on a specific part of the population that is defined by its geography, and a case study approach was employed in order to gain more insight into specific experiences, beliefs and values. Through analysis and interpretation of the collected findings this enables a rich, rounded understanding to be developed.

This chapter provided a brief overview of the philosophy underpinning interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Phenomenology and hermeneutics were discussed. Alternative methods that might have been appropriate to this research were considered together with a resume of why IPA was chosen. Validity was discussed.

You put your left leg in, your left leg out...

Implementation

This chapter includes the method of data collection, participant sample and details of the analysis method used. Elements of the method used were revised following review of the pilot study.

Plan and changing plans

The design of this study combines several common elements of qualitative research design. In common with other qualitative methods participants were asked to reflect on their experiences and talk about them during a semi-structured interview.

Following Smith and Osborn (2003), recommendations for carrying out a piece of research using IPA as a method I aimed to find between four and six participants who had a certain degree of commonality. 'IPA studies have been published with samples of one, four, nine and fifteen. As a rough guide, we suggest five or six as a reasonable sample size...', (p54). Similarly they state that a degree of homogeneity was required, 'The basic logic is that if one is interviewing, for example, six participants it is not very helpful to think in terms of random or representative sampling. IPA therefore goes in the opposite direction and through

purposive sampling finds a more closely defined group for whom the research question will be significant.' (op cit).

In the research proposal I had stated that six pupils would make up the participant group. This was to ensure a balance between age groups and to keep the participant numbers fairly small as in-depth case studies were to be carried out by one researcher over a short period of time. The preliminary design required six male participants across school years 10 and 12 to be self selecting and interviewed at school. However after interviewing two year 10 pupils and carrying out the transcription of their interviews I changed the design to include the interviews with the year 10 pupils as a pilot study. I changed my method of sampling participants and carried out interviews with them in their own homes. There were three participants in the main study. These participants were purposively sampled in order to ensure a degree of homogeneity. Equally importantly the participants were willing and available to take part in the research and carry out the research tasks.

- Participant numbers were small because in depth case studies were to be carried out. The purpose of the pilot study was two-fold. It afforded the opportunity to test the proposed design and

method and enabled me to make changes to the main study as a result of the pilot.

The final design included a two-participant pilot study who completed all the elements of the main study. Data gathering involved participants in a photography task leading on to an individual semi-structured interview. The interview was recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed by the researcher.

Participants

In the original design self-selecting participants were sought from two school year groups; Year 10 and Year 12. Eight rural secondary school head teachers were approached requesting permission for me to speak to year groups of boys, (see appendix A,) describe the tasks and rationale of the research and seek participants. Three schools replied, two of them agreeing to their pupils' participation. On arrival at each participating school I found that four boys had been selected for me by each headteacher. One of the schools did not have a 6th form which meant that I had six Year 10 pupils and two Year 12 pupils from which to draw participants. Of these eight pupils three Year 10 pupils returned their own consent forms and consent forms from their parents agreeing to them taking part in the research. (See

appendices B and C). These participants became the pilot study group.

Main study participants were recruited by me personally approaching boys between the ages of 16 and 18 and asking them to take part in my research. If they agreed to participate I went on to have face-to-face discussions with their parents prior to the boys taking part in the research and obtained parental consent. All the main study participants were known to me but did not know me well. They would have known me by sight. I had never worked with any of the participants in a professional capacity as a teacher, careers adviser or psychologist. Those who agreed to participate all lived in rural communities, though not the same community. All pupils attended the same secondary school, though not in the same year group. A measure of homogeneity between participants was required. A case study approach was adopted.

Brief participant profiles are included as part of the case studies on subsequent pages.

Method

In order to help my participants think about themselves in a purposeful way I asked them initially to take ten photographs which said something about who they were and ten that said something about who they wanted to be. I gave them disposable cameras with 30 shots in them, or allowed them to use digital cameras if they had access to a digital camera. I allowed two weeks for the participants to take their photographs before having them developed and conducting interviews. Of the main study participants one chose to use a digital camera.

In this piece of research the participants took the photographs, using disposable or digital cameras. There was no cost to the participant and I paid for the development of the films

When the films had been developed I returned the films to the participants and asked them to look through their photographs. The participants selected the images that they wanted to talk about within the initial brief of photographs that said something about whom they considered themselves to be now and who they wanted to be in the future, (see Appendix D). The participant who had used a digital camera (Participant E) had already filtered his images and selected the ones he wanted to discuss.

Most participants had taken more than the required number of photographs so when they looked at the images again they were required to categorize the pictures in order to address the original questions.

- Having had the experience of participants using disposable or digital cameras I prefer to use disposable ones. With disposable cameras the participant cannot edit their images until the film has been developed which leads to the re-stimulation of memories for the participant and reminds them why they had taken that image in the first place. When a digital camera was used the editing and ordering of photographs took place at the time of taking the shots which may have been a week prior to the interview. The mood, intention, validity of the photograph may have changed over even that short period of time; similarly the hot cognition that I was seeking was not evident.

One semi structured interview was conducted with each participant. The interview was in two-parts with the first concerning the participant talking about his photographic images, why they had been chosen and what they meant to the young person. After the pilot study interviews the semi structured interview questions were redrafted for the main study participants because the questions had been too closed. The

younger participants had seemed less willing or able to talk fluently or with confidence without regular prompting and the use of supplementary questions. The second part of the interview consisted of four questions with supplementary questions designed to prompt rather than to lead the participant.

With the photographs in front of us my opening statement was to clarify what they had done and ask which photograph, or set of photographs, they were going to start with. All participants chose to start from who they were now.

- The younger participants required further probing around their talks about photographs because they tended to give shorter answers. The older participants gave fuller, more reflective answers and the oldest participant, Participant C, had staged his photographs so that they carried a figurative meaning, the fly-paper being representative of being stuck and the juxtaposition of the Manchester A-Z against the background greenery for example (Appendix D section 3).

Following on from the pilot study and after attending a master class on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) with Jonathan Smith, who first developed this method, I developed a

semi-structured interview schedule (appendix E) which was administered to the three main study participants. The semi structured interview questions focused on exploring issues concerned with living in rural communities and the participants' reflections on these experiences.

The interviews were semi-structured, rather than proscribed because my follow-up questions were dependent upon the answer participants gave to the initial question.

At the end of the first interview with a main study participant I added the final question which had not been on the original interview schedule, (appendix F). The final question required the participant to reflect on the experience of taking part in the research and particularly in having to think about himself in a different way.

In order to help participants feel comfortable and relaxed main study participants were able to choose where they were interviewed. All chose to be interviewed at home. Alternative venues could have been my home, at school or in a café or park.

Participant D was the first main study participant to be interviewed and second to be transcribed, Participant E the second person to be interviewed and third to be transcribed and – Participant C was the last person to be interviewed but the first to be transcribed.

Ethical considerations in this study

In the recruitment of participants I took several steps to ensure that participants would be able to give informed consent. I held a meeting, in school, and discussed the aims, methods and use of my research with the group of potential participants. I encouraged questions particularly to do with maintaining anonymity and who would see the research. I also gave the potential participants a handout which supported our discussions. The letter to potential participants' parents outlined the activities that they would be asked to undertake as part of the research and detailed how much commitment was required from the young people.

At each point of the research process participants were asked if they wanted to continue to take part in the research. There were alternative methods of informing me that a participant did not want to continue with the research; returning their own consent –

forms, parental consent forms, cameras, not attending the interview or not answering questions were all ways in which a participant could withdraw without having to tell me that they no longer wanted to take part. One young person did not sign his consent form, a number of potential participants did not return the parental consent forms and another did not return his camera. I interpreted this as those young people withdrawing their consent.

When talking about the taking of photographs I asked the participants to be mindful of other people's privacy as well as their own. I assured them that I would not use photographs from which people could be identified. We discussed ways in which people could be represented other than through their photographic image.

The participants were encouraged to talk about something that they knew about (their photographs). Although the pilot study participants were interviewed through contact with their school the main study participants were invited to choose the location for our interview. This could have been in their homes, my home, a café or another social place of their choosing. I felt that this helped to address any power imbalance that might have been present in that the interviews took place on their terms and

although I had set the overarching topic their interpretations were individual to them.

My final question to the main study participants concerned finding out how the process had been for them.

The method of data collection, participant sample and details of the analysis method used were described in this chapter. Elements of the methods used, with regard to participant sample and semi structured interviewing were revised in light of the pilot study.

How's my driving?

The analysis and findings of the pilot study are described for Participants A and B. Areas of commonality and difference are outlined and the findings discussed. Changes to the research in light of the pilot study are highlighted.

Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis ‘...provides a set of flexible guidelines, which can be adapted by researchers in light of their research, aims’ (p487). In this study each interview and the accompanying photographs constituted one set of data.

Each line of the interview transcription was numbered according to page and line, e.g. 4:5 would refer to page 4 line 5. Each transcription was analysed completely before the analysis of the second transcription was started. The transcription was read through initially and notes made in the left hand margin and on post-it notes of ideas that seemed to be interesting or important to the participant.

After several further readings, consideration of the transcript as a whole and reflection on the initial thoughts, themes and phrases emerged from the data. Finally a table of themes and sub themes

was produced with snatches of dialogue which illustrated the identified theme. Analysis continued through the process of writing up as the researcher's interpretation of the participants' accounts and description of the phenomena emerge, (Eatough & Smith, 2006).

Pilot Study

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to analyse the transcribed interviews. After reading through the transcript several times three main themes (table 1) were identified; social, communication and entertainment.

Table 1: Initial analysis showing emerging themes.

Social	
1:4	It's er...sometimes to play games on, phone people, and text.
2:4	I sometimes just talk to my friends and then sometimes look at the news.
3:12	I sometimes play with my brother 'cos he likes playing on it.
4:13	Yeah I go down the L (park) every Saturday and play football with my friends down there.
6:19	Well I'd like to stay on the normal police...street,,,walk around the streets and things like that.
7:19	just think it'd be really, really fun and I'd make a lot of friends.
Entertainment	
1:4	It's er...sometimes to play games on, phone people, and text.
2:18	It's my playstation.
3:1	Yeah it's really fun...I've got loads of games for it.
3:4	An XBox
3:10	Shooting games ...and cars
3:21	Er yeah that's my iPod
4:5	Yeah I used it a lot. Had loads of music on it.
4:11	I play football a lot
5:1	This is my guitar. It's got a lot of fingerprints on it
Communication	
1:4	It's er...sometimes to play games on, phone people, and text.
2:4	I. How else to you keep in contact with your friends?
	A.Computer.
	I Ok so why have you chosen a photo of a computer?
	A Because I use it a lot. It's the thing I use most. I got it last Christmas and it's just... I never stop using it.

From those initial themes further clusters of themes emerged.

'I am what I own' emerged as a theme when I reflected on the inclusion of the broken iPod, (table 2). On reviewing the interview I found that several consumer electrical items had been included although on questioning Participant A he claimed that the item was broken, redundant or not that important to him. This led me

- to question why Participant A had included these items. I wondered whether he defined himself by his possessions. I am aware of media reports with regard to the covetability of certain brands of mobile phone, mp3 player and trainers and that young people can be identified as consumers, buying in to the constructs pushed by marketing departments, (Calvert, 2008).

Table 2: Clusters of statements around possession and ownership of goods

I am what I own

1:1-1:8

- I So A which one would you like to start with?
A. I er I just really I use my phone a lot so ...
I What do you use your phone for?
A. It's er...sometimes to play games on, phone people and text.
I. O.K so... would you say that your phone is really important to you?
A. Not that important, no. I use a lot of other stuff as well. I use these things (indicates other photos).
I. Right. Are you proud of your phone, do you like your phone?
A Yeah (laughs)

1:13-2:4

- I OK. So why have you chosen your computer as a photo?
A Because I use that a lot. It's the thing I use most. I got it last Christmas and it's just.., I never stop using it.
I And what do you use your computer for?
A. I sometimes just talk to my friends and then sometimes look at the news.

2:17-2:20

- I OK what's this one?
A It's my playstation
I Ahh. So you've got quite a lot of gadgetry haven't you?
A Yeah!

3:19-3:21

- I OK. Continuing on the gadgetry what are you going to talk about next? Do you want to carry on with your iPod?
A. Er yeah. That's my iPod. I don't use it much cause it's... kind of... broken.

5:1 This is my guitar. It's got a lot of finger prints on it.

Another theme to emerge from the data was that of the place of sport for participant A, (table 3). It appears that he is a young person who is very sociable and because other social activities may not be available to him he sets a lot of store by his ability to play football for his school and within the community at weekends.

Table 3: Cluster of statements about the importance of sport

Football = How I relate to my male peers= homosociability 4:11-4:22
A. I play football a lt. I sometimes play for the school. I Do you play out of school?
A. yeah I go down The L (park) every Saturday and play football with my friends down there. I really like playing football.
I. Is that something you've done for quite a while?
A. Yeah
I. When you play for the school is that for the under 15s?
A. Yeah... in the Carlisle Cup?
I. What position do you play?
A. Defence
I. And do you support a team?
A. Yeah Man U

The idea of sociability continues into discussions about Participant A's ambitions for the future. When talking about his ideas for joining the police force he explains that one of his motivations is that he thinks the job will be fun. This is based on talking to local police officers and watching American police comedies. He has done a little research around his choice and

—

knows what options are available to him with regard to joining the constabulary.

Another cluster of statements can be bracketed together because of their focus on location and the importance of place to Participant A. When talking about his life in the present he doesn't mention his local area at all but when talking about his ideas for himself in the future he makes a few remarks that suggest that home is an important place to him and an important factor in his post education planning,(table 4).

Table 4: Clusters of statements illustrating attachment to local area.

There's no place like home	
8:1-8:6	
I.	Very ambitious in that way? And where do you think that would happen would you stay in /Cumbria or...
A.	Oh no in Northumberland...
I.	You're thinking of Northumberland? Why is that?
A.	Cause its nearer to home and I'd go to Bishop that's where the headquarters is I think. I tried to get my work experience there but they didn't take people.
8:5- 8:9	
I.	And you think you'd stay locally. Why do think that you'd stay locally in Northumberland?
A.	Because it's nearer to home
I.	Do you think it's important to be near to home?
A.	Yes, and I know it well.

Participant A limits himself in talking about joining the police. He wants to stay locally, walking the streets he knows and going to a city he knows reasonably well. He expresses his feelings of conflict when he says he wants to 'get to the top' (page 6, line 23) — but qualifies that by saying that it is important to be near home, somewhere he knows well.

Participant B identifies some similar themes to Participant A. He does not dwell on the possession of objects as much as A, although some are present, (table 5).

Table 5: Ownership of electronic goods.

Talk about this one...I like to play on computers like xbox. I just got one for Christmas so I like to play...

These two (photos) are linked...cause like they're both speakers...because I like music

Participant B makes many statements which relate to his attachment to the location (table 6) and the importance of sport and social interaction through involvement in sport, (table 7).

Table 6: Cluster of statements relating to location

There's no place like home

This one..it's my dad's house I don't live there but its like..I always go there
This is where I normally hang around it's the market cross.

And this one is of my street that I walk down every day so .

This one is a picture of the cemetery cause I live next door to the cemetery
So you live next door to the cemetery?
Cause that's at my mum's house

That's my mum's house where I live like, actually live... so..

This ones just basically a street again that I walk across everyday. Its close to my
mam's house.

...I took pictures on my journey of places I go to everyday. That ones just the
neighbourhood...

— Yeah I like it round here I always have

So what do you see as the opportunity? what chances have you got to do this?
Maybe moving away like you say.
And what might stop you from doing this?
Friends round here and stuff cause I like round here...I don't know.

Participant B spends a lot of time out and about, on foot, in his local environment. He moves between two houses within his town, his mother's house and his father's house. He identifies the market cross as a focal point for meeting friends and has used his walked route to school as a focus for who he is now. This includes images of his neighbourhood, the cemetery next door to his mother's house and the school.

Participant B seems to be very attached to his local environment. All his future plans seem to be built around staying in the local area, joining a local football team or working at an outdoor education centre in the locality.

For Participant B sport is an important aspect of his life, (table 7). He has had trials with the local professional team and plays for the town. He has other sporting interests in golf and darts. Interestingly the involvement in golf began because his mother worked at the golf club, darts is a game played in the home. Sport seems to connect Participant B to his family and to the wider community.

Table 7: Both participants talk about the importance of sport in their lives

Participant A

That one. Erm cause I play football at the minute

Who do you play for?

A(town)

And do you also play for the school?

Yeah I play every Sunday for the A(town) Team

So that's quite important for you. What position do you play?

Striker

Do you go and watch football

Yeah I support Liverpool...I never miss a game on the telly if they're on.

Participant B

We've got another set of photos about how you see yourself in the future.

Which one are you going to start with?

That one. I play a lot of golf I always have I play at the local golf course when I can...

Do you have a group of people up there who you can play with ?

Yeah. My friends cos we get in free they like youngsters

This is meant to be a picture of the premiership trophy.

So why did you pick that picture? Why did you take that picture?

Well hopefully one day maybe...cause I like football so much...

A new theme emerged with Participant B that was not evident in Participant A. Participant B was keen to have his academic and sporting achievements recognised, (table 8). Almost as soon as Participant B has spoken about his achievement he plays them down however, almost as if not wanting to own those achievements, such as his early acquisition of a GCSE. When I suggest that he is academically good, he responds that he is 'OK'

. After talking about his trophies he immediately plays down his achievement by adding 'and stuff' to his statement.

Table 8: Achievements denied

	<p>Do you like coming to school? Well I've already got a gcse in English Yes Mr P (teacher) told me. Yeah? Are you pretty good? I'm Ok.</p>
—	<p>Its another trophy I've got a lot of trophies already as you can see. I just enjoy winning them. <i>What did you get these trophies for?</i> There's a night at the end of the season...where you get the trophies for playing and stuff. I usually get top goal scorer and stuff.</p>

Similarities and Differences

Both interviews have elements of commonality. Participant B talks about sport in a lot of detail, he talks about different sports, football golf and darts. Participant A also talks about sport but for him there seems to be more of an element of enjoyment in playing; for the social aspect of being involved in sport with groups of friends. Participant B talks about the social side to sport when talking about golf, he has a group of friends that he plays with. He doesn't mention the social aspect of football when he's talking about the town team that he plays for. He has

ambitions to play football professionally and is keen that his achievements are recognised. He says;

It's another trophy I've got a lot of trophies already as you can see. I just enjoy winning them.

What did you get these trophies for?

There's a night at the end of the season...where you get the trophies for playing and stuff I usually get top goal scorer and stuff. (Participant B)

Although sport is important to both participants it appears that sport is important for different reasons to each boy.

Local area is another topic that features prominently for both participants. For Participant B the local area is very important he feels rooted to the streets and the climate. His experience of the town is mediated through the necessity of accessing the town on foot to move between his parents' houses, to meet at the market cross, to travel to school and to go to the football club. Conversely because Participant A lives more remotely than Participant B he accesses his community through being driven to places and does not perhaps have such a physical attachment to the locality.

Discussion

- Possessions feature to a greater or lesser extent for both participants. There seems to be an acknowledgement from both boys that entertainment and socialising or being sociable is important to them. The young person who has more independent mobility, Participant B, is able to meet friends in his vicinity at weekends. Participant A has less independent mobility because he lives more remotely than Participant B. He is reliant on an adult, or someone with a driving license, taking him to wherever he needs or wants to go. I suggest that this results in fewer opportunities to 'hang out' as he will only ask to go somewhere for a reason, such as to play football. It seems to follow that for Participant A the possession of means of communication, such as mobile telephone and computer are vital to him. Similarly, because of his lack of mobility, he needs to entertain himself more at home. Again the inclusion of his Ipod, guitar and games console support to this. Participant B probably has a mobile phone but does not feel it is important enough to mention. He has access to other young people within the town, acknowledges the importance of meeting up with them at the weekend. Whilst — also mentioning some of the electronic entertainment systems he has access to, these often seem to be used in a social context,

such as on-line gaming and watching the sport on television with his family.

Sport seems to be the acceptable way in which these young men socialise and both participants recognise this by including references to playing with friends when talking about sport. Sport is particularly important for participant B who wants to have a career involving sport, whereas maintaining a level of fitness and the opportunity for a kickabout with friends at a local park is the priority for Participant A.

These participants are both in Year 10 and are therefore unable to join in other socialising activities which might be appropriate for older people, such as going to the pub. Again the issue of mobility plays a part.

Both participants express a preference for finding employment in the local area when they leave school. Attachment to place appears to be stronger for participant B who experiences his local area through walking everywhere. This gives him more independence than participant A and keeps him connected to the seasons, climate and changes occurring within his local area. These factors featured in the photographs he chose to share about how he sees himself now.

There is also an element of security and comfort in knowing an area well, feeling confident to negotiate it and to locate oneself within the culture of a place. Both boys have experience of being part of a small community and feel comfortable within that community. With reluctance Participant B acknowledges that he may have to move away if he is to realise his dream of becoming a professional footballer.

What about if someone came up from... say Aston Villa how would you feel about that?

Don't know, excited

Would you be happy to move away to do it?

It depends if I want it I'll have to, won't I so probably yeah.

—

but similarly recognises that he may not be able to make that move.

And what might stop you from doing this?

Friends round here and stuff 'cause I like round here...I don't know

Participant A is considering a future in the police force and intends to stay locally. He feels that he knows the area and that this will be a positive factor. He also acknowledges that he will

— need to do something between leaving school and joining the police. He is thinking of travelling to Newcastle-upon-Tyne to study forensics. It is important to him to think that other people from his area will also be at the college and that there may be an opportunity of staying with a friend's father who has accommodation in Newcastle.

So have you got other friends who might be going to Newcastle?

D, who's doing this with the pictures, I think his dad lives in Newcastle...he might be going.

Although facing the probability that he will have to move away he is seeking to lessen the impact of the upheaval by going with friends and possibly staying with a friend and his father in the city:

— Since this research was not concerned with looking at the appropriateness of choices, the feasibility of the futures the participants talked about neither participant was challenged on their ability to fulfil their ambition. This research was concerned with finding out how young people see themselves, how they see their futures and what they perceive as barriers that might prevent them from realising their ambitions.

Confidence in their ability to reach their goals is something that affects both participants. Participant A feels that he may not be academically able enough to join the police. He feels 'scared' by the prospect of GCSE exams and is not looking forward to writing reports. Similarly when talking about playing the guitar he comments that he would not like to be in a band playing the guitar because of the stage and performance in front of other people. There are elements of lack of confidence in his ability and lack of confidence in his ability to overcome his difficulties in Participant A.

Participant B has different limitations, mainly to do with his attachment to the locality, the lack of opportunities offered there and his reluctance to consider an academic path. Similarly although he professes an interest in becoming a professional footballer he does not appear to have taken any steps towards becoming taken on by a team since his trial at Carlisle United. Is this because he does not have the confidence to pursue this ambition or because he really wants to stay in the locality?

The main themes to emerge from the interviews were concerned with communication, socialising and entertainment. On further

investigation however other themes emerged from both participants. Themes of sport, location and ownership of goods emerged together with another theme of confidence or lack of confidence.

What I would do differently?

Following the pilot study, methods used are evaluated. Changes are made after consideration of the success of the pilot study with regard to participant sample and semi structured interview schedule.

I think that the method I used in approaching schools to help me find participants was flawed. Schools may have a variety of reasons for nominating pupils to take part in research and they may be different from the researcher's reasons for wanting to speak to young people.

In this piece of research I as a researcher consider almost all pupils living in Cumbria to be living in a rural community, even those in the medium-sized towns of up to 20,000 inhabitants. For those living in larger towns such as Carlisle and Barrow there is

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still a rural sensibility. Commerce and employment are dominated by tourism, financial services, such as banking and insurance, and public sector employment, through local government, health and education (Hands, 2008). Whereas an urban area such as Manchester lists its main areas of employment as financial and professional services, life science industries, creative culture and media as well as public sector employers, (Policy Unit, 2006).

The schools I had contacted had interpreted rural living as concerning those young people living in isolated and sparse communities. One of the aims of using IPA as a method was to research collaboratively with participants into how they made sense of their lifeworld. Ideally for this participants would have chosen to take part in the research out of curiosity to find out more about themselves and work through thoughts, feelings and ideas that they might have.

—

In my original letter to schools (Appendix A), I had asked for the opportunity to talk to Year 10 pupils and Year 12 pupils in an assembly-type setting, where the whole year group would have been gathered together. In that way potential participants would

have been able to self-select and opt in to taking part in the study.

In this pilot study, however, the participants were nominated by the school. One of those initially proposed by the Head teacher did not want to take part in the research and did not return his personal consent form.

I made initial contact and conducted interviews through the school, arranging a small meeting room within the school in which to conduct the initial briefing of participants and in organising an interview room in which to speak to the participants about their photographs and their experiences. The school was also involved in following up the return of consent forms from the participants' parents and the return of the cameras which were then posted on to me for processing.

In many ways I think that this allied me with the school although I was not the educational psychologist for the school at the time. Consequently I think the images the boys chose and the subjects they chose to talk about reflected the school focus that they perceived. Participant B, for instance, seemed surprised that I

should question his inclusion of the school in his photographs when school was such a large part of his life.

Interestingly when asked to think about themselves in the future both the participants talked about possible work or lines of employment they might go into. This seems to be a natural continuation from attending school especially as this school had no sixth form. The participants may have interpreted my request for them to consider themselves in the future as a question about career choice and vocational decision-making post school.

Neither of the participants chose to talk about themselves as men, in social or sexual relationships, themselves as part of a community or themselves as potential future fathers. There were no aspirational photographs relating to being legally able to drink, vote or drive a car.

After attending a masterclass by Jonathan Smith into IPA, in March 2008, I realised that my interview questions were poor. Many of my questions focused on asking the participants about individual photographs and asking closed questions. I also talked too much. I devised a new semi-structured interview schedule for subsequent interviews.

I suspect that one of the factors affecting the thinness of the pilot interviews was the closeness of the school to the process and the relative immaturity of the participants. Similarly when seeking 'hot cognition' about the lives and lived experiences of the participants there did not appear to be much going on with relation to their views of themselves or their futures as they were only just beginning Year 10 when they were approached to take part in the research.

Roll up for the magical mystery tour

- *The main study has three participants and employs a case study approach to investigate their thoughts and feelings about growing up in rural communities and their future. Researcher and participant interpretations are discussed. Some links are made between some of the findings. Differences and commonalities are explored.*

Main Study

Access

Having taken into consideration several factors which arose from the pilot study I obtained a sample of participants willing to take part in my research. For the pilot I had felt that my participants had felt that I was allied to the school, in some way, that they limited their responses and had felt pressurised to participate. I was also aware that the sample was not a self-selecting group who had wanted to take part but rather a group chosen from within the school by the head teacher. I decided therefore to approach young people that I knew, who did not particularly associate me with their school or anything to do with school.

Sample

I knew all of the participants personally, though not well, as they all lived within neighbouring villages. The young people included in my study were homogeneous in that they all attended the same secondary school, had all taken external examinations and were all awaiting the results. All the participants knew me and my family as part of the wider community. All the participants lived in small villages or hamlets.

Differences included birth order, number of siblings and family make-up as well as age. Participant C was in Year 13 awaiting A level results, Participant D was in Year 12 awaiting AS level results and Participant E was in Year 11 awaiting GCSE results. Participant C was an only child and lived with his mother with open access to his father who also lived locally. Participant D was the youngest of four siblings living at home with both of his birth parents and his oldest brother. Participant E is the older of two siblings and lives at home with both of his birth parents.

Method

As in the pilot study participants were given disposable cameras with which to take their photographs. Participant D asked if he could use a digital camera which I agreed to. All participants were asked to take a series of ten photographs that said

something about who they are now and something about who they wanted to be in the future.

The participants who used disposable cameras returned them for processing after which interviews were conducted with them at an agreed time in their own homes. A different semi-structured interview schedule was drawn up with four questions. (Appendix X). The questions differed from the original pilot questions in that they explicitly sought answers to questions such as 'What is it like to be a young person growing up in Cumbria? In addition to the original themes I included a new question about the process of taking part in the research and how they felt about it. This topic had not been covered in the pilot study.

The main study has three participants and employs a case study approach to investigate their thoughts and feelings about growing up in rural communities and their future. Researcher and participant interpretations are discussed. Some links are made between some of the findings. Differences and commonalities are explored

A Voyage of Discovery

As with the pilot study Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to analyse the findings.

Participant C

Participant C was an 18 year old who was awaiting A level results prior to going to Manchester University to read English Literature. He lived with his mother in a small Cumbrian village, situated at the foot of the Pennines. He was interviewed in his home at the beginning of August one week before the A level results were released. He had already planned to move to Manchester with his girlfriend before he received his results not knowing if he would be studying at the university or working.

In discussion about his photographs and the semi structured interview questions Participant C spoke for 45 minutes and several themes emerged, (table 9).

Table 9: Initial themes for Participant C

I have my own agenda
It's me against other people
To fulfil myself I have to leave.
I love ideas. My own and other people's ideas
Sometimes I doubt myself.
What's it all about? Search for meaning.
I want to tell you what I think.
I'm creative and it's very important to me.
'I'm a mad social animal'
I live in a really beautiful place.
'My thirst for knowledge is the thing that drives me on' Watt 1983
Fears of debt and illness.
Protestant Ethic
How I live at the moment I'm really happy, it's brilliant
Earn through doing something I love
Ambition
Altruism
Attachment
Exasperation and bewilderment at peers' attitudes.

The themes could be bracketed together to form clusters of themes.

Participant C is very clear that he is a young person who is sure of himself, his goals and ambitions. He shows himself to be knowledgeable and to value his ability to understand concepts, reflect on them and evolve his own ideas around what he has read.

Themes could be bracketed together around notions of agency, self determination and independence, creativity and self

expression and the 'Protestant Ethic' (Weber 1905). Other clusters of themes included expressions of self-doubt and anxiety and items relating to location (table 10).

Table 10: Clusters of themes emerging from interview with Participant C

Agency, self-determination, independence
I have my own agenda
What's it all about? Search for meaning
Thirst for knowledge
Earn through doing something I love
Exasperation, bewilderment with peers' attitudes.
It's me against other people
I'm a mad social animal.
Creativity and self expression
I value ideas, my own and other people's
I'm creative and it's really important to me.
I want to tell you what I think
Rural living
I live in a really beautiful place
How I live at the moment I'm really happy, it's brilliant
Protestant ethic
Ambition
Altruism
Motivation, do my best, live a full life
Self doubt, anxiety,
Fears of debt, illness
Sometimes I doubt myself

Participant C's interview was very dense with themes sometimes conflicting.

Deeper analysis of the themes that emerged from the interview with Participant C included feelings of momentum and inertia,

the exploration and acceptance of self and optimism for the future.

The overall feel of the interview with Participant C was one of momentum, (table 11). The feeling of momentum embraces some of the other themes that emerged from the interview such as self improvement, the yearning for independence and the Protestant ethic.

Table 11: Comments illustrating Participant C's super-ordinate theme of momentum.

<p>'I'm moving on Saturday and I'm really looking forward to getting out and living...independently...' (p7:10/11), 'I think I'm ready to get out and be more independent...' (p7:17/18), 'The plan there is to get better, get published again in higher places,' (p10:2), 'I just want to get better and do well, do myself justice' (p10:26), 'I want to do well...get a first...quite like to do an MA...keep going' (p12:10/11) 'I'm really looking forward to the university experience and want to do very well' (12:19/20) 'I like throwing myself into things...' (p14:1) '... I want to do it now...I'm fired up to do it' (p19:1) 'I'm pretty driven to achieve them, very driven to achieve at university...' (p20:3/4) 'Changing my ideas and grabbing other people's ideas...' (23:4/5)</p>
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In contrast to the concept of momentum there are also feelings of 'inertia' in the interview with Participant C, (table 12). In one of

his photographs for instance he describes himself as being 'slightly stuck'. When discussing his choice to leave the area the implication is that by remaining behind would be an example of inertia.

Table 12: Comments of Participant C's theme of inertia

<p>'It's about feeling, at the moment, slightly stuck' (p7:7/8)</p> <p>'it's pretty hard to get things done when you live in the countryside, apart from on the internet...' (p7:20/21)</p> <p>'I'll get a part time job in Tesco's but once I've finished my job I don't want to get stuck there' (p11:12/13)</p> <p>'...if I stayed at the university too long I'd have to become part of the digging up literary bits and bobs' (p12:17/18)</p> <p>'...make sure I don't squander the time I have there' (p20:4)</p> <p>'...it seems to be a sort of divide between the people who haven't got any interest in...outside of how it is...outside of general sort of life' (20:16-18)</p> <p>'...some of them have spent their first year just drinking and wish they hadn't already' (p21:25/26)</p>
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Participant C also makes a strong distinction between what he thinks and has worked out for himself and what he considers other, unidentified, people to think. He is keen to identify himself as a thinking, reflective, philosophical person, (table 13). This is demonstrated in the extracts where he states what 'other people think' and immediately contrasts that with what he thinks about the same situation. This could be interpreted as Participant C being a defiantly oppositional, headstrong person or that he is interested in thinking things through for himself. From remarks

made in the rest of the interview in which he talks about valuing thinking I prefer the second interpretation.

Table 13: What others think versus what I think

<p>‘She’s my fiancée, we got engaged on our birthdays....I’ve been with her since I was 14, about 4 years or so. People are often surprised by that and say “Are you sure it’s a good idea being so young and everything?” and I just say “yeah” ’ (p1:4-8)</p> <p>‘People say “Are you sure you don’t want to dabble around a bit and see what it’s like?” and I haven’t had any urges yet so as far as I am concerned that’s show it is at the moment. I love Girl S and she loves me and we’re moving in together on Saturday’ (p1:9-13)</p> <p>‘ I live in a really beautiful place and people often say that if you live in a beautiful place you don’t appreciate it but I think I do’ (p4:18-20)</p> <p>‘I think football is a much more intelligent sport than people think’ (p5:14/15).</p> <p>“And every one says ‘oh but of course you don’t go to university to learn do you? You go to university to go clubbing and be carefree for three years’ er that’s not how I see it” (p12:1-3)</p> <p>‘a lot of people go to university because they want a better job. I’m going to university because I want to...go to university because I want to learn.’ (19:20-22)</p>

When going through his photographs Participant C declares his love of football, particularly Blackburn Rovers. Their club motto ‘Ars et labore’ (skill and work) is reflected to some extent by the Protestant (work) Ethic (Weber 1905). The Protestant Work Ethic is described as attaching value to work, thrift and self discipline (Farlex 2008), elements which feature prominently throughout the interview with Participant C, (table 14).

Table 14: 'Ars et Labore': the Protestant Work Ethic

'I want to be able to fulfil my potential...' (p8:16)

'get out of university without too much debt (p8:18)

'that's me revising a poem with a pen. Plan there is to get better.' (p10:1)

'...it's poetry...it's not just a thing that comes out of you... it's training...you have to train yourself quite a lot. (p10:12/13)

'my main aspiration is not to do with money at all...just as long as I've got...as long as I'm not absolutely...as long as I'm not in debt I'll be fine.' (p11:19-21).

'I desperately want to do the best I can...' (p12:12)

'I want to live a full life' (p13:18)

'living well...not well to do but sound-mindedly and sound conscience and just keep myself together really...doing everything to the full extent I can' (p13:22-24)

'...I want to do something for a good cause' (p14:17/18)

'I want to make sure I keep caring about everything else and other people...' (p14:23/24)

'Some of them have spent the first year drinking and wish they hadn't already. I think you need a bit of sense 'cause you go to uni for a reason and so I think that's about it really...it sounds horribly mature...but that's why you should be going to university' (p21:24-29)

'perfectly happy to go ...as long as I can afford it...after as much wild fun as I can in a big city....I also want to do well and I've got to balance that. (p22:3-5).

Participant C also reflects on the impact and contribution growing up in the countryside has made to his life, (table 15). He sees positives and negatives but overall considers growing up in the countryside to have been a positive experience. There is some conflict and ambiguity in his comments relating to living in rural

Cumbria. For instance although he expresses regret that the University of Cumbria cannot meet his requirements there are other, commutable, universities that he could have applied for.

— Similarly he dismissed the idea of taking a year out and reapplying after his A level results were in. During the interview Participant C accepts that his feelings of love for the local environment could be connected to the fact that he is leaving on Saturday. Similarly when we talk about the possibility of returning to his family in Cumbria he points out that he has not taken student accommodation but is living, full-time and permanently with his girlfriend in a Manchester flat rather than coming home during the holidays. He is actually moving away in a manner that most young people do not when they go to university.

Table 15: Growing up In Cumbria

<p>‘That’s just general it’s just about where I live. I live in a really beautiful place...’ (p4:18/19)</p> <p>‘I just love walking about and seeing the animals and the sky...’ (p4:20/21)</p> <p>‘it’s about freedom to go where you want safely and just be able to watch things quietly and think about it’ (p5:1-3)</p> <p>‘As much as I’ll miss the safety of my green-ness I’ll be able to go and do things for myself a lot easier ‘cause everything’s closer at hand’ (p7:22-24)</p> <p>‘where I live at the moment I’m really happy with, it’s fine it’s brilliant.’(p8:3/4)</p> <p>‘There’s a big gap between being basically a young person living at home in the countryside compared to going to university, hopefully and living in the city’.(p8:7-9)</p> <p>‘I think I’d probably want to come back to the countryside once I’ve done...it’ll probably take a while though...once I’ve done everything citywise’. (9:17-19)</p> <p>‘I’ve enjoyed living in Cumbria especially recently I’ve really started appreciating things over the last two years.’(p15:20/21)</p> <p>‘I’m moving away...I am got to...there ain’t no university of C (village) and I’m too high a standard for the University of Cumbria at the moment sadly’.(17:17-19)</p>

Listening to Participant C talking about growing up in the countryside it seems that his motivation for leaving is mainly to do with the desire for some independence from his parents and because he feels that what is offered by way of higher education locally is not appropriate for him and does not address his goals. Although there is regret expressed that the local university is not appropriate for him Participant C expresses stronger reasons for going than staying. The need to be more independent is strong and expressed throughout the interview, (table 16.)

Table 16: I want to break free

<p>‘...going to a poetry reading tonight...as long as dad arrives to give me a lift as I cannot drive.’ (p2:20/21)</p> <p>‘I’m moving on Saturday and I’m really looking forward to getting out and living, well with my Girl S, independently and just being able to do, within reason, what I want to do...’(p7:9-12)</p> <p>‘I think it’s about time...I think I’m ready to get out and be more independent...’ (p7:17/18)</p> <p>‘...it’s absolutely terrifying but it is also what I need to do and what I want to do. So there’s a kind of uneasy tension but I’m also really looking forward to it. (p8:11-14)</p> <p>‘they’re going ‘cause it’s what you do a) because you’ve got to do it ‘cause it gets you away from your parents’ (p20:10-12)</p>

In the interview with Participant C the words relating to ‘intelligence’ such as intelligent, intellectual occur as part of the discourse quite frequently. Following on from the previous section about ideas and thinking it seems to me that the notion of being thought intelligent and able to engage in intellectual activities is something that is very important to Participant C, (table 17)

Table 17: Use of ‘intelligent, intellectual, intelligence’ in Participant C’s discourse

‘...mainly intellectual sort of things, music as well...(p1:20)
‘I think football is a much more intelligent sport than people think’ (p5:14/15)
‘as you mature and you’ve got more intelligent as you gradually do’ (p16:21/22)
‘there’s a few of us who are really driven to go to university to learn a lot there’s a few intellectually kind of driven...’ (p20:7/8)
‘Mates who I watch the comedy with and have a pint with all on the same intelligence line pretty much...’ (p20:24/25)
‘become part of that just get involved with it all...intelligent thinking.’ (p23:8/9)

One of the themes that recurs throughout the interview with Participant C is the value he places on thinking, his ideas, other people’s ideas and his belief that he will be able to think things through.

He acknowledges a need in himself to talk about his own ideas, through writing poetry, involvement in a philosophical group at university and performance of his poetry, (table 18).

Table 17: Thinking and telling

'I'm interested in other people's ideas er that's poetry mainly poetry, erm intellectual sort of things, music as well, just other peoples ideas, other peoples ideas.' (p1:19-21)

'This is my notebook, guitar, pens etcetera. That's my ideas. Once I've got other people's ideas I like to tell everybody what my ideas are.' (p2:16-18)

'I have an urge to understand as much as I can about the world. That's psychology, philosophy and literature, mainly poetry for me.' (p2:4-6)

'...once I've read everybody else's ideas and thought on them, produced my own ideas the next logical step is telling everybody what I think...' (p3:24-26)

'I think they brought me up to appreciate writing and thinking. I think mum's brought me up to appreciate how to think and that it's important...(p7:2/3)

'I think it's about keeping ethical standards and working out what I think about everything...not necessarily whether there's a God...but just working out about how I want to live and what I think about philosophical things like whether I have a mind or not....' (p13:3-8)

'I also want to have some idea of what I think more strongly ...'(p13:13)

'I just think you start thinking about stuff, don't you, when you get older' (p15:22/23)

'It's about other people's ideas, working out how the world works whether it's through literature or science or whatever and being a part of it....' (19:13-15)

'different levels of caring about thinking I suppose that's what it is...some people don't like it, some people like it, some people feel uncomfortable about thinking about stuff too much, some people just don't try and do it all the time' (p20:26-p21:1)

'What's motivating me? I suppose desperately wanting to say my piece really I think.' (p22:18/19)

'I just like ideas I think that's what's motivating me mainly' (p22:22/23)

'I've never thought about why I am driven so much... I think it probably is that whole thing to do with ideas I think that's the best way I can express it...' (p23:26-28)

In identifying the factors that are motivating him to try to achieve his goals Participant C reveals a sense of purpose, or intrinsic motivation to succeed. His focus is not solely on finding employment at the end of his university course but also includes targets outside of study which acknowledge the holistic nature of life. Life is more than just achieving at work or study but also achieving within his personal relationships, his social life, as a member of the community and his interior world of thought, poetry writing and reflection. Within our interview Participant C talked about religion and philosophical challenges, the desire to live ethically, a commitment to making a success of his relationship with his fiancée, a wish to achieve through doing something to earn money which was personally rewarding, maintaining his physical and mental health and combining a love and knowledge of the countryside with a desire to become immersed in the city, (table 19).

Table 19: What does Participant C want?

'I have an urge to understand as much as I can about the world'. (p2:4/5)

'...give myself time to do what I want to do ...it's just about fulfilling things without letting things slip by before I get too old to do it. ' (p8:21/22)

'Me and Girl S. That's part of the happiness thing I want it to work out between us living together...' (p9:1-3)

'I want to combine my love of living in the country with being happy in the city as well'.(9:14/15)

' I want to get better and do myself justice...' (p10:26)

'I want to make a bit of money doing something I want to do. Or not what I want to do 'cause I don't know what I want to do to be honest. But just make a bit of money doing something I'd be relatively happy doing.' (p11:5-8)

'it'd be nice to get a job which is involved with writing but as long as I make enough money to live off I'll be happy...my main aspiration is not to do with money at all...ideally something to do with my current dream which is to get published and go and be a poet etcetera.' (p11:17-23)

' I desperately want to be the best I can be' (p12:12)

'I want to have completely sorted out all my various philosophical and religious things a little bit more 'cause at the moment I have no idea...I'm not even an agnostic...I'm literally haven't got a clue'. (p12:23/26)

' I want to live a full life. Fulfilling purposesdoing it...living well...not well-to- do but sound-mindedly and sound conscience and just keep myself together really...doing everything to the full extent I can' (p13:22-24)

'I want to stay health for as long as possible' (p14:4/5)
'physically and mentally healthy' (p14:6)

'I'd like to hope I have an altruistic streak, I could probably be more empathetic with people, but I'd like to do well and then give something back.' (p15:6-8)

'I also want to do well and I've got to balance that...I'm a mad social animal, I love talking to people and going out and all that...(p22:5/6)

Participant D

Participant D is a 17 year old, Year 12 pupil. He attends the local secondary school where he is studying for A levels. At the time of interviewing he had taken AS levels and was awaiting the results. He lives in a small village in north Pennine fells. The village is very picturesque, has a relatively large number of holiday or second homes and a very small number of people of school age. Participant D lives with his parents and an older brother. He has two other older siblings both of which live away from the village.

In the discussion of his photographs and responses to the semi-structured interview questions Participant D spoke for approximately 20 minutes. The initial part of the interview covered the photographs he had taken and chosen to talk about. The other section of the interview involved Participant D answering the same semi-structured interview questions that Participant C had answered.

From listening to Participant D the initial themes to emerge were related to the importance of sport in his life, how he enjoys school and work challenges and how important social aspects of his life are. The initial themes that emerged from the interview with participant D were varied. The themes elicited from talking about

his photographs developed and became more clearly defined after he began to reflect on himself as a young person growing up in Cumbria.

The initial themes to emerge are presented in table 20 and include sport, entertainment, social, aspiration, rural versus urban living, independence, other people's view and purpose or focus.

Table 20: Initial themes for Participant D

Sport
Entertainment
Do my best
Friends/Social life
Motivation
Pride in my achievements
What other people think
Aspiration
Rural versus urban
Conflict of emotions
Independence
Making choices
Purpose/focus

These themes can then be clustered or bracketed together as in table 21.

Participant D contradicted himself from time to time and had the most difficulty in reconciling his feelings about rural life. He expressed frustration at being the only young person in his

— village of secondary school age, that he felt his opportunities were limited by his transport difficulties and that if he had children of his own he would not bring them up in the countryside. Later on in the interview however he stated that he would hope to return to the village to live someday and that it was a beautiful place to live and demonstrated that he felt somehow ungrateful or disloyal to be expressing his negative views.

Similarly he contradicts himself when talking about independence, which is not explicitly defined. He talks about being independent from the village, being able to lead his own life and do the things he wants to do but wants to be within an hour's drive of his home village and anticipates seeking his mother's advice. It seems therefore, that for Participant D independence is a graduated concept. There are degrees of independence that he is comfortable with and that it is not an all-or-nothing state.

Table 21: Clusters of themes emerging from Interview with Participant D

<p>I want to live my own life</p> <p>Independence</p> <p>What others think</p> <p>Making choices</p>
<p>I want to try to achieve my goals</p> <p>Do my best</p> <p>Motivation</p> <p>Aspiration</p> <p>Purpose/Focus</p> <p>Pride in my achievements</p>
<p>I'm a people-person</p> <p>Sport</p> <p>Friends/social</p> <p>Entertainment</p>
<p>Should I stay or should I go?</p> <p>Rural versus Urban</p> <p>Conflict of emotions</p>

The initial part of the interview with participant D includes many references to sport, football in particular, (table 22). It seems that sport fulfils a lot of functions in the life of this participant. The range of comments relating to sport suggests that Participant D regards sport not merely as a means of keeping fit. Participant D regrets the lack of young people of his own age with whom he could take part in sport, he looks at sportsmen as his role models and sees his recreation time as being largely concerned with playing or watching sport. Whilst acknowledging that he does not

have the skill or ability to be a professional sportsman

Participant D aspires to have a career which keeps him involved with sport in some way. He has a knowledge of some sport-related opportunities that might be open to him if he followed a career in journalism.

Table 22: The theme of sport that emerges from Participant D's discourse

'I'm a very sporty person and I like to get outside as much as I can to play sport, especially football and I have a football team that I play for on a Friday night in a six-a-side football, which I love to do.' (p1:1-3)

'I also like reading, specially, biographies of sport like Steven Gerrard and Pele...' (P2:11/12)

'And then there's my second life, which is football and I go to Carlisle matches every weekend' (p3:5-8)

'Of course football rules my life and if I wanted to do something it would be to play football. I know that's not going to happen. It would be for Liverpool and I want to carry on football for as long as I can'. (P3:10-13)

'As a career I'd like to be a journalist especially in sport, because that's just, I love sport and journalism's the course I want to do at university' (p4:8-10)

'I look towards my idols as well, especially football players like Steven Gerrard, erm, people like that...' (p4:17/18)

'I'd rather be outside playing sport but there's not enough people here to play sport...well I could play sport with younger children but that's not competitive enough for me. That's why I play football on a Friday...' (p6:14-16/p7:1/2)

Another theme that came from the interview with Participant D was a sense that he split his life into different areas. Sometimes people compartmentalise their lives in order to exercise some control. Participant talks about his school life, work life, home life and social life, (table 23).

Table 23: How Participant D describes different aspects of his life

<p>‘I always have my life at school as well which I do a lot of work for, strive to work harder and do better...’ (p1:6/7)</p> <p>‘... then I have my work life as well at the pub...and er...in the kitchen’ (p1:9)</p> <p>‘With the money I’ve earned from the pub that’s my social life. (p2:3)</p> <p>‘...and then I have my last, it’s like...and then there’s my second life, which is football...’ (P3:5/6)</p>
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Opinions ascribed to other people by Participant D are important to him. He appears to find other people’s opinions of him important and does not challenge them, (table 24).

Table 24: What other people think about me is important to me.

<p>‘...when I talk to people about what I do people are quite impressed ‘cause I’ve worked there for three years’ (p1:14-p2:2)</p> <p>‘Mum doesn’t think that’s very good because I spend too much on clothes’ (p2:5/6)</p> <p>‘...I like drama and many people call me a drama queen...’ (p2:7/8)</p> <p>‘I’ve already been told that I’ll go to the city and get sick of it after a while it’s probably true’ (P6:3/4)</p> <p>‘I’ve talked to my Head of Year telling me where the best courses are and what the best courses are.’(P9:2/3)</p> <p>‘They’ve always told us at school to pick the right course, it’s the most important thing you can do’.(p11:1/2)</p>
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Participant D uses comparative language to describe himself and his attitude to work and learning. To some extent there is a sense of a personal struggle to achieve at school, in his work and post-school ambitions, (table 25).

Table 25: Participant D describes his personal struggle for self-improvement

<p>‘...my life at school as well which I do a lot of work for, strive to work harder and do better...’ (P1:6/7)</p> <p>‘I cook, I do starters, and sweets, all sorts. I used to do washing up but I’ve been promoted...I think I’ve grown as a person from doing the work’ (p1:14)</p> <p><i>So you’ve taken some opportunities to develop your own skills. Yeah just trying to kick on and show what I can do’ (P9:7)</i></p> <p>‘If you know what you want to do you’ve got something to work for and I think I’ve got something to work for and hopefully get there.’(p:916-p10:1)</p>
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One of the major themes that resonates through the interview is how crucial to Participant D social aspects of life are, particularly in relation to friends. This can be especially difficult for young people who do not drive or have easy access to transport.

Participant D talks about travelling for two hours to meet up with friends, using social networking sites to maintain friendships and

the importance of strong social relationships with school and work colleagues, (table 26).

Table 26: The Importance of social relationships to Participant D

<p>‘I have a lot of friends at school that I mix with...’ (p1:7/8)</p> <p>‘...at the pub...and er... in the kitchen which I’ve made a lot of friends from as well...’ (P1:9/10)</p> <p>‘And I’ve made a lot of friends from that...’(p1:13)</p> <p>‘I joined up onto Facebook as lots of my friends are on it and I’m meeting new friends. I have lots of friends that go to A School (local independent school) that I don’t see very often so I would of course talk to them on Facebook’ (p3:1-4)</p> <p>‘... a lot of my friends don’t live in T (village)’ (p5:8)</p> <p>‘... It’s a good way to meet friends and to keep fit.’ (P3:13/14)</p> <p>‘Just ‘cause a lot of my friends don’t live in T say Scotby, so I’ll have to walk to Brampton then get a bus to Scotby which is just... that takes a couple of hours out of the day. Erm and if I want to go to Carlisle ...well I have to plan ahead. (p5:7-11)</p>

There was a sense of Participant D striving for independence from his village and his family although this was often matched by him commenting on how he still felt that he needed to maintain a link with his mother and home, (table 27).

Table 27: Conflicts of feeling around moving away, independence and leaving home.

Erm well I think I want to go to a good uni and I just... I want to move away and I want to be more independent I want to meet new people I don't want to stay here I see that as a step back if I stay here because I think I have to make that jump from living at home to living away and doing it myself and living my own life. And not my mum like cooking for me. I think I have to do that and I think that's in a city somewhere ... and there is people there and that's why I don't want to go too far so I've got that comfort zone where mum's only an hour away and I can phone her and talk to her and then there's the thing of coming back ... this is where I was born and bred and this is like the only place I know really. This is a place I love and I'll come back one day. (p7:8-p8:2)

Similarly there was some unhappiness about the limitations Participant D perceives and his experiences as a young person growing up in the countryside and yet he expresses his love for the area and a desire to return in later life, (table 28). He contradicts himself several times during the course of the interview. For example he says that he does not want to stay and would not bring his own children up in the countryside (p3:15-p4:3) yet goes on to say 'This is place I love and I'll come back one day' (p8:1/2) and "I do enjoy living where I do. It's a very nice place to live. Who would not want to live in a place like this' (p5:18/19).

Table 28: Participant D is ambivalent about growing up in the countryside

'In the future I want to own my own house and have a family bring them up but in the city not in the countryside 'cause in T(the village D lives in) I find it quite... there's not many, there's not enough people my age. It would have to be in the city where there's things going on.' (p:3:15-P4:3)

What's it like being a young man growing up in Cumbria?

'erm....It's ok (sighs) but I find that... if I lived in a city, somewhere like Newcastle...there'd be a lot more things to do and I'd maybe not have a better life but I'd enjoy it more.' (p5:4-6)

'I do enjoy living where I do. It's a very nice place to live... who would not want to live in a place like this? I think for a young person you have to have the hustle and bustle of a city and I don't think Carlisle's quite that. I think I would move back here if I had the chance in later life I would move back here. (p5:18-6:2)

What are the good points about Cumbria?

The rural area, it's quiet, you can do things, the people, the people. Like it's hard that.

What about the negative points? We've talked about transport and the logistics of getting around.

It's like there's only one bus to T in a week so it's quiet. That's a positive and a negative. I have to bike or do something to get there. Because there's no shops I spend a lot of time in the house that's why I have my music and my playstation and my telly that I watch, spend a lot of time doing whereas I'd rather be outside playing sport but there's not enough people here to play sport...well I could play sport with younger children but that's not competitive enough for me. That's why I play football on a Friday, that's a neg...well not having enough people around is a negative...the older generation.

Participant E

Participant E is a 16 year old, Year 11 pupil. He attends his local secondary school where he has been studying for GCSEs. At the time of interviewing he had taken his GCSEs and was awaiting the results. He lives on a lane that runs off a hamlet in the north Pennine fells. The hamlet is a ribbon development with no more than forty houses. There is a pub but no other amenities. There were four children of primary school age and four of secondary age at the time of the interview. Participant E was the only boy of secondary school age in the village.

Participant E lives with both of his parents and a younger sister.

In the discussion of his photographs and responses to the semi-structured interview questions Participant E spoke for approximately 22 minutes. The initial part of the interview covered the photographs he had taken and chosen to talk about. The other section of the interview involved Participant E answering the same semi-structured interview questions that the other participants had answered.

The initial themes that emerged from talking and listening to Participant E were predominantly concerned with entertainment

and socialising which, along with obtaining money, appear to be important factors in his life. Participant E also seems to have clear ideas about how he wants to be as an adult and how he views success. His ideas are less clear about how he might achieve this ideal. Family life, parents and extended family are important for Participant E and represent something that he would like to replicate in his own adult life, (table 29).

Table 29: Initial themes for Participant E

Being happy
Entertainment
Gaining experiences
Sport
Electronic games
Socialising/friends
Being successful
Money
Design
Family
Ambitions
Work

Some of Participant E's themes could be bracketed to create more meaningful clusters of themes, (table 30).

Table 30: Clusters of themes for Participant E

Things that make me happy
Comedy films
Friends
Pets
Family
Entertain me
Computer games
Interesting people/ interesting places
Sport
Success
Money
Higher education as a route to success
Nice lifestyle
Lots of friends
Ambitions

Participant E states that he wants to be successful and describes how he measures success, (table 31).

Table 31: How Participant E defines success

<p>This is a picture of Canary Wharf... it just means I want to be a successful businessman or own a big company or something like that. Be successful in life.</p> <p><i>And what does that look like? What does being successful mean?</i></p> <p>Having lots of money ,having a nice family, having a nice lifestyle....that kind of thing....and having lots of friends. (p3:)</p> <p>This is wads of cash which basically means I'd like to have lots of money when I'm older. (p3:)</p> <p><i>Why are you thinking that you'd like to go to university?</i></p> <p>To, to help me get that boost like so I'm more likely to be successful. (p:4)</p>
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He goes on to use financial reward as a measure of success in several of his comments about his aspirations and when talking

about who he is now. He also seems to be keen to acquire money and things which he sees as having a monetary value such as financing a university education, (table 32).Table Table 32:

Comments relating to money and material reward

What does being successful mean?

Having lots of money, having a nice family, having a nice lifestyle....that kind of thing....and having lots of friends. (P3)

This is wads of cash which basically means I'd like to have lots of money when I'm older. (3)

... erm it seems to be a good opportunity and they pay for your university as well. Yeah (5)

What's motivating you for these ambitions?

Just the idea of getting good grades and being successful. Dad has put in a few rewards some 'incentives' to help me. (8)

And you were going for a job the other day did you manage to find something?

They said they were full but I'm going to try and find other places over the summer to help fill my wallet. (p8)

Yet Participant E describes how fluid his ideas are as he goes on to talk about ideas of perhaps joining the army. The notion of a career in the military had occurred to him when visiting his aunt who is stationed in Edinburgh. Although he has access to someone who can tell him about the army life his ideas at this time demonstrate a lack of understanding of what an army life is like, (table 33).

Table 33: Participant E discusses his Idea of joining the army.

<p>Then... I might join The Forces. That seems to be quite a good experience, my auntie's in there. An erm it seems to be a good opportunity and they pay for your university as well. Yeah</p> <p><i>So has your auntie talked to you a lot about being in the forces?</i></p> <p>Yeah. Well I went to visit her at work on Monday, 2 days ago, and that was quite interesting 'cause I got to meet the different people at her work place and see the kind of place she works and yeah just getting some experience.</p> <p><i>And there's lots of different roles in the army so what are you thinking...?</i></p> <p>I don't think I'd like to be a 'soldier' soldier because the idea of being shot doesn't really appeal to me I'd probably want something to do with computers like IT or comms or intelligence. Something away from all the fighting I think. (5:)</p>
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It also demonstrates, perhaps, how it is the experiences that Participant E has had, and of which he is trying to make meaning, which have an impact on his thinking with regard to his future. His photographs demonstrate that he has had experience of travelling, being with his friends, observing, at close quarters, his family. Participant E is undergoing a painstaking filtering of what experiences he would like to keep and which he would discard, how he would like to see himself and which elements do not apply or appeal to him. He is engaged in the process of deciding who and how he wants to be in the future, (table 34).

Table 34: Participant E talks about experiences he would like to build on in future

<p>This is a picture of me on holiday. It means I like to go to new exciting places. It's a picture of me in a temple, a Buddhist temple in Thailand. It basically means that I like to go to new exciting places. (p1:15)</p> <p><i>How do you see yourself getting into the design field?</i></p> <p>I'm doing product design at school and I'm very imaginative. I wanna do computer graphics that kind of thing that's kind of inspired by seeing all the films, special effects and all that. I'm very interested in creating new things. Like on my school course I've been involved in creating a corporate image for a company. I've enjoyed that. (p4)</p> <p>This is a picture of the world which basically means I'd like to travel the world when I'm older and meet lots of interesting people and go to interesting places as you saw earlier, that's the kind of thing I'd like to do. (p4):</p>
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Where have we been and what did we see?

This section aims to pull together the findings of the three participants and to consider them from several angles. The first area of discussion considers the themes that emerged from each participant, the second concerns how the findings related to the literature review and the third how the findings relate to the research question. Consideration is given to the methods used. Finally the research question is answered.

Discussion of themes

Attachment to Place

— The notion of being unable to leave the home area was expressed most noticeably by the boys in the pilot study who both felt that they needed to stay close to what they knew. One participant reflected that he may not be able to move away from the comfort of what he knew the other reflected on the benefits, as he perceived them, of staying with the familiar. The person who interacted most closely, in a physical way, with his environment, as demonstrated by his photographs which illustrated his walked route around the town seemed to be most attached to it. Other participants, who interacted with their community mainly from

— within a car, appeared to be less limited by it. These were the youngest participants in the study both aged 14.

The main study participants all mentioned how important the area was to them and yet were of an opinion that their immediate futures lay elsewhere. Although there is evidentially a pull to their home community it does not seem to be limiting the young people I worked with in what they hoped for or aspired towards. All of the participants expressed a desire to either remain in their local area or to return at a later date. As Participant C put it: I think I'd probably want to come back to the countryside once I've done...it'll probably take a while though...once I've done everything citywise, (9:17-19).

Role models/ The Vanguard

— All main study participants expressed a desire to continue into higher education. Participant D took inspiration from a cousin who worked in an area in which he thought he might be interested. He also talked about his brother, who lived in Newcastle and had attended university there, and his sister who had gone to Lancaster. Participant E included a photograph of his mother in her graduation robes and expressed a desire to achieve something similar.

Participant C valued learning and thinking, which he illustrated through his photographs and discourse about them. He also saw a benefit in learning for the pleasure of learning, but had wider ambitions as a writer which was something both his parents did, or had done, at some time in their lives.

Another factor that may be relevant is that all the participants in the main study had at least one parent who had experienced some form of higher education, Participant D had siblings who had already experienced higher education. For these three participants higher education had become a normalised and expected route for them.

Similarly, all participants in the main study were the off-spring of people who had moved into the area. Although one of the parents of Participant E was Cumbrian, she had not been born in the part of Cumbria that the family now lived and one of her own parents was German. All the other parents were from outside Cumbria although they had all been living in Cumbria for over twenty years and with substantial community involvement.

Parental community involvement included being church warden, member of the village community project team, membership of

the Cumbrian women's rural network, arts officer for the area and facilitator of writing groups and workshops. Only one of the six parents was not involved in a group based community activity but, because she was always around, held key holder responsibilities for various properties within the village and was a contact for many of the frail and elderly village residents.

Experiences

Participants' experiences seemed to be of great importance in helping them focus on how they see their futures. All the participants reflected on experiences that they had had, found enjoyable and wanted to repeat or explore in more detail. The participants were able to identify elements of an experience that had appealed to them and discriminate between what they did and not want to repeat. When Participant E talked about the possibility of joining the army, which was an idea still very much at the experimental end of his career planning, he was able to say that he did not want to be involved in frontline warfare but was interested in the aspects of soldiering connected to computers and military intelligence. He was not interested in one aspect of the work but still able to identify elements of that work that appealed to him.

Participant C talked about his future ideas on a more global scale, encompassing family life, personal fulfilment through writing, a desire to make sense of the world, a love of ideas both his own and those of other people. These were all issues that he had talked about in some detail, from his experience of writing, publishing and performing poetry, to his evaluation of his parents' roles in his upbringing, through critically interacting with works of literature and philosophy and his analysis of his own desire to learn.

When thinking about higher education Participant D reflected on his experiences of being with his brother in Newcastle. He also talked about a cousin who has a media role with a professional football club, he had been to look around her place of work and talked to her about her work. He also has the experience of being involved in the school newspaper and thinks that that is something that he would like to take further as a career.

The pilot study participants, although slightly younger, continued to build their aspirations based on their experiences. Participant B, a talented footballer and sportsman, reflects that this may be where his future lies. Interestingly though, other areas of

success, such as the early acquisition of his GCSE in English, has not led him to explore studying English further.

Both Participant A in the pilot study and participants D and E in the main study talk about spending a lot of their free time playing on computers, surfing the internet and watching television.

Whilst these are common features in the lives of many young people, in rural areas it seems that these may become the main free time occupation for some young people. Regular, reliable transport, organised sports activities and accessible social opportunities are not widely available within rural communities. This leaves those young people growing up in rural communities dependent on adults for transport and dependent on adult approval of the activity that they may want to take part in.

It seems that although experiences of school and education play an important part in a child's life they are not the only source of experiential opportunity. All the participants talked about a range of experiences which they had reflected upon and which they could explore further.

One theme that emerged within the pilot study with Participant A and continued and developed with Participant D and Participant E was concerned with ownership of, predominantly, electronic goods. One of the themes that emerged for most of the participants was their use of the internet, gaming and social networking technology. As well as this being a strong focus for some young people it seems that for some young people growing up in rural areas it offers a point of social contact that might otherwise be difficult to maintain.

Sex and relationships

The issue of sexuality was not raised at all other than by Participant C who named his fiancée and referred to her from time to time. None of the other participants mentioned current emotional attachments although participants D and E did have aspirations to family life. I am conscious of researcher bias here in that my initial assumption would be that family life included children and a wife or partner. Having said that there is no reason to assume that at all and it would be more reasonable to assume that family life involved living with other people who may or may not be of the opposite sex and may or may not include children.

All participants talked about the importance of friends. The participants talk about the activities they do with friends, such as playing computer games or sport, predominantly football. Chatting, relaxing and engaging in activities together seem to be important activities with regard to friends. The engagement with friends through sport appears to be particularly important to both pilot study participants and to one of the main study participants. Although the remaining two participants are not involved in playing sport any more, sport remains a feature that all participants focused on as being an important aspect of who they are. Four of the participants had a lot to say about sport and one, participant E, only really mentioned sport in passing. This leads me to question what the role sport plays for these young men. Does sport offer an acceptable way for young men to engage with other young men in the eyes of the participants? Is that its function for these boys? This could just be a coincidence of using such a small sample and a larger sample may have thrown up young men who are part of a musical group or skateboarders. An interesting area for further development would be to find out the role of sport in the lives of adolescent males and what alternatives are open to those who cannot muster an interest in sport.

– Discussion relating themes to the literature review

When carrying out the background reading for this study several areas of research were considered. These included the formation of identity during the period of adolescence, attachment to place, social capital and its function in education and social policy as well as aspiration development, rural living and post school transition.

There have been elements of discourse from each of the participants that have borne out what has been written in previous literature and also areas of difference.

Identity

- In the case of identity development there appears to be support for two conflicting ideas of identity development. Marcia's (1966) work in developing Erikson's ego identity status theory is supported with participants appearing to fall into Marcia's categories of foreclosure, moratorium, and ego identity. The
- theory of ego-identity was illustrated to some extent by the participants in the study. Participant C demonstrated that he

was on his way to achieving ego identity, in that he was thinking of career choices on his own terms. As he said:

...I want to make a bit of money doing something I want to do. Or not what I want to do, cause I don't know what I'd want to do to be honest. But just make a bit of money doing something I'd be relatively happy doing. So at the moment I thought go and get my degree go and work in an editors or work for publishing house or for a magazine or a newspaper or something. Something which I can see being beneficial rather than just getting whatever job I need... (Participant C).

He listens to other people's opinions yet has the confidence to discount them. Examples would be other people's opinions about taking a year out, not becoming engaged to his girlfriend and not applying to Oxford or Cambridge Universities.

Participant D is still struggling with his own ideas, his dreams of working in a football-related role and the expectations and views of his parents and Head of 6th Form whose views he regards highly. This is in keeping with the idea of moratorium as defined by Marcia.

The values, standards and wishes of his parents are still very prominent for Participant E who could be said to be at the foreclosure stage of the process, (Marcia, 1966). He shows no

inclination to challenge his parents' view of the world and aspires to be just like them.

On the one hand there is also support for Rattansi and Phoenix's (2005) notions of multiple identities. Participant D in particular refers to his different lives, his school life, his work life at the pub and his life relating to football. Similarly Participant C talks about his relationships with other writers and thinkers that he has met through the poetry café and those he considers his friends who are not such strong thinkers but who are enjoyable to be with.

— **Attachment to place**

The theme of attachment to place, for instance is quite commonly found in literature relating to human geography and sociology, planning and population studies and social ecology as well as in environmental psychology (Ponzetti, 2004). Researchers into the attachment of young people to the poor, English, urban areas that they grew up in acknowledged that attachment to place was a factor in keeping the young people they studied out of the workplace. (Green & White, 2007). It appears that there are many factors associated with attachment to place that are not purely

—
geographical, to do with landscape and space, but more closely linked to where extended family members live and how the feeling of belong to the community is engendered. In my pilot study Participant B relates most closely to the Green and White, (2007) study, when he talks about walking about the community, visiting his father's house and living at his mother's house, using the town centre as a meeting place and playing football for the town. The town appears to be central to his life and he admits that he will find it difficult to leave.

All the participants, both in the pilot and in the main study, express an attachment to their village or local community. For the older participants this has set up a conflict between feelings of guilt and ingratitude to some extent, and feelings of needing to leave in order to achieve independence and self knowledge.

The lack of mobility and reliance or dependence on others is a factor. Public transport does not adequately supply these rural communities particularly during the late afternoons and evenings. Participants C and D were old enough to drive but had not had driving lessons and would not have been able to afford to run cars even if they had succeeded in passing the driving tests.

For young people in rural communities transport, or lack of it, is one of the major issues that affects all aspects of their lives.

Aspiration

From previous literature around rural communities, (Shucksmith, 2004; Ni Loaire, 2000; Glendinning *et al* 2003) etc it is the lack of experiences that some pupils may acquire that could lead to low aspiration. The participants in the main study did not demonstrate low aspirations but had aspirations for themselves in terms of academic achievement and to some extent earning capacity. Participant C was more focused on writing as a means by which he would support himself and his family financially whereas Participant E aspires to being comfortably well off. All of the participants aspired to being 'happy', and went on to define what happiness would look like to them.

Participant C talked about his aspiration to 'do good' and talked about activities that he considered to be altruistic, including living ethically and 'sound-mindedly'.

Although much of the academic research and non-academic research appears to suggest that young people from rural

communities have low aspirations this does not seem to be the case with my research. Admittedly in some cases their aspirations are more wide-ranging than purely academic or economic goals but they all aspire to achieve well and the effect of their rural up-bringing has not impacted on them in this way.

For those young people in rural communities who do have low aspirations there would appear to be other factors at work, which may or may not be related to rural living. One such factor may be to do with social capital, another to do with parental expectation and parental experience.

Well Being

From the literature review it seemed that young people were able to identify certain factors as being of importance to their feelings of well-being. Some of those features were identified by the participants in the study. All of them talk about their need for social relationships with friends and all of the participants talked about the importance of their families in supporting them. This is not only through financial support but through parental interest in what they are doing. In response to the question *'What might help you reach your goals?'* Participant E said, *'...I suppose support*

from my parents and friends' when asked how that might be demonstrated he went on to say,

'I don't know like expressing an interest in what I do and giving advice and supporting me advice, showing interest that sort of thing erm' (Participant E).

Participant D reflects on the importance of his family in supporting his goals and knowing that he has his family's support,

'... I don't want to go too far so I've got that comfort zone where mum's only an hour away and I can phone her and talk to her.' (Participant D)

Participant C's mother offers practical support in working with revising a poem;

'Mum's been useful in that she's been quite honest, brutally honest in fact when it comes to my poetry so I'm beginning to learn how to revise it...' (Participant C).

Other features of subjective well-being in previous research which echoed in the themes raised by these participants included; the setting of goals, the aspiration to happiness and the strength of social relationships that all the participants talked about. Similarly the acceptance of the environment and their inability to change its features is reflected in previous literature, (Glendinning *et al* 2003; Bourke & Geldens, 2006), which goes on

to report that the young people believe it is they that must change. Participant C put this clearly when he talks about how he has come to appreciate his environment more as he has become older:

‘If you’d asked me a couple of years ago I probably would have said it’s boring and there’s nothing to do but that’s completely wrong. I’ve gotten over that, it’s fantastic, I think it’s a great place to live ‘cause...Its just everything, the people, the area. ... living in rural Cumbria very involved in every day to day stuff, you feel that you’re part of everything that goes on. You feel like you’re part of almost the farming and everything that goes on there. You almost feel you’re close to the earth (laughs) sort of thing ... yeah you just feel part of everything in a very close sort of way...’ Participant C.

All of the participants talk about being happy in the future and offer their own ideas about what this means to them. Participant C in response to the question ‘*What do you mean by “happy”?*’ offers the following statements:

I want to be able to fulfil my potential in things that I want to do, stay relatively carefree, make sure I get out of university without too much debt so that I’m not stuck with the financial business and just generally be happy enough to get along with what I want to do to a reasonable extent... and give myself time to do what I want to do. It’s just about fulfilling things without letting things slip by before I get too old to do it. I’ve got quite a while. I just want to get everything that I want to do, done, (Participant C).

Participant D describes himself as happy. 'I'm happy with my life now. Because of working and certain things that I do I've found myself very independent so I think if I'd not been so independent then it would have been easier to do who I wanted to be as I I'd have had more aspirations whereas I already do a lot of things on my own and with my friends' (Participant D).

In Participant E's view happiness is '... so long as I had a place I could call home, at home I'd be happy, if you get the idea. I'd be happy to go away, to explore, as long as had somewhere to come back to.' (Participant E).

Social Capital

Social capital is defined as either bridging capital or bonding capital. Bridging social capital acts almost like a lubricant, facilitating and empowering youngsters to make effective decisions about themselves. Bonding social capital on the other hand seems to operate like an adhesive, gluing the young person to the community into which they were born, (Morrow, 1999; Singh & Dika, 2003).

Because the families were not local in the sense that they could count generations of their family living in the same locality, they did not have the community attachment that might have been

expected although they played important roles within their communities. Although Participant D states that he was born and bred in his village he does not have the longer, inter-generational ties that others growing up in the area may have. Social capital may play an important role in whether a young person feels able to move out of the area of their birth or not. The Green and White (2007) study of distinct urban villages highlighted how difficult it is for some young people to make a move out of their urban neighbourhood. Although this was not evident with the participants in the main study there may have been an element of this with the pilot study participants, particularly Participant B. If the main study participants are to be considered from the point of view of a positive psychologist it is the strengths and features that work well and are beneficial to them that should be considered.

Positive youth development

Research into positive youth development has demonstrated that young people who are engaged in learning through purposeful, but not necessarily academic, activities they undertake in their free time, (Damon, 2004; Lerner *et al* 2000; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003. All of the participants talked about their lives out of school

with some of the older participants being engaged in part time paid employment, voluntary work activities, membership of sports and arts groups. Although some of the participants talked about their reliance on home entertainment through electronic media, they also demonstrated that being involved in activities in their communities was important to them regardless of the difficulties they had actually getting to these activities.

Considering the transport implications for all of the participants they felt that taking part in purposeful activities, not just being with friends but actually doing something, was a valuable, important part of their lives. Participant D says, '... I think I've grown as a person from doing the work...' and Participant C reflects on going to the poetry café and comments '... I only get to do it sort of once a month at the moment...I go and read my poetry and it's fantastic'.

From the literature and from listening to the participants it seems that being able to take part in purposeful, non academic activities is a valuable and important factor in the lives of some young people as has been suggested by a number of previous researchers, (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider 2000).

Post school transition

It seems that transition from school whether at 16 or 18 is left largely to schools and families (Foskett *et al*, 2008). Although Connexions provides a careers guidance service this appears to be mainly targeted at those young people who are most likely to become unemployed, drop out of college courses and not engage in training, usually referred to as NEET (not in education, employment or training). Recent reports on the performance of Connexions by the young people who receive that service have been poor, (DCSF 2008, Watts, 2009).

All the participants in this study had hopes for the future some further developed than others as suggested by the research of Quaglia and Cobb (1996). Participant C talks about his frustration with not receiving appropriate advice early enough (Foskett *et al* 2008), with regard to his GCSE grades which were relatively poor compared to the five A grades he was expecting at A level. Participant D was unsure of how he was going to achieve his goal of becoming a sports journalist and what training and learning routes were open to him. In the pilot study the boys were going to leave after Year 11 because the school had no sixth form. There were varying degrees of connection to the choices they were making with Participant A thinking he might need to go and stay

in Newcastle and go to college there and Participant B stating that he would be looking for employment in his local area.

Participant E had a long term objective, to earn a lot of money through running a business, but did not express any strong idea of how he was going to manage that. One of the issues that Tony Watts highlights in his study is that young people have longer term goals but are not given the guidance to challenge those goals or to find a means of achieving them (Watts 2009). He envisaged going to university but was unsure of what to study and felt he responded best to having monetary incentives. These seem like fragments of a picture that Participant E may need advice and help to put together.

Government Policy since 1997

New Labour came to power in 1997 with an agenda of making the education system fairer. They did this by enabling anybody who was academically able and sufficiently motivated to succeed at university to have the opportunity to take up a university place. Subsequently for many young people this has become the only route, with any esteem, open to them. This has had several possibly unforeseen effects. Since the most common method of

— gaining entry to university is through college or 6th form academic study it is assumed by many young people that they will follow an academic pathway. School sixth forms predominantly ask for five GCSEs at grades C or above to be accepted onto a sixth form course. Apprenticeships for what used to be National Certificate and Diploma courses also require five GCSEs at grades C or above. The social norm however has become for young people with five GCSEs at grade C or above to stay on at school, or sixth form college. It takes real motivation for a young person with GCSE qualifications to leave school and often they are put under pressure by the school to stay. The loss of able pupils to take on skilled apprenticeships in engineering or construction trades, for example is one example of this, and has caused problems of skills shortages in some areas, (Pring, 2005).

For some young people all this serves to do is to defer the decision-making process, for the years of sixth form study and beyond to degree level study. As William Damon notes in his (2008) article 'The Young and The Restless, 'their delay is characterized [sic] more by indecision than by motivated reflection, more by confusion than by the pursuit of clear goals, more by ambivalence than by determination', (2008, online article). Participant C reflects on some of his contemporaries with

bewilderment. For some young people, however, the push for academic qualification may be to the detriment of other skills and interests that they may possess.

Discussion of research questions

I have previously described my research questions as being open-ended in order to facilitate the development of knowledge rather than offer a hypothesis to be proved or disproved.

The main question I was sought to address through this piece of research was to establish how the experience of growing up in a rural community might impact on a young person's identity and future aspirations.

It would appear that growing up in a rural community does have an influence on young people. This is not necessarily related to the physical geography of the place although all participants express regret at having to leave somewhere so beautiful.

Expressions of guilt and ingratitude seem to prevail, as Participant D says, 'Who would not want to live in a place like this', (Participant D). It seems that the participants feel a degree of attachment to their communities, to the fells and to the way of life, Participant C talks about watching the agricultural work that goes on in his village.

The ageing population, the fact that there may be no other young people the same age in the village, the travel and transport difficulties which mean that independence from adults can be deferred are all features of rural living. Similarly tasks like walking down to the local shop or post office on a small errand cannot happen in these communities because the shop or post office no longer exists. The over-reliance on electronic gaming, television and computing all play their part as these are the ways in which isolated youth growing up in rural communities find themselves spending their time whether playing alone or networking through broadband technology.

The participants in this study had aspirations that might be expected anywhere. They did not want to stay locally in their immediate future for a variety of reasons, none of which was wholly related to the paucity of educational opportunities in Cumbria. Although lack of work or educational opportunities is often cited as a reason for leaving the area this is not the case for these participants. All are seeking a degree of independence and an opportunity to carry out the basic tasks of life, such as shopping and socialising for themselves. They see higher education, as a vehicle that legitimately facilitates their

movement away from the area, as an opportunity that they must grasp.

This leads on to my final research question which concerned the skills young people might demonstrate in taking part in this research and what skills could be developed to help them take responsibility for making decisions about their own futures.

Participant C demonstrated that he had used his reflective skills, developed through his writing and interest in literature, philosophy and ideas, to think about himself and what he wanted from life. He was also keen to articulate his thoughts, which is in itself a skill. Participant C appeared to have a degree of self confidence and belief in himself, he saw himself as an agent with a lot of power over his future outcomes.

Participant D was also able to talk about himself and his feelings, his response to experiences and situations. He talked about his ambitions but also reflected that the opinions of others in his community, family, friends, co-workers, was important to him. Though perhaps not as focused on his role as his own agent he appeared to be working towards this through his active engagement with work, study and football.

Both participants had enjoyed carrying out the task and the interview and had found it an interesting and helpful exercise in clarifying their thoughts.

Participant E was the youngest of the participants and this may be reflected in the difficulty he seemed to find in expressing his thoughts. Partly this may have been because his thoughts were relatively unformed, possibly this was because he wanted to show me images that he thought I would want to see. His discourse about his future plans was vague with goals but no path of how to achieve these goals. This may be a developmental issue as suggested by Marcia (1966) or part of his identity style, as suggested by Berzonsky (1990). Alternatively, it could be that Participant E has not yet become engaged with thinking about his future in a way that the older participants have.

Analysis of the interviews with the participants revealed several areas of commonality that were of considerable importance to how they see themselves now and how they visualise themselves in the future. The notion of 'community' for instance has a bearing on young people's happiness in the present and in the future.

Community is more than the collection of family and neighbours that the participants find themselves living alongside. For the young people interviewed here 'community' not only includes links made through school, sporting and locality connections but can also include on-line, social and cultural contacts. From all the participants there appeared to be a movement out from family and towards a sense of reaching toward and belonging to a wider community. The new community was one that they had selected or sought to find for themselves through the pursuit of hobbies, interests and activities. Whether these organisations or *ad hoc* groupings recognise that they are part of a community or acknowledge that they may have any responsibility concerning young people in their communities has not been discussed here and may be an area that merits further investigation.

Community belonging through involvement in sport, predominantly team sports such as football and rugby, is something that has been introduced by all the participants. For the majority of the participants the involvement in sport, though enjoyable, is a means to an end. These participants are not so much interested in playing for a team or playing and winning matches, but in taking part in an activity together with others. This appears to be a crucial part of life for the young men who took part in the research as it offers them an opportunity to be sociable and make new friends in a culturally-appropriate setting.

The issue of social class did present itself but was rejected by this researcher. My participants may have had a 'middle- class' label imposed upon them by other researchers but that does not recognise how they would have defined themselves. Two of my

main study participants were very proud of their working-class roots and at least one of them would have fiercely declared himself to be working-class although the earning power of his parents and their level of education, as well as his own achievements would have suggested otherwise. The concept of 'working-class' appears to be changing within British culture at the moment and values and goals that would once have been ascribed to working-classes may not be universally recognised as such.

The idea of the Protestant work ethic was so clearly described by two of my main study participants that I used this as an alternative description to social class. I think that it was more appropriate and relevant to consider the values espoused by my participants than to examine other traditional methods of determining social class. Values expressed by Participants C and D included striving to improve their performance, a need for become self sufficient or independent, thriftiness as well as the valuing of effort and learning as a means of living a full life. All participants expressed a desire to have families that they could provide for in the future.

I suggest that it is adherence to this set of ethical considerations for the manner with which a young person engages with the world that is of significance when considering choices concerning the future.

The importance of building on experiences and recognising that all experiences offer an opportunity for learning should be stressed. When talking about their future plans all the participants talked about previous experiences although these

had not all happened through school and education. Experiences can be catalysing for some young people; having sampled exotic foreign travel and hoping to repeat that experience Participant E is considering finding a career that will afford the financial rewards needed to have those sort of holidays or a career that will involve him in overseas travel. Participant D acknowledges that he is not skilled enough to become a professional sportsman but identifies skills and interests that may keep him involved in sport through career and study options.

Finally I wish to consider the issue of rurality. It appears that for the participants interviewed in this piece of research rurality is not greatly important. In the 21st century, Britain, and Europe are relatively accessible; telecommunication systems make it easy to stay in touch and find out what is happening on the other side of the world. Living in a rural community can be a pleasant and rewarding experience for some and an isolating, oppressive experience for others. This has less to do with growing up in a sparsely-populated location than it has to do with the nature of the community inhabiting that locality. In other words if the community is exclusive, unwelcoming and divisive then the experiences of young people growing up there will be poorer than those who are included, welcomed and involved in their community.

It is possible that socio-economic and cultural factors can make living in a rural community expensive and prolong dependence for young people. However the effect of bonding social capital, is as significant in the lives of urban young people (Green & White, 2007), as it is in the lives of those growing up in rural communities. Similarly although it may be difficult to obtain a

range of experiences in rural communities some urban communities may be more socially-stratified which excludes some young people from work and leisure experiences.

Critique of the Methodology

- The methodology and methods chosen are discussed and*
- *observations made concerning future studies. Reflection upon the findings with respect to the methods used is included.*

Consideration is given to the validity and transparency of the study.

Having completed the research and the analysis it is important to consider whether the methodological approach selected was effective, whether the data collection methods chosen were appropriate and whether the data collected and analysed provided any insight into the lived experiences of young men growing up in rural areas.

Sample

- I used a purposive sample of three homogeneous participants for my main study and although hoping for a self selecting sample in my pilot study had had my pilot participants preselected by school for an unvoiced reason. There were interesting methodological outcomes from each sample; the older, main study,
- participants were more relaxed, more holistic in their approach to

the photographs and more forthcoming about their perceptions and interpretations than the pilot study boys. As I personally knew all of the main study boys as members of my wider community I acknowledge that they may have tailored their discourse as to what was appropriate for an adult female, acquaintance of their parents or neighbour, to hear. The pilot study participants did not know me as part of their living community. For them I was part of the school community and perceived, perhaps, as only being interested in school matters.

— Much of the dialogue from these boys concerned school. It may have been that these participants were conscious that they were representing the school, had been specially selected by the head teacher and were keen to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. Equally their thoughts about their lives and school could have been the most important things to them at the time that the research was conducted.

I had consciously chosen not to conduct focus groups because of the potential for inter-group bias and concerns for what might have arisen from participants. This could have been particularly problematic over issues of sexuality, work aspiration and discussions around personal beliefs and feelings. Much research literature reports how important it is for young people to feel part

of a group and have a group identity, subscribe to group norms. From reading the background literature concerning visibility within rural communities (Ni Loaire, 2000; Shucksmith, 2004) I was aware that any disagreement or deviation from the collective 'norm' may have had repercussions for dissenting focus group members.

Not knowing the sensitivities of the rural communities in which I was carrying out my research it is possible that any disclosure that did not fit with accepted local views would not have been voiced by participants for fear of reprisals.

After the pilot study I decided to offer the main study participants a choice of where I would conduct their interviews. All participants opted to be interviewed in their own homes. I saw all participants during the afternoon or early evening and on each occasion I was greeted by the participant's mother. Although interviewing in the participant's home had the benefit of taking the participant out of the school environment, which seemed to be important in the interviews I had carried out with the pilot study participants, it is possible that the participants were conscious of the parent in the background busily going about her business.

- Perhaps it is too difficult to find a totally neutral place in which to carry out interviews without putting the participants at a disadvantage. By giving them the option of where they were interviewed I think that the participants were able to feel at ease during the interview and secure by being in their own familiar surroundings.

Photo-elicitation interviews

I thought that the use of photographs was effective although I would insist on disposable cameras in future as I think the sorting of the photographs refreshes the participant's mind as to why they took it. The purpose of using the cameras and photographs was to try to create a fresh insight or 'hot' cognition. It also gave the participant an opportunity to stand apart from the image and consider it in a distinct way, not objective but separate.

The photographs were a good medium for the participants to express themselves through and the cameras were an easy,

- accessible technology to use requiring no training. I think it made the task of reflecting on themselves easier for the participants,

particularly those less familiar with introspective reflection, especially since they had selected the images they were to talk about.

Semi-structured Interview.

The semi-structured interview offered the opportunity to consider in more detail some of the answers the participants had offered during the photo-elicitation interview. During the pilot interviews the supplementary questions were not as rigorous as during the main study interviews and I was able to tighten the semi structured interview questions after the pilot study.

I added a final question to my interview schedule during the first main study interview. It concerned the participants' views of taking part in the research which I felt might be an interesting dimension to consider. Unfortunately because this was added at the last minute I think that it could have been a tighter question which would have provided a more comprehensive insight into the participant's view of carrying out the reflective work.

The use of semi structured interviews worked well as I was able to respond to my participants' statements, to seek clarification or

to encourage them to expand an idea. Some of the participants, notably Participants C and D, found rephrasing or developing an idea relatively easy whereas Participant E found it more difficult to expand upon his ideas. For instance when I asked him to what he meant by 'interesting' in relation to his stated wish to 'meeting interesting people,' he found it difficult to clarify exactly what it was that made a person interesting to him. This may have been because he had not really considered what he was saying and what, on the surface, seemed to be a reasonable statement was actually too complicated for him to explain.

Analysis

I chose to use IPA for the reasons already documented. IPA offers an opportunity to carry out collaborative research with the participants. The ensuing discourse provided through answering open questions gives better understanding of a phenomenon or situation. I found it difficult on occasion to travel around the hermeneutic circle (Tietz, 1994, Finlay 2003), particularly with Participant E.

I realised that I was able identify with elements of what participants C and D were saying as they seemed to fit with my

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own view of the world. I agreed with Participant C's belief in hard work, little debt and self-sufficiency and totally understood Participant D's frustration at his lack of independence and his need to try out new ideas.

I realised then that my standpoint was becoming obstructive to my understanding of how Participant E was perceiving and interpreting his world. I think this is because his lifeworld appeared to be more concerned with the material, being incentivised and earning a lot of money than the other main study participants. I had found the protestant work ethic espoused by Participants C and D much more in tune with my own personal constructs, believing that a person earns what they work for. Some of the language used by Participants C and D was not present in Participant E's dialogue; strive, urge, a notion of struggling and fighting to achieve rather than expectations of reward, the acquisition of possessions and a desire to have more than a person needs which seemed to be present with Participant E.

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Although IPA does not require the researcher to be objective, it does require the researcher to be sympathetic to the participant. This I found very difficult at times. It is important as a

researcher to acknowledge and recognise any ambivalence and to consider oneself as an active agent within the research process.

The interview with participant E was relatively stilted, and did not offer very much in the way of elaboration of ideas, exploration of responses to questions or developing his thoughts around his photographs. This could have been because of his relative youth compared to the other two participants or he could have picked up on any of my unconscious reaction to some of his answers.

Another area of difficulty with IPA that I found was that the quality of the discourse depended to some extent on the ability of the interviewee to express himself verbally. Participants C and D had an idiosyncratic use of language, occasionally using extreme forms of some words to express meaning. I wonder whether this is concerned with modern patois and how young people speak generally or whether there was real significance to some of the words they used; I question whether I am excluded from knowing its meaning through being a mature woman.

I am sure that it is not a coincidence that the most comprehensive interview was given by the person who is at his most comfortable thinking about ideas, writing ideas,

constructing meaning by a skilful juxtaposition of words and using symbolism to express the duality of meaning.

Appropriate methods for the participants?

I was interested in finding out whether the use of photographs was an appropriate methodology to use with young people. I think that the use of photographs and image finding was a successful approach to take in facilitating discussion and enabling the participants to think about the images they wanted to use. Some participants found it difficult to find images that represented how they wanted to be in the future and that related to their aspirations. Some participants only thought of their futures in terms of where they would be living and what work they might be doing whereas others took the long view of not only their immediate future with regard to education work or training but also the aspirations around family life in the more distant future.

IPA offers a method for exploring people's insights into their lifeworld. It is about how they make meaning out of their experiences and how they cognitively analyse and make sense of what is happening to them usually focussing on very specific, and to some extent discrete, situations. IPA requires participants

to be able to express themselves and convey their ideas through the use of spoken language. I think that this could be problematic for some young people who are not used to being asked to think about themselves and who are not used to expressing their interior life to a stranger. In this study it was important to focus on the research as a piece of research, rather than as a therapeutic intervention. I think this method of working could become a therapeutic tool. The exploration of feelings and ideas not previously voiced or reflected on offered some of the participants an experience that they had not had before and they described as being helpful. Although it was not my intention to be 'helpful' it seemed that for some young people the opportunity to think and talk about themselves in the manner offered by IPA was a positive experience.

Another research sub-question was concerned with finding out whether the young people I researched with could be engaged with to reflect on their lives and experiences. From the interviews and photographs obtained it would seem that my participants were able to think about their lives, their experiences and their hopes for the future and reflect on them. Some participants were more adept at this than others. The participants who were used to offering an emotional response to a stimulus, such as those

engaged in literature studies and creative projects appeared to find the tasks easier and more enjoyable to complete.

The research question was explored and the participants were able to reflect on their life worlds, make observations about their own situations and describe their experiences.

The methodology and methods chosen are discussed and observations made concerning future studies. Reflection upon the findings with respect to the methods used is included.

Consideration is given to the transparency of the study.

Conclusion

This section summarizes the findings of the three participants and considers them from several angles. The first area of discussion considers the themes that have emerged from each participant, the second concerned how the findings relate to the literature review and the third how the findings relate to the research question. Consideration is given to the methods used. The research question is answered.

Research Questions

This piece of research has been case study based and has sought to illuminate, rather than to offer generalisable hypotheses. The conclusions drawn here relate to observations and data analysis from these case studies in relation to the extant literature.

*The notion that growing up in a rural community can be disadvantageous for some young people is generally supported by the literature, (Shucksmith, 2004; Glendinning *et al*, 2003; Mathews *et al*, 2000) around this topic. The young people involved did not perceive many disadvantages, as such, although there were features of rural life that frustrated them. These features were predominantly concerned with being isolated and*

dependent, through poor transport availability, and the relative lack of peers in their immediate locality.

It may be that from living through the experience of growing up in a rural community the participants accept what they cannot change and have always known. It could be, as Participant C suggests, that those dissatisfied with rural living are overly influenced by a media which portrays a different aspect of adolescence to one with which these participants are familiar. The other view of adolescence presented through the media has more focus on the knife crime, binge drinking and feckless behaviour than these young people have experienced. Whilst not denying that rural communities can have problems with anti-social behaviour, particularly in relation to domestic violence and drug and alcohol misuse, this is not something that is solely attributed to young people and was not evident from my research.

As described in the existing literature, (Ni Loaire, 2000; Shucksmith, 2004; Glendinning *et al*, 2003), lack of opportunities for employment, socialising and playing a valued role in the life of the local community are evident. Participant D has weekend work in his local pub. He admits that if he had not found work within his village with the only employer in his village

he would not have had any work experience at all. He also reflects on how his part time job has helped him grow as an individual, feel proud of his achievements and have sociable interactions with others in his community.

With pubs, post offices and shops closing in rural communities there are fewer and fewer opportunities for part-time working for those still involved in education when for many work opportunities a young person may find themselves competing with adults also seeking part-time work.

The participants ably demonstrated that they were competent to carry out the tasks required of them by the research methodology. The main study participants were pupils who had, in the main, already experienced academic success at some level. They presented as confident, young people doing well at school and reasonably articulate. It was interesting to note that the participants had found the research to be interesting in the way it encouraged them to think and talk about themselves and experience themselves in a different way.

Through taking part in the research the participants demonstrated a number of skills including the ability to reflect on

their lives and experiences. The skill to express themselves orally and visually through the use of photographs was also in evidence as was the skill of selecting topics to talk about in relation to their photographs. The act of editing, selecting and ordering photographs with which to illustrate their lives and future ambitions required organisation, self awareness and some decision making skills. Questioning, seeking answers for themselves and making meaning out of the images they had selected were also skills that were used as part of the research process.

Themes emerging from the research

The themes raised by the participants were wide ranging in their scope from the pilot study participants' interest in possessions through to the theme of sport and socialising through sport as well as the focus on the geography of their lives.

Although themes had been predicted to some extent by the literature around young people, rural life and aspiration there were nevertheless new themes to emerge. Participant C talked about his desire to work hard and be rewarded for it, to live ethically and to be free of debt. Participant D described his

struggles between his perceived need to leave the area and his guilt or ingratitude expressed by thinking of leaving. Participant E demonstrated why electronic gadgetry and gaming can be important as a social activity between young people in isolated communities. All the participants described experiences that were important to them and had helped shape their ideas about themselves and their futures. Participant D had been helped by having siblings and close relatives who had already lived an urban life, been to university and were holding down the sort of job to which he aspired. Participant E was open to new experiences and had recently returned from a visit with his aunt to Thailand and spent some time with her at work. He was still making sense of these experiences and sorting through which elements he wanted in his life, such as travelling and finding out about the world, and those he did not want, such as being a front line soldier.

Participant C described his experiences as a writer and performer of poetry and expressed a need to meet up with more like-minded people with whom he could discuss issues of philosophy, politics and literature. For Participant C the themes of thinking and being intelligent were a key part of his identity and how he saw himself. He identified a need in himself to go away from his home

— environment and develop himself intellectually through engagement in academic study and debate. There were themes relating to momentum and inertia with an overall feeling of being caught up in something dynamic particularly for participants C and D. Participants C and D also described themes relating to the (Protestant) work ethic.

Aspirations for the future were discussed by all the participants. They ranged from the vague, goal-orientated aspirations of Participant E who wished to become wealthy and be happy. Happiness was a goal for all the main study participants some of whom went on to describe what happiness or being happy meant to them. Whilst no one would expect to find unhappiness as a goal it is interesting that 'being happy' is a stated goal. This corresponds with research into adolescent well-being (Bourke & Geldens, 2006; Layard 2008) which identified happiness as a key component of subjective well-being. On the other hand the participants were also able to reflect on the areas that impair their feelings of well-being.

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Methodology

The methodology chosen for this study worked well with the participants selected. A purposive, homogeneous sample was used and the participants coped well with the tasks and generally enjoyed taking part in the study. The sample was homogeneous in ways that I had not recognised and accounted for before I – began the research particularly relating to family background, parental expectations and parental experiences around education. Since the parents were not interviewed these strands were inferred from the data offered by the participants.

The methods used were not without difficulties, particularly the method of analysis. On occasion I found it difficult to stand alongside some of the participants and appreciate their view of their lifeworld. Instead of the research being about them, the participants, it became about me, the researcher. It would be very easy to put oneself as the researcher at the centre of the research. Instead of shedding light on the lived experience of the participants it would, at times, seem to be focused more on the lifeworld of the researcher. As the researcher it was important to acknowledge my feelings through a reflexive diary and to reflect upon those feelings. I found that experiences and reflections that echoed my own were more likely to find acceptance by myself as

the researcher. For example I am conscious that I perceive an inertia and complacency about living in the countryside and so saw, and perhaps, unconsciously sought, some recognition of those perceptulons in some of the statements made by the participants, particularly participants C and D.

Because IPA makes no claims at offering an objective perspective it is perhaps an honest way of looking at data. The researcher acknowledges their position, recognises their prejudices and constructs and reflects on those as part of the analysis process. Similarly when two individuals interact, whatever the circumstances, there is a reaction made at a personal level. This is recognised through IPA rather than unacknowledged.

The use of cameras and photographs was worthwhile and it was interesting to note where this technique was at its most potent when the participants were given all their photographs and asked to sort them. When the more modern technology of digital cameras was used the resulting discussion around those photographs was not as informative. This could have been for several reasons; the participant who had used the digital camera was not as reflective in discussing his lifeworld as the other participants. Equally, the photographs had been chosen and

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edited well before the interview; the participant had selected photographs for their technical merit, as photographs, rather than from the meanings they represented.

With Participant C the photographs had been staged, almost as if he had planned what he was going to say in his interview by what he had included in his photographs. Participant C was very comfortable thinking about his lived experiences, he remarked that the only aspect of his life he had not previously considered was why he was so driven to achieve.

Themes from this data and the literature

Some of the themes that were generated by this data chimed with findings in the existing literature. This was particularly accurate when describing how young people felt themselves to be disadvantaged by the difficulties with transport and their relative isolation from others their own age. The bleak prospects identified by Glendinning *et al* (2003) and Shucksmith (2001, 2004) were less evident however, with the participants able to identify what they liked about living in a rural environment. The concept of attachment to place, as outlined by Tuan (1974) seemed to be relevant to the participants in that their perceptions

of the area they lived were overwhelmingly positive, reflecting their positive experiences of growing up in their communities.

In the findings there was evidence of the on-going debate around identity with some participants seeming to fall into Marcia's ego identity categories and others demonstrating aspects of Rattansi and Phoenix's (2005), theories on multiple identities depending on the circumstances. There was also evidence of group identities and that some participants were seeking to be part of a social group with which they could identify themselves. This took the shape of Participant C hoping to find young philosophers at university and Participant D needing to be part of an adult football team.

Rather than echoing national and local government concerns about low aspiration all of the main study participants demonstrated that they were motivated to aspire and achieve academically and economically despite the difficulties and upheavals that that would entail. In fact for the older two participants they were relishing those upheavals and the opportunity to make their own way.

For the participants aspiration was not solely concerned with progress through learning and earning, these participants aspired to social and emotional well-being, through forming relationships and having families of their own. They also talked about wider ethical concepts, such as inhabiting the planet fairly. The participants talked about aspirations that do not seem to be generally recognised by policy makers.

As suggested by Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000) experiences are very important to the participants when thinking about themselves and who they want to be. When talking about themselves in the future the main study participants built their aspirations around their previous experiences, not necessarily their school-related experiences. Experience of travel, being with friends and leisure activities appear to be as important for the participants as any school or work-related experiences they may have had.

Participants also appear to have a strong idea about what constitutes happiness and to some extent are able to describe what happiness means to them. Their willingness to set goals, develop strong friendships and maintain healthy family

relationships is important for ideas of subjective well-being and happiness.

Although the participants live in a rural area this is the norm in Cumbria, everybody lives in a rural area. It seems that because the environment and to some extent the experiences of growing up in the rural environment are the only experiences that the participants have they accept them rather than question how it could be different. Although there is an understanding that life is different in urban environments, particularly metropolitan cities, there does not seem to be a desire to bring some of these elements into the rural community. The participants cannot imagine any change within this rural community which might encourage them to stay. All the participants aspire to following higher education course but discount higher education in Cumbria. Whilst Participant C is quite dismissive of the University of Cumbria, a new university created from the amalgamation of smaller specialist institutions, on academic grounds, Participant E dismisses it out of hand without knowing what is on offer there. Similarly Participant D rejects the notion of Cumbria although they offer a journalism course that may be of interest to him.

This suggests that 'going to university' appears to offer a transition opportunity above and beyond higher level academic study. Some of the participants acknowledge this by talking about the sorts of things they will do, such as shopping for themselves and cooking, when they are more independent. Since, in this area, they could shop for themselves and live in Carlisle or Ambleside the idea of going away to university is about more than those acknowledged steps towards independence. It is unvoiced by the participants who perhaps do not know, or are unprepared to discuss, what they are hoping for by leaving the countryside. Perhaps going to university fulfils the requirements as a rite of passage for young people in the 21st century in a way that National Service was at the beginning of the previous century.

This section pulled together the findings of the three participants and considered them from several angles. The first area of discussion considered the themes that emerged from each participant, the second concerned how the findings related to the literature review and the third how the findings related to the research question. Consideration was given to the methods used. Finally the research question was answered.

Implications

Implications arising from the research, literature review and current policy are considered. Suggestions are made for ways in which educational psychologists could work with young people around the area of transition in the future. Opportunities for multi-agency working are considered. Finally areas for future research are suggested.

Political

– The 14-19 Agenda

The much heralded education reforms, for young people aged between 14 and 19, boasting diplomas as viable alternatives to A level and opportunities for more young people to stay in learning seems to have hit a sticking point in the economic downturn of 2009. Recent stories have run in the press, (TES, 2009) and at teachers' conferences (NAHT, 2009) highlighting the cutting of funding for those planning to go on to further education and sixth form colleges. Because of uncertainty in the labour market, and a perceived reluctance by employers to offer training placements or take on new staff, more young people are choosing to stay in education than had been anticipated.

In their paper on how 14-19 reforms were going to be delivered in rural areas (Public Accounts Committee, 2008) committee members concluded that 'Providing the Teaching and facilities to support the broad curriculum is particularly difficult in rural areas with dispersed communities', (p5). This conclusion is in contrast to the aim stated within the body of the report that 'Diplomas should be available to all young people no matter where they live', (p8).

The Government has recognised the cost implication of trying to roll out their 14-19 reforms to young people in rural areas and has produced a report specifically focused on the difficulties this will entail. Jim Knight MP in the final report Delivering 14-19 Reforms in Rural Communities (2008) has considered many of the problems that schools, colleges and young people are going to encounter. 'The challenges are well understood' he comments '...dispersed populations, less well developed transport infrastructures; and more, micro and small businesses' (p3). The diploma programme calls for a range of opportunities involving businesses and further education colleges as well as schools and sixth form colleges. In rural areas there are relatively few employers who might be able to offer a work-based placement or

an apprenticeship. Participant D in this study, for example, has succeeded in securing work in the kitchen of the village pub. The village pub is the only employer in his village and is not usually — open during school hours.

The report goes on to highlight two essential components that will make the 14-19 reforms successful; one is ensuring access to the provision and the other is securing sufficient employer involvement to make the reforms work (DCSF, 2008). In the present climate of economic uncertainty when unemployment figures are estimated to rise above three million and consumers do not have the spending capability they once did, it seems likely that rural enterprises and small businesses may suffer most (Walton, 2009).

In a press notice from the Federation of Small Businesses Linda Walton, their president remarks;

'Small firms are crucial for the survival of village communities and the death of one small firm can have a devastating impact on the local area. Over 40 per cent of all businesses surveyed depend on one or more sole food shop, general store, petrol station, post office or pub in their local community.' (Walton 2009).

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Of the participants in my research one was interested in seeking work or training locally, rather than continuing in full time education, but there was an understanding that after GCSEs further learning was necessary for all of the participants in one form or another.

The three main study participants had all decided to take a higher education route after completing Year 12 and 13 studies. Apart from Participant C, who was awaiting his A level results at the time of interview, there was no mention given to alternative courses if final exam grades were not as expected or hoped for. Participant C did say that he would be either working or studying whereas Participants D and E were certain that they would be studying even though they were unsure of what they would be studying or where. It seems that for some young people going on to university is 'what you do', Participant C observed, with no other purpose than to leave home.

Every Child Matters Outcomes for young people

Be healthy

Being healthy is perhaps, on the surface, the most straightforward of the five ECM outcomes and it is worth exploring further with regard to the data generated by the

research participants in this study in light of recent literature. In the UK there have been great moves through health promotion activities to promote healthier eating and exercise programmes, to inform young people about the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse and to advise on sexual health matters. Nevertheless concerns about childhood obesity and eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia seem to be on the increase. Binge drinking and the anti-social behaviour that can result from it, together with increases in mental health disorders and a rise knife crime suggest that all is not well.

In the data generated by the participants in this study they consider having strong social ties and taking part in physical or creative activity as a measure of healthiness. For all the participants it seems that friends, physical activity and having — something positive to do, through paid employment, sport or music making and other creative activities helps to create a positive feeling of well-being.

Stay safe

It seems as though there may be some overlaps between staying safe and being healthy, particularly when it comes to health

behaviours. Being safe is more related to young people being safe from being exploited or maltreated and safe within their family and wider community.

Although some of the participants seem to feel that they are safe and able to play a role within the wider community this is not the case for all of them. Participant E suggests that some parts of town, Carlisle, are not safe for instance. It may be that anybody would find this to be the case or it could be that Participant E perceives it as not being safe because he has limited experience of being out in town independently. Equally what he defines as safe and unsafe may not be the same for another person of a similar age.

Whilst in rural areas there is high visibility of strangers and newcomers into a community, greater threats to personal safety come in the form of domestic violence and road traffic dangers.

The participants appear to feel that they are safe within their communities.

Enjoy and Achieve

The 'enjoy and achieve' objectives relate closely to schools and school life. Enjoyment through being engaged in relevant, interesting lessons appropriately taught to an individualised learning plan and able to access non-academic activities which promote a sense of achievement and well-being are pre-requisite, (Layard 2009, Highland Council Education, Culture & Sport Service, 2009) .

A difficulty for rural schools comes in subject viability. These schools may not be able to offer the range of subjects at GCSE or Advanced level because they do not have sufficient staff, with appropriate subject knowledge or interest, to teach them. Out of school activities may prove difficult to offer due to having a smaller pool of adults to call on. Equally, the transport issue raises itself again in that many pupils take a bus to and from school which always leaves at the end of the school day. The outcome 'enjoy and achieve' appears to be more focused on achieving than making life and learning enjoyable although, as can be seen from previous literature and the data from this study, the enjoyment element is crucial to young people's feelings of well-being and motivation to learn.

Make a positive contribution

The young people in this study talked about making a positive contribution through involvement in family life, sport activities and involvement in environmental and community projects.

Previous research tells us that young people do entertain certain aspects of community life. These may not include the traditional community roles of local politics, civic responsibility and involvement with the church but are more likely to involve protection of the environment, civil liberties and activities. Whilst the positive contribution strands of ECM seem to be largely concerned with promoting learning and earning potential, presumably in order to encourage a positive tax contribution in later life, there are aspects of this outcome that could appeal to the idealist nature of some young people and offer them the opportunity to be recognised as active agents of good in their community rather than an unruly, unreliable element that needs to be contained.

Achieve economic well-being

As a concept economic well-being appears to be acceptable. From the research into subjective well-being by Bourke and Geldens (2006) however it seems that 'pressure' is one of the factors that detracts from the well-being of young people.

— Although initially proposed as outcomes for children and young people the interpretation of the ECM outcomes does not seem to have been done with the young person at the centre. It is government's priorities to increase the skills base and enhance equality of opportunity and access to learning and training.

Work of Psychologists

Considering the amount of change that has taken place in secondary education and training over the last decade and more it is surprising that there is not more involvement by educational psychologists in working with the fourteen to nineteen age group. When the number of important factors such as well-being, positive activity and future orientation are under consideration there should be closer involvement for psychological services in making sure that the young people involved in making important, potentially life-changing choices have developed the appropriate skills to be able to do so with confidence.

— Educational psychologists are uniquely positioned to help young people and emerging adults develop personal skills which they can carry with them beyond the classroom. Through the use of a range of eclectic psychological interventions it is possible to equip

young people with tools to facilitate them finding out about whom they are and who they want to be. Current education policy assumes that young people already have access to this information without the assistance of skilled practitioners and that it is not only possible, but probable for a young person to have the self awareness to make important decisions about their life path without additional guidance. Using positive psychology to look at the successful elements of transition could be another way of empowering young people to help themselves.

One of the basic tenets of careers education and guidance over the past century has concerned the young person having self-awareness, (Law & Watts, 1977). Knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, values, dispositions and abilities is crucial to young people being able to make decisions about themselves. One task for educational psychologists could be to help young people to develop self-awareness. We, as educational psychologists, have a range of tools and interventions that could be used with young people: narrative therapy, using personal construct psychology, coaching approaches and guided reflection.

A narrative approach might involve the young person in telling their own story, using whatever media they choose. Using a visual, verbal, dramatic musical or mixed media approach might

be the method preferred by the young person when working through their story. Through the process of telling the story the young person could be helped, by a skilled practitioner to identify core beliefs.

Similarly through using tools and skills designed to elicit a young person's personal constructs a degree of self exploration could be encouraged. The development of a coaching relationship with an individual or group of youngsters which combines mentoring, counselling and advocacy, and exploration, is another way in which an educational psychologist could facilitate young people developing their self awareness. The ability to reflect on experiences in and outside school should be encouraged in order to help young people to become more self aware.

Reflecting on an experience could help young people deconstruct the experience and find out something about themselves. What may have seemed to be a superficial experience of, say, baby-sitting could be analysed into different components and each component reflected upon. This is like competency profiling in solution oriented work, (D.Lumsdon, 2008, personal communication). The young person may not have liked the experience of being responsible for a distressed child, for

— example, but found that they had the skills to cope when that child had a nose bleed. They may have liked reading, or making up a bed time story but did not like having to be firm about going to bed. These revelations that a young person has about themselves could be further reflected on to find some core construct about the individual. Many experiences can afford young people the opportunity to explore themselves further if they can be given the skills to carry out the exploration.

Rather than match young people to careers, the role of professionals involved in transition to post-compulsory education should involve encouraging young people to identify and construct a portfolio of skills, experiences and attributes that could be useful in a variety of vocational and educational settings.

— It seems that educational psychologists as skilled practitioners are equipped to facilitate young people to develop skills that they can use in a variety of situations. Input from an educational psychologist would enable a young person to think and reflect about themselves in a focused way, and equip them with tools to carry out this type of reflective, evaluative task throughout their life.

This is personal work that a young person may or may not be inclined to share with peers or an adult. The use of appropriately secure technology may offer a way ahead. Young people could be – encouraged to record their thoughts, feelings and reflections in such a way that they could be referred to at a later date.

The role for educational psychologists might be to facilitate training for Connexions personnel, personal advisors, learning mentors and other non-teaching staff who may be involved in the pastoral well-being of young people.

Since educational psychologists are a scarce resource it seems unlikely that this work would be carried out directly by educational psychologists with young people. A more likely scenario is that educational psychologists will be involved in training or facilitating other agents to deliver this work, whilst having direct involvement with young people whose transitions are complicated by additional factors.

One of the most important roles an educational psychologist could play would be that of critical friend, or young person's advocate, particularly in a time of economic hardship, when it

seems possible that economic and financial demands may take priority over the needs of children and young people.

Opportunities for multi-agency working

Within the 14-19 framework and beyond there are opportunities for agencies to work together to further the experiences of this age group. As well as the traditional agencies involved in schools such as Connexions, there could be a move to involve a wider variety of outside agency.

Multi-agency working has come to have a specific meaning within local authorities and agencies involved with children and young people. In the language of the day multi agency working means a close working relationship between professionals from education, health and social care who may all be working with the same child, young person or family.

It would be refreshing to move beyond the agencies that tend to become involved with young people when things begin to go wrong for them, CAMHS, Behaviour Support, Youth Justice teams for example and to encourage third sector and voluntary agencies to become engaged in offering preventative and positive interventions or developmental opportunities to those who want to take them.

Research tells us that many young people are interested in 'issue-based' politics, such as the environment or globalisation and are also highly interested in local issues that directly affect them or their environment (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Taylor, 2008). There may be young people who would be keen to volunteer for various projects if they appealed to them in some way. In order to obtain youth involvement with the community the community should look for opportunities to involve its young people, particularly where young people may not previously have had a voice, such as on Parish Council or about how they would like to be policed, for example.

It might be possible for educational psychologists to work with other agencies involved in supporting young people through this phase of their development by developing strategies built on successful transitions. These agencies may be within the usual local authority and health agencies but has the potential to include community and voluntary agencies too in order to afford the maximum benefit to young people.

Further areas of research

- This piece of research has been concerned with exploring the issues around aspiration, identity and transition for young men

growing up in rural areas. Although this research was focused on finding out young people's views of their situation as the research progressed I became aware of groups of young people who might have different perceptions of what growing up in a rural community might be like.

Academic literature accessed as part of the literature review suggest that transition, identity-finding and aspiration might be more complex for young women growing up in rural communities than for young men. Similarly young people exploring their sexual identity may find growing up in rural communities more challenging than has been evident in this study.

Another group of young people that would be interesting to research with would include those for whom the rural community really is where their history and roots lie; the young people who can trace their ancestors back through several generations. The participants in this study were purposely chosen and would appear to be quite high academic achievers. Further research with young people unlikely to achieve the academic grades that would allow them to leave the community may produce interesting results.

A study with a wider scope than the current research would be interesting particularly with regard to the aspirations of teachers and parents for the young people in these communities.

Through the themes generated by the participants during their interviews and reflections the emergence of the importance of sport in their lives became apparent. Further areas of research could focus on looking at the importance of sport and other social activities that are important for male friendships. Research concerning the notion of going to university as a rite of passage might also offer insights into the thinking and development of this group of young people. Has 'going to university' become a stage of life that must be passed through in order to achieve a certain status and if so what are the alternative processes for those who do not access university education?

A future step for me would be to develop the research methods used in this study as a tool for helping young people explore their own ideas about who they are, where they want to go and what they want to do. In order to gauge its effectiveness a randomised control trial should be conducted.

Implications arising from the research, literature review and current policy are considered. Suggestions are made for ways in which educational psychologists could work with young people around the area of transition in the future. Opportunities for multi-agency working are considered. Finally areas for future research are suggested.

Unique contribution

Consideration is given to how this study has contributed to the body of knowledge and understanding of the subject relating to growing up in rural areas, aspirations and identities of young men.

There have been many previous studies on adolescents, or youth. Some of the studies have focused on young people particularly affected by a specific issue, such as being looked after by the local authority, being part of a gang culture being involved in the criminal justice system. Similarly there has been a raft of literature around the nebulous, changing concept of identity and all its facets.

UK studies into rural life tend to focus on the difficulties of agriculture, the pockets of wealth and deprivation that exist and plight of an aging population living in the countryside with fewer amenities and greater costs. There are exceptions to these studies such as the studies by Glendinning *et al* (2003) and Mathews *et al* (2000) which approach the topic of rural youth from a sociological perspective.

The study shows that the issues of low aspiration, limited opportunities and strong attachments to their local area are not

exclusively the preserve of young men growing up in rural communities. As in urban populations, as the Green and White (2007), research tells us, there are some young people for whom these factors play a part, others however have broader aspirations.

Economies of scale comprising sparse populations, poor transport links and limited work experience opportunities conspire to create difficulties for young people growing up in our rural communities. Nevertheless these rural communities contain some young people with wide-ranging holistic aspirations.

Participants in this study describe wanting to live ethically, make a positive contribution to society and bring up their own families as well as wishing to achieve economically and educationally.

What is required is a will to put support and opportunities in place to encourage and enable more young people to develop their aspirations rather than limit them.

This study used qualitative research methodology to ascertain from participants what the experience of growing up in the countryside was like for them. It sought to challenge some widely-held national and local government perceptions that rural communities are areas of low aspiration.

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This study used interpretative phenomenological analysis combined with a mixed method of data generation through the use of photo-elicitation and semi structured interviewing. The study was designed to give control over what was raised and discussed to the participants.

This piece of work forged links between previously unrelated areas of research and attempted to make connections within an over arching framework of the rural community. It has added to the complex story told about young men growing up in rural communities.. Links were made between aspiration, subjective well-being and positive youth development. Preventative multi-agency work was advocated together with the possibility of the development of a wider role for educational psychologists.

My article relating to the potential development of the work of psychologists working in rural communities was published in Educational and Child Psychology (2009) 26. The article arises from this study.

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Consideration was given to how this study has contributed to the body of knowledge and understanding of the subject relating to growing up in rural areas, aspirations and identities of young men.

Looking back...How was it for me?

- The researcher reflects on the journey taken to develop and research the study. Account is taken of how the researcher's*
- *thinking has changed about the topic and about herself as a result of the research process.*

The Research

At the beginning of the research process, when ideas about topic and appropriate method were being negotiated and background reading was being undertaken, I believed that rural communities were an unhelpful place for young people to grow up in. I also believed that young people thought this too. I wondered whether the countryside and landscape into which children were born somehow shaped how they would interact with the countryside in the future.

- I recognise that for young people who grow up in rural communities the landscape is the least of their worries. The landscape is constant, predictable in its seasonal changes and the need to negotiate how to live within the landscape is learned at an early stage, the landscape is accepted as unchangeable. I realise that the key word in considering rural communities is not the word 'rural', it is the word 'communities'.
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It is the communities which create difficulties for young people to be included, communities which have developed norms and expectations about young people that young people then need to manage. In the end it seems that these communities let young people down because they are not interested in offering the developmental experiences that young people seek. For the able young people in this research the answer lies in finding a different community by going away to study at university. It would be an interesting future exercise to find out how other populations of young people manage their post school transition. I would be particularly keen to find out what happens to those who do not achieve the grades to go on to higher education or those more rooted in the community, perhaps in third or fourth generation families. I am also keen to find out how the outcomes, processes and development trajectory might be different for girls and young women. Previous research (Craig & Stanley, 2006, Elder et al, 1996, Glendinning et al 2003, Mathews et al 2000) points out that the place of young women in rural communities can be more desperate than for young men.

I have wrestled with the research process and in particular documenting what I have chosen to do and giving the rationale behind it. Similarly finding previous literature, to substantiate or

challenge my own thoughts, has at times been difficult to find and assimilate.

Much research has been done in the United States, particularly around emerging adulthood, whereas the contribution from Canadian and Australian researchers around rural life and young people seems to be the most current. In the UK research around 'the rural' seems to focus on the sociological rather than the psychological although there would seem to be a place for more psychological research with rural communities particularly around mental health and well-being issues.

The support networks around the development of IPA as a research method have been marvellous. I have had access to a vibrant Yahoo chat group through which many issues arising from using this method are discussed not only by students but also by leaders in this method. The development of the IPA website run by UCL Birkbeck, containing resources such as details of previous research, conference and master class dates and practical chapters on using this method, has been invaluable.

My personal journey

In the course of carrying out this research I have made many interesting findings; I have uncovered a wealth of research from a range of disciplines including geography, sociology and health as well as psychology. From human geography I have found literature pertaining to the role of the physical environment in the development of people, reading the output from government departments, most notably DEFRA and DCSF, has given an insight into a variety of initiatives. Finding out about concepts from sociology such as social capital and career planning has been varied and diverting.

This background reading has not only been relevant to rural settings but also to those growing up in urban settings. The nature and function of social capital within schools and communities has given me much food for thought not only in my work as a psychologist but as a responsible member of my own community. Since carrying out my research I have been more open to developing young people's bridging capital, by facilitating introductions or offering to talk about my work to those on work experience in school settings. I may have done these things before but now I have a raised awareness of how this can be beneficial to a young person.

I acknowledge that I have personal difficulties with living in my part of rural England and am able to define and label my dissatisfactions more accurately. I find the lack of cultural diversity stunningly blinkered, for example, and believe that there is an insularity among well-to-do incomers which does not appear to see a role for itself within the wider community. The community cohesion, that is a feature of the 'rural idyll' ,
— discriminates against its young people and is a factor that seems to be tolerated and even exacerbated in some rural communities.

Through the course of my work I have become conscious of low expectations of rural children from some senior teachers when dismissing a child's interest in farming and agriculture. These assumptions should be challenged and children's holistic development and sense of well-being fostered rather than stifled.

Finally with reference to my own family I am aware that my ambivalence about living in a sparse, rural community communicates itself to them. Through carrying on this piece of research I am able to say that my thinking is changing. As an adult aware of what can aid successful transitions I am

determined to try to mitigate the negative features that my own sons may encounter.

This we do by encouraging friendships with a wide range of people and frequent visits to our nearest cities for cultural and sporting events. To this end I will try to foster their independence, allow their self care skills to develop and give them opportunities to explore who they are and who they want to be. At the moment I have one child, aged 9, aspiring to play football for Manchester United and go to Cambridge University, (having seen Chariots of Fire). The other, aged 7, wants to be a farmer, or a vet or a deep sea diver or a fighter jet pilot or to just watch films all day long and play musical instruments and be in a band and have a dog. I'm hoping we can keep all those options open for a while and — add a few more.

The researcher reflected on her research journey. She described how her thinking had changed about growing up in a rural community and described opportunities for further future study. The researcher discussed ideas about herself and her family as a result of the research process.

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Appendix A

Letter requesting permission to speak to groups of potential participants.

Samuel King's School
Church Road
Alston
Cumbria
CA9 3QU

20th September 2007

Dear Mr Peddelty

Re: Research for PhD in Educational Psychology

I'm hoping that Samuel King's School can help me out with my doctoral research. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with the County Psychological Service based in the north/east of the county and supervised through my doctorate by the University of Newcastle. My thesis is about adolescent males and the contribution rurality makes to their aspirations and identity.

I am looking for participants who would be willing to take part in my research and work with me to provide data for my research. Ideally I am looking for two Year 10 boys. I am approaching other secondary schools in the county asking for similar numbers.

The boys will be issued with disposable cameras and asked to take photographs which they think illustrate who they are and who they want to be. I will also be asking them to identify barriers and facilitators to them achieving their goals. The cameras and photos are really a prompt and provide a focus for the participants in their discussions with me. I anticipate needing the boys for two sessions of up to one hour each to discuss the photographs.

If you think that Samuel King's School has students who might be interested in taking part in my research I would welcome the opportunity to come and make a brief presentation to potential participants. I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have. Any participation by students would be in accordance with parental agreement.

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely

Rachel Hayton

Appleby Grammar School
Battlebarrow
Appleby-in-Westmorland
Cumbria
CA16 6XU

20th September 2007

Dear Mr Lund

Re: Research for PhD in Educational Psychology

I'm hoping that Appleby Grammar School can help me out with my doctoral research. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with the County Psychological Service based in the north/east of the county and supervised through my doctorate by the University of Newcastle. My thesis is about adolescent males and the contribution rurality makes to their aspirations and identity.

I am looking for participants who would be willing to take part in my research and work with me to provide data for my research. Ideally I am looking for two Year 10 and three Year 12 boys. I am approaching other secondary schools in the county asking for similar numbers.

The boys will be issued with disposable cameras and asked to take photographs which they think illustrate who they are and who they want to be. I will also be asking them to identify barriers and facilitators to them achieving their goals. The cameras and photos are really a prompt and provide a focus for the participants in their discussions with me. I anticipate needing the boys for two sessions of up to one hour each to discuss the photographs.

If you think that Appleby Grammar School has students who might be interested in taking part in my research I would welcome the opportunity to come and make a brief presentation to potential participants. I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have. Any participation by students would be in accordance with parental agreement.

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely

Rachel Hayton

Keswick School
Vicarage Hill
Keswick
Cumbria
CA12 5QB

20th September 2007

Dear Mr Chapman

Re: Research for PhD in Educational Psychology

I'm hoping that Keswick School can help me out with my doctoral research. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with the County Psychological Service based in the north/east of the county and supervised through my doctorate by the University of Newcastle. My thesis is about adolescent males and the contribution rurality makes to their aspirations and identity.

I am looking for participants who would be willing to take part in my research and work with me to provide data for my research. Ideally I am looking for two Year 10 and three Year 12 boys. I am approaching other secondary schools in the county asking for similar numbers.

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If you think that Keswick School has students who might be interested in taking part in my research I would welcome the opportunity to come and make a brief presentation to potential participants. I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have. Any participation by students would be in accordance with parental agreement.

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely

Rachel Hayton

Ullswater Community College
Wetheriggs Lane
Penrith
Cumbria
CA11 8NG

20th September 2007

Dear Mr Gimber

Re: Research for PhD in Educational Psychology

I'm hoping that Ullswater Community College can help me out with my doctoral research. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with the County Psychological Service based in the north/east of the county and supervised through my doctorate by the University of Newcastle. My thesis is about adolescent males and the contribution rurality makes to their aspirations and identity.

I am looking for participants who would be willing to take part in my research and work with me to provide data for my research. Ideally I am looking for two Year 10 and three Year 12 boys. I am approaching other secondary schools in the county asking for similar numbers.

The boys will be issued with disposable cameras and asked to take photographs which they think illustrate who they are and who they want to be. I will also be asking them to identify barriers and facilitators to them achieving their goals. The cameras and photos are really a prompt and provide a focus for the participants in their discussions with me. I anticipate needing the boys for two sessions of up to one hour each to discuss the photographs.

If you think that Ullswater Community College has students who might be interested in taking part in my research I would welcome the opportunity to come and make a brief presentation to potential participants. I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have. Any participation by students would be in accordance with parental agreement.

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely

Rachel Hayton

William Howard School
Longtown Road
Brampton
Cumbria
CA8 1AR

20th September 2007

Dear Clive

Re: Research for PhD in Educational Psychology

I'm hoping that William Howard School can help me out with my doctoral research. As I think I have mentioned my thesis is about adolescent males and the contribution rurality makes to their aspirations and identity.

I am looking for participants who would be willing to take part in my research and work with me to provide data for my research. Ideally I am looking for two Year 10 and three Year 12 boys. I am approaching other secondary schools in the county asking for similar numbers.

The boys will be issued with disposable cameras and asked to take photographs which they think illustrate who they are and who they want to be. I will also be asking them to identify barriers and facilitators to them achieving their goals. The cameras and photos are really a prompt and provide a focus for the participants in their discussions with me. I anticipate needing the boys for two sessions of up to one hour each to discuss the photographs.

If you think that William Howard has students who might be interested in taking part in my research I would welcome the opportunity to come and make a brief presentation to potential participants. I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have. Any participation by students would be in accordance with parental agreement.

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely

Rachel Hayton

The Nelson Thomlinson School
High Street
Wigton
Cumbria
CA7 9PX

20th September 2007

Dear Mr Ferriby

Re: Research for PhD in Educational Psychology

I'm hoping that The Nelson Thomlinson School can help me out with my doctoral research. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with the County Psychological Service based in the north/east of the county and supervised through my doctorate by the University of Newcastle. My thesis is about adolescent males and the contribution rurality makes to their aspirations and identity.

I am looking for participants who would be willing to take part in my research and work with me to provide data for my research. Ideally I am looking for two Year 10 and three Year 12 boys. I am approaching other secondary schools in the county asking for similar numbers.

The boys will be issued with disposable cameras and asked to take photographs which they think illustrate who they are and who they want to be. I will also be asking them to identify barriers and facilitators to them achieving their goals. The cameras and photos are really a prompt and provide a focus for the participants in their discussions with me. I anticipate needing the boys for two sessions of up to one hour each to discuss the photographs.

If you think that The Nelson Thomlinson School has students who might be interested in taking part in my research I would welcome the opportunity to come and make a brief presentation to potential participants. I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have. Any participation by students would be in accordance with parental agreement.

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely

Rachel Hayton

Caldew School
Dalston
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA5 7NN

20th September 2007

Dear Mr Abernethy

Re: Research for PhD in Educational Psychology

I'm hoping that Caldew School can help me out with my doctoral research. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with the County Psychological Service based in the north/east of the county and supervised through my doctorate by the University of Newcastle. My thesis is about adolescent males and the contribution rurality makes to their aspirations and identity.

I am looking for participants who would be willing to take part in my research and work with me to provide data for my research. Ideally I am looking for two Year 10 and three Year 12 boys. I am approaching other secondary schools in the county asking for similar numbers.

The boys will be issued with disposable cameras and asked to take photographs which they think illustrate who they are and who they want to be. I will also be asking them to identify barriers and facilitators to them achieving their goals. The cameras and photos are really a prompt and provide a focus for the participants in their discussions with me. I anticipate needing the boys for two sessions of up to one hour each to discuss the photographs.

If you think that Caldew School has students who might be interested in taking part in my research I would welcome the opportunity to come and make a brief presentation to potential participants. I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have. Any participation by students would be in accordance with parental agreement.

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely

Rachel Hayton

Settlebeck High School
Long Lane
Sedbergh
Cumbria
LA10 5AL

20th September 2007

Dear Dr Greene

Re: Research for PhD in Educational Psychology

I'm hoping that Settlebeck High School can help me out with my doctoral research. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with the County Psychological Service based in the north/east of the county and supervised through my doctorate by the University of Newcastle. My thesis is about adolescent males and the contribution rurality makes to their aspirations and identity.

I am looking for participants who would be willing to take part in my research and work with me to provide data for my research. Ideally I am looking for two Year 10 boys. I am approaching other secondary schools in the county asking for similar numbers.

The boys will be issued with disposable cameras and asked to take photographs which they think illustrate who they are and who they want to be. I will also be asking them to identify barriers and facilitators to them achieving their goals. The cameras and photos are really a prompt and provide a focus for the participants in their discussions with me. I anticipate needing the boys for two sessions of up to one hour each to discuss the photographs.

If you think that Settlebeck High School has students who might be interested in taking part in my research I would welcome the opportunity to come and make a brief presentation to potential participants. I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have. Any participation by students would be in accordance with parental agreement.

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely

Rachel Hayton

Appendix B

Consent Forms

Consent Form for participation in academic research with R.A.Hayton, University of Newcastle.

I agree to my son (name) taking part in Rachel Hayton’s research into aspirations.

—

Signed

Name

Date.....

—

Appendix C

Letter to parents

Dear Parents/Carers

Attached to this letter is a consent form which enables your son to participate in a piece of academic research.

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with Cumbria County Council's Psychological Services in Carlisle. I am currently carrying out research, under the supervision of the University of Newcastle, into the aspirations of adolescent males from rural areas.

Your son has expressed an interest in taking part in my research. He will be expected to use a camera (either a disposable of mine or a digital of his own) to take some photographs which say something about him. The cost of producing the photographs will be mine. I will have films developed and digital images sent to me.

Your son will also spend up to two separate hours in conversation with me about the photographs. I will see your child in school during normal school hours.

I will guarantee to use a pseudonym so that your child cannot be identified in my writing. It is possible that the photographs your child selects may compromise anonymity and I would discuss that with them and ask for their specific agreement if that were to happen.

My work will be seen by examiners at the University of Newcastle and academics from other establishments. My findings will be shared with groups of professionals and with colleagues.

I have a full current CRB check (enhanced disclosure) which allows me to work with children and young people.

If you are unhappy or concerned with the way in which my research is being conducted please contact myself, Rachel Hayton 01228 601237 R.A.Hayton@ncl.ac.uk or Dr. Liz Todd at the University of Newcastle 0191-222-6572 Liz.Todd@ncl.ac.uk

If you are happy for your son to take part in my research would you please return the attached consent form.

Many thanks

Yours faithfully

Rachel Hayton

Appendix D

Transcriptions of Interviews

1st interview

I=Interviewer

A= Pupil A

7th February. Interview with A talking about his photographs at SKS.

I. So A which one would you like to start with?

A. I er I just really I use my phone a lot so ...

I. What do you use your phone for?

A. It's er...sometimes to play games on, phone people and text.

I. O.K so... would you say that your phone is really important to you?

A. Not that important, no. I use a lot of other stuff as well. I use these things
(indicates other photos).

I. Right. Are you proud of your phone, do you like your phone?

A. Yeah (laughs)

I. It looks pretty flash to me. How else do you keep in contact with your friends?

A. Computer

I. Yeah

A. It's the same

I. OK. So why have you chosen your computer as a photo?

A Because I use that a lot. It's the thing I use most. I got it last Christmas and it's just.., I never stop using it.

I And what do you use your computer for?

A. I sometimes just talk to my friends and then sometimes look at the news.

I Do you use the computer in a creative way at all?

A I sometimes go on 'Paint'

I What's that?

A It's a .. make pictures?

I Do you make pictures in a particular style?

A. No, well sometimes I've been doing stick figures.

I why have you been doing those

A I dunno... I saw this thing on... my brother draws a lot of them, he's into art and design

I Is that something that you're interested in?

A Not especially

I OK what's this one?

A It's my playstation

I ahh. So you've got quite a lot of gadgetry haven't you?

A Yeah!

I. tell me about your playstation then. Is this a PS2?

A er yeah

I OK

A Yeah It's really fun... I've got loads of games for it and er...well I rarely use it now..cause I got a different one.

I What have you got now?

A An X-Box

I Did you get that for Christmas?

A Yeah

I And did you take these photos before Christmas

A (laughs) yeah

I So what sort of games do you like playing?

— A. shooting games...and cars

I. and do you play on your own or do you play with other people.

A Sometimes play with my brother cause he likes playing on it

I and is this one of the games where you can link up with other people?

A. No

I Can you do that on the X-box?

A Yeah

I and do you do that?

A no I don't have the stuff.

I OK. Continuing on the gadgetry what are you going to talk about next? Do you want to carry on with your iPod?

A. er yeah. That's my iPod. I don't use it much cause it's... kind of... broken.

I Right. What happened to it.

A I put some music on... it just didn't work and when I took it off it said
can't remember... something really bad....it just shut down. Never turned
back on.

I. oh no. so when it was working did you use it a lot?

A. Yeah I used it a lot. Had loads of music on it.

I. What sort of music are you into

A. Indie, rock and stuff like that.

I. Where do you download stuff from

A. From the computer I use Itunes

I Ok so which one do you want next?

A. I play football a lt. I sometimes play for the school.

I Do you play out of school

A. yeah I go down The L (park) every Saturday and play football with my
friends down there. I really like playing football.

I. Is that something you've done for quite a while?

A. Yeah

I. When you play for the school is that for the under 15s

A. Yeah... in the Carlisle Cup?

I. What position do you play

A. Defence

I. And do you support a team

A. Yeah Man U

I. Last picture

A. This is my guitar it's got a lot of fingerprints on it.

I. Do you teach yourself?

A. No I get lessons off P (man's name)

I. Are you in a band or play with other people?

A. No I just play loads of songs that I like

And do you write stuff yourself

No I might do later

How long have you been playing

About 5 or 6 years

So you're pretty good

Have you thought about being in a band

I wouldn't be interested in that...it's the stage and loads of people

Altogether these things say something about you. They're all things that are of interest to you. You've got your gadgets and technology, ways of keeping in touch with people, ways of being creative and ways of entertaining yourself.

These things seem to be quite important to you

Yeah

Is there anything else that you want to talk about...

So this is just a little bit of where you are now, there's a whole load more of you that we haven't even touched on. So this is where you are, how you are now in Y10 and you're working towards your gcse's how do you feel about that

Pretty scared

What's worrying you about that?

Erm just the thought of the exams and how hard they'll be ...its just... really a lot of pressure...

Have you got any modules for science and maths this time?

No maths is on March 3rd

I'll avoid that then Now we also talked about what you're aspiring to about what you want to do, how you see yourself in the future and you've got me a picture here. Do you want to talk to me about that?

I think I first started to want to be a policeman when ...I'd saw a lot of TV films like police academy and stuff. I thought that 'd be really fun.

And did you find out anything else about it?

Yes I went to connexions and got a lot of information qabout what to do at college to get the right gcse

What have you got to do/ what have you got to aim for? Can you tell me

Erm well if was aiming for rthe forensics I'd be doing a lot of science and I think maths and English.

And is it the forenics side that interests you most?

Erm well kind of..i'd like to stay on the normal police... street... walk around the streets and things like that

Yes..when you start you do that for the first two years anyway, don't you, before you specialise.

Yes I just...I just want to get to the top

Very ambitious in that way? And where do you think that would happen would you stay in /Cumbria or...

Oh no in Northumberland...

You're thinking of Northumberland? Why is that?

Cause it's nearer to home and I go to Bishop that's where the headquarters is I think. I tried to get my work experience there but they didn't take people

Right I wonder if they'd take people on the admin side I know it's not quite the same I can understand why they wouldn't take you round on patrol with

them. I wonder if they do any open days have you been to any open days?

Er I don't know I don't think they do

Have you been able to talk to any police officers about their work?

Er yeah one just when we were at the police station I started talking to him?

And was he encouraging?

Erm yeah I told him about what I'd like to do and he said go for it and stuff

Good. So why would you like to be a police officer... what is it about you that makes you think that would be the job for you?

It's good money....that's important....it's just... I don't know... I'm not

bothered about the uniform and what you have to do there in the training... I just think it'd be really really fun and I'd make a lot of friends.

And are you quite good at dealing with people

It's alright

'Cause that's quite an important part of the job isn't it you're not always

chasing after people sometimes you have to have conversations with people...

—
you're physically fit...groaning about the paper work. How do you feel about that?

Oh not too bad it's just that I'm not a very fast typer

Oh well hopefully the technology will have moved on by then

And you think you'd stay locally. Why do you think that you'd stay locally in Northumberland

Because it's nearer to home

Do you think it's important to be near to home

Yes and I know it well

What do you think might stop you from doing that?

The grades,...English... I'm not very good at English

Ok and what about chances what opportunities can you see?

Er I think if I go to Newcastle college I think if I'm studying ...er... forensics there, I think I don't know

If you went to Newcastle College would you stay in Newcastle or come home in the evening?

I'd stay at Newcastle... it's a long way

It isn't it I know you're 15 or 14 but you might have any transport but it would be a little motorbike or moped, not very good in

So have you got other friends who might be going to Newcastle?

—
D, who's doing this with the pictures, I think his dad lives in Newcastle...he might be going.

Transcription pupil B

N has brought in some photographs...which one would you like to talk about

This one..it's my dad's house I don't live there but its like..i always go there

This is where I normaly hang around it's the market cross

What happens is it in alston

People sit around there ...it's like a hang out really

Is that something that you do regularly? Often? Every night?

Not every night...weekends really

Who else would be there

Just my friends...Me and my friends. Talk about this one...I like to play on computers

like xbox. I just got one for Christmas so I like to play...

Do you play on your own or with other people?

I play with my friends.

And do you do that where you can connect and all play on the same game?

Like on-line? Yeah I've got online at the minute so it's good I can play...

And this one is of my street that I walk down every day so ..

So this isn't here this is different?

Yeah it's neither.

Is that your mums?

It's like my dads There's a picture of my mums here as well.

These two are linked...cause like they're both speakers...because I like music

So musics quite important to you...listening to music... what sort of stuff do you like

Rave music.everyone round here likes that sort of stuff

So what? Do you go to raves around here?

No I just go on the websites and stuff get some songs

Do you make any music yourself? Do you play anything

No just listen to it

This one is a picture of the cemetry cause I live next door to the cemetery

So you live next door to the cemetery?

Cause that's at my mum's house

So is it something youre looking out at?

Yyeah when I walk out of the house every day to the left is the cemetery so I'll see thart

Does that give you pause for thought, not really

Just have a look every day see what's going on

Anything new

Aye

That's my mum's house where I live like, actually live... so..

Is it just you and your mum?

I've got a step dad and a little brother ...he's three

Very little then

So its good and that one's specially cause I like tele?

What do you watch

Simpsons , football... football mainly.

This ones just basically a street again that I walk across everyday. Its close to my mam's house.

Is that the same wall?

Yeah, I think so anyway..no that's not the wall actually it's a little bit different.

And this one is basically the school

Why is school important to you

Well I come everyday (laughs)

Do you like coming to school

Well I've already got a gcse in English

Yes Mr P (teacher) told me

Yeah

Are you pretty good

I'm Ok

And that ones just cause I like darts

Where do you play

Just in the house. I've got a dart board up

I took that one on purpose cause it always rains around here.

So what does that mean? You spend a lot of time inside?

Yeah well like anywhere there's a lot of sbnow as well.it just rains a lot.

That ones just like golf...I play every day..i took pictures on my journey of places I go to everyday. That ones just the neighbourhood...

You've got a full moon. Have you heard of Vince Peart?

Yeah..i live close to him I saw his commercial the other day.

Do you think he's got a point? Do you think there's a lack of things for people in A?

I there's not really a lack of shops. If I want to go shopping I go into Carlisle or somewhere like that.

One picture left

That one. Erm cause I play football at the minute

Who do you play for?

Alston

And do you also play for the school?

Yeah I play every Sunday for the Alston Team

So that's quite important for you. What position do you play?

Striker

Do you go and watch football

Yeah I support Liverpool...I never miss a game on the tele if theyre on

So you play sport you're interested in sport big style but you also like your entertainment.

You also seem quite rooted...you know where you're from. All these photos of the town where you live and the places that you go seem quite important to you is that right?

Yeah.

We've got another set of photos about how you see yourself in the future. Which one are you going to start with

That one. I play a lot of golf I always have I play at the local golf course when I can when the weather's not so good so its quite hard... It must be quite windy as well...yeah and cold.

Is that something you've been doing for a while

Yeah since I was about... not sure four years ago my dad played a lot and my mum worked at the golf club... so I used to be up there quite often so it was something to do

Do you have a group of people up there who you can play with ?

Yeah. My friends cos we get in free they like youngsters.

It's good exercise

Yeah I enjoy it

So how often would you say you play

There used to be a time in the Summer when I'd go up every day sometimes twice a day.

I enjoy it very much But in the winter I just don't get up there very often

What about your other pictures?

This is meant to be a picture of the premiership trophy.

So why did you pick that picture? Why did you take that picture?

Well hopefully one day maybe...cause I like football so much...

Has anybody spotted you? been to have a look at you?

Yeah I had a trial with Carlisle United about two years ago. It didn't go so well.

I need to get better

Did they give you any pointers any feedback

They said I needed to get stronger (physically stronger?) yes. I know I've got stronger over the years so... I could be a lot better?

Which one next

Its another trophy I've got a lot of trophies already as you can see. I just enjoy winning them

What didd you get these trophies for?

There's a night at the end of the season...where you get the trophies for playing and stuff
I usually get top goal scorer and stuff.

So what are you going to do to get yourself in this sort of position? What are you going to do.

Not sure really. Just try to do well for my team

Yeh, erm I'm trying to think could you invit someone to come and watch you..i don't

know maybe yeah...be proactive about it....aye what are you going to do after you finish
here after your GCSEs how are you going to get from here to there?

If I don't get this I've got work experience set up at an activity centre so maybe when I'm
16 I'll work there for a bit... see what it's like on my work experience...I've been before
when I was 11... so maybe give that a try and see how it works out ...

An if that works out you might take some qualifications in it. Yeh

But this is what you really want?

Yeah.

And you're going to talk to me about your right foot?

I think that maybe should have been the other one. That's about football.

Do you think that to be able to do this (football) you'd be able to stay locally or do
you think you'd have to move away?

Erm not sure really cause a lot of teams play here

Yeh you've got some big clubs locally, Newcastle, sunderland Carlisle, Middlesboro

So you've got quite a few and still stay locally is that something that would be important
to you?

Yeah I like it round here I always have

What about if someone came up from... say Aston Villa how would you feel about that?

Don't know, excited

would you be happy to move away to do it?

It depends if I want it I'll have to, won't I so probably yeah.

With your friends from school how many of these of you friends are interested in this sort of thing?

Well a lot of people like football in this school so... basically the same thing as me

But have they got the skill?

Some people have yeah

And have they been scouted

I think one has yeah

So really we could do with whoever's in charge of you r football team getting in touch with some clubs and saying...come and have a look at our lads

Yeah

So what do you see as the opportunity what chances have you got to do this?

Maybe moving away like you say.

And what might stop you from doing this?

Friends round here and stuff cause I like round here...I don't know.

And you've got a plan B

Yes

Participant C Transcription

Which photographs do you want to start with?

I'll do now. Ok I went , I did a mixture of principles as well as what I'm interested in as well as stuff that I do. So in no particular order . this is me and Girl S lying on the lawn so that's sort of Girl S and love and that stuff. She's my fiancée we got engaged on our birthdays, we share the same birthday, I've been with her since I was 14. about 4 years or so. People are often surprised by that and often say 'are you sure it's a good idea being so young' and everything and I just say 'Yeah'.

So how do you respond to that?

I don't know I haven't had any problems with it so far. People say are you sure you don't want to dabble around a bit and see what it's like. And I haven't had any urges yet so as far as I'm concerned that's how it is at the moment and I love Girl S and she loves me and we're moving in together on Saturday. So yeah, that's it. That's my 1st photo.

Ok 2nd one is a pile of books. We've got Ted Hughes Selected, Paradise Lost what's that? Wordsworth Purgatory that's Civilisation and Discontents by Freud, thought it would be a giggle to put that on top, and a few CDs. So that's a mixture of the fact that I'm interested in other people's ideas er that's poetry mainly poetry erm intellectual sort of things, music as well, just other people other people's ideas. I'm doing Literature at University hopefully as long as I get my results. (laughs) I've already got my flat and I'm moving to Manchester before I get my results so I'm either working or learning

in Manchester. I'm quite confident hopefully I think I'm confident (laughs).

Can you tell me what it is about other people's ideas that draws you? What is it that draws me? I don't know. I just... I have an urge... I have an urge a) to understand as much as I can about the world that's psychology, philosophy and literature mainly poetry for me. Although that's just my preference and I just you know the best ways to explain the world in a way that isn't cold and scientific which is very interesting but not interesting enough. I quite like the human perspective and stuff that lasts for years and years and years like Milton who is long dead but everyone knows pretty much what he thought or we could argue about what he thought about anyway. And then music's just the same thing really it's the same thing as poetry. Next one?

This my notebook, guitar, pens etcetera. That's my ideas. Once I've got other people's ideas I like to tell everybody what my ideas are...

So how do you do that?

I write a lot of poetry... which I've won awards for ... and read regularly going to a poetry reading tonight... as long as dad arrives to give me a lift as I cannot drive... used to play a lot in a band... we toured around a bit... mainly through poetry now. And of course writing essays for school and I hope to continue writing essays at university.

So is writing an essay a creative thing for you?

Yeah it is, yeah definitely.

And are you still able to use your guitar creatively?

Of course yes... I want to learn music technically a lot better cause I used to learn guitar properly at school but I finished that when I was

about 13, just couldn't be on with it any more, so I just started playing and I've noticed .that sort of technically I'm a lot worse than people who play guitar at my age so I just... that's not particularly a problem for me... cause I'm perfectly happy to sit and play around but yeah it's mainly just made up what I play so it is fairly creative yeah.

— Is it important for you, as a person, to have a creative outlet?

Oh yeah! That's one of my sort of main things is writing peoptry, everything else is...I spend a lot of time thinking about it. It's one of the only things I definitely want to do...sort of from here on in. so yeah, yeah it's pretty much key actually. Love poetry, music that sort of thing. That one is me performing Hamlet with an apple. It represents performance. Not necessarily theatre but any old performance. There's such a buzz about performing it's, you know... I only get to do it sort of once a month at the moment...I go and read my poetry and stuff like that but it's, you know, fantastic.

So do you have a regular opportunity ...

Yrea I'm a regular reader at The Source at , Speakeasy I've been going there since I was about 15 so I think I've gradually risen through the ranks. Occasionally I've been invited through to Dumfries and read there before... a collection of us got invited over the border to read there and I've read on the radio. I just like... once I've read everybody else's ideas and thought on them, produced my own ideas the next logical step is telling everybody what I think, of course, which is very important so...

Next one? Is the pub...yes well it's more about the fact... s'posed to be where I meet friends. Rather than, you know, an object... a place where you go and drink. It's The S (local pub in neighbouring village) that's my local cause the nearest pub to me hasn't got a bar or an outside area particularly cause it's mainly a restaurant so my local is F

where I walk to, and yeah its where everybody meets up...most people I know seem to work there...and we know the landlords quite well...and we just talk a lot and goss...drink a lot we've had various lock ins but it's mainly just about it's the best I could get ...the one place you meet everyone that isn't the school and now I've left school it is the main place where I go and meet all my mates .

So how do you get there?

I just walk or someone'll come and pick me a lift. How long does it take? About a 30 minute walk? Which is not long really. Walked back in the dark many a time erm which is occasionally good and occasionally I've stumbled and come back covered in mud at about 4.00 in the morning. That happens occasionally. OK

That's just general it's just about where I live. I live in really beautiful place and people often say that if you live in a beautiful place you don't appreciate it but I think I do. And so... I just love walking about and seeing the animals and the sky...and especially if it's sunny like it is in the photograph it's quite good... it's probably something to do with the poetry as well I just like the natural world I write about it every now then, as every body seems to. It's an important part of living in the countryside really.

Do you feel an attachment to the countryside?

Of course ..Yeajh big attachment I've lived here for 18 years. So I can wander round this village and local area as much as I like. It's about freedom to go where you want safely and just be able to watch things quietly and think about it... which I think is perhaps lacking in the modern world a little bit as far as I can tell...just wandering about with your mouth shut and having a look at stuff and just, it's just great, that's what I think.

(Fanfare) Football!!!

That's the Blackburn Rovers strip...that's an old shirt...just a football shirt...that's Blackburn ..the other love of my life... the third love of my life after Girl S and poetry then there's Blackburn. I love football it's brilliant... it's an art form in itself and they do get played hideous amounts of money but who cares cause it's brilliant?

Are you able to say what it is about football that...?

What it is about football?i like.. I think football is a much more intelligent sport than people think... it's all about seeing where someone is playing the ball through to... it's got an object...which is the goal...you can get some of the most beautiful goals... tends to be the major part of football but it's just a clever, tactical game which you can just sit and think about and watch and go mad about it. It's one of the few things where you have the opportunity to be tribal about I think apart from I think only times you feel... everyone's there for the same reason... everyone has a purpose for being at a football match especially if you all follow the same team...I think the only other place you get that is music festivals which is where you have somewhere you can be dead tribal and collective and there for one reason and be happy about everything. So there's football, the game and football, the watching of football.

Why Blackburn?

I don't know I think dad thought it was the nearest half decent premiership team so we went down once I don't know maybe 10, 11 years ago or something, quite a long time ago, just went down and I've been hooked ever since. I used to go to the odd Carlisle game but I

don't think I'd be seen dead at a Carlisle game anymore. I'm very fiercely....badged.

— There's my dad...and various other people but that's just about who am I actually... I'm part of dad and there's my mum as well. So you know one half dad one half mum that's family. My extended family live dead far away and I don't see them very often so that is pretty much my family as an only child so that's pretty important.

Can you tell me how your parents are important in making you who you are?

Well there's the obvious biological way, I lived with my mum and dad until I was about 13 before they split up so obviously my entire probably most of my make-up is come from, apart from their genes, apart from womb experiences directly from my mum which have probably done something to me and then just getting brought up however they managed to do that.

Has obviously had a large part to do with who i am.

Dad's probably responsible for the football. They're both writers.

Dad wrote a lot a while ago so I think they both brought me up to appreciate writing and thinking. I think mums brought me up to appreciate how to think and that its important and yeah I think they're both probably really sensible, good people and hopefully they've brought me up to be the same. (laughs) (some discomfort around this Q?)

Ok I know some of my questions may seem strange.

— It's fine. This one is a bit morbid... it's a fly paper with dead flies on... it's nothing to do with morbidness...its about feeling at the moment, slightly stuck.

Just because I'm not...I'm moving on Saturday and I'm really looking forward to getting out and living, well with my Girl S, independently and just being able to do, within reason, what I want to do and have to cook for myself and stuff and wash my own clothes and decide what I do with my time a bit more more than I do now... represented by the fly paper.

If I'd asked you these questions a couple of weeks ago would your answers have been different?

— Probably have been pretty much the same. Maybe stuck's the wrong word I don't think I'm stuck to a piece of fly paper necessarily, I think it's about time ...I think I'm ready to get out and be more independent and also I think moving to the city will be interesting cause I'll not have to get buses anywhere I'll be able to walk to the shops I think its pretty hard to get a lot of things done when you live in the countryside apart from on the internet I'll be able to walk around. As much as I'll miss the safety of my greenness I'll be able to go and do things for myself a lot easier cos everything's closer at hand and I'll have to deal with ... I'll have to deal with being independent as well which will be interesting see how that works out.

Do you think there's a conflict... Are you experiencing a conflict between staying and going?

Yeah I think so. Obviously it's great being ...where I live and how I live at the moment I'm really happy with its fine its brilliant I don't have to worry about as many things. I went to the bank today and paid off 950 quid to my landlord which was absolutely terrifying. There's a big gap between being basically a young person living at home in the countryside compared to going to university, hopefully, and living in

the city and doing everything for myself erm in my own flat and paying my own bills and getting everything sorted, there's a big gap that and its absolutely terrifying but its also what I need to do and what I want to do. So there's a kind of an uneasy tension but I'm also really looking forward to it. I think I'll be fine when I get there.

I let you interpret this however you like. Who do you want to be?
I want to be happy.

So what does 'happy' mean to you?

What does happy mean? I want to be able to fulfil my potential in things that I want to do stay relatively carefree make sure i get out of university without too much debt so that I'm not stuck with the financial business and just generally be happy enough to get along with what I want to do to a reasonable extent and give myself time to do what I want to do. its just about Fulfilling things without letting things slip by before I get too old to do it. I've got quite a while. I just want to get everything that I want to do, done.

— So do you know what you want to do?

I do. Various things are in here that I want to do. Me and Girl S. That's part of the happiness thing I want it to work out between us living together cos it could not it could go horribly wrong and that would be. .. jjust have to see what happens. Hopefully it'll work out very well. And we'll stay happy

Is it important for you to be in a relationship? I don't want say 'a' relationship because your relationship with Girl S is 'the' relationship isn't it? Do you know what I mean?

I do, I suppose it is its just I've always preferred the idea of having support and consistency rather than having to struggle to go out and

pull a girl on a Saturday night or anything like that. I've always found it easier to be with someone who knows me and erm we've pretty much made each other happy, ish, and if we can keep doing that then I think I'll be chuffed.

Next one

To continue I want to combine my love of this country with being happy in the city as well so that's me clutching a Manchester a-z. , which I'll have to get a good look through sometime soon, I think I'd probably want to come back to the countryside once I've done ... it'll probably take a while though... once I've done everything citywise. So I think that's about just wanting to be happy in the city as well as being able to come back to the countryside... just generally you know...

I think it's just about my worries and wanting to keep both (a foot in both camps) Yeah exactly. Which hopefully I'll be able to.

That's me revising a poem with a pen. Plan there is to get better, get published again and in higher places. Cos I got published by a local publisher recently, I need to get my books off him actually and so hopefully I can repeat that down with a Manchester publisher and then hopefully repeat that nationally. That'd be nice.

So yeah it was lucky that the whole getting published thing. He just asked me whether I wanted...he wanted me to... cos they publish, I think, every year with the Carlisle Arts Festival they get a bit of money and put it together and publish about 5 people... just any old...who they think's best at the moment and so me and 4 others got published and we've got our own little collections. So that's me...I just... it's poetry...it'd not like a thing that just comes out of you...it's training...

you have to train yourself quite a lot and I'm just beginning to understand the whole idea of a) how to write cause you have to learn how to write and that's all about being able to not worry about what you've written before hand on the page and just keep going. You have to have two ideas in your head you've got one ideas roughly where you want it to go even though that changes maybe half way through. And one idea roughly you need to try and remember where you've been otherwise you completely get rid of any sort of music you've added to it you'll just start playing the wrong tune. I've also started learning how to revise my work a little bit better. Mum's been useful in that she's been quite honest, brutally honest in fact when it comes to my poetry so I'm beginning to learn how to revise it so I just want to get better and do well do myself justice so it has not been a complete waste of time which I don't think it is cos I think I've got stuff to say. So I just want to keep going and get better at that.

Next one

I want to make a bit of money doing what I want to do. Cos otherwise I'll be absolutely skint I can't just sit around writing poetry all the time that doesn't make you money. But that's supposed to be...I want to make a bit of money doing something I want to do. Or not what I want to do, cause I don't know what I'd want to do to be honest. But just make a bit of money doing something I'd be relatively happy doing. So at the moment I thought go and get my degree go and work in an editors or work in for publishing house or for a magazine or a newspaper or something. Something which I can see being beneficial rather than just getting whatever job I need... yes I'll get a part time job in Tesco's but once I finish my degree I don't want to get stuck there. So I want to be relatively pleased with what I'm doing. So yeah that's the future... Hopefully

So you see your future as being around writing in some way (hopefully) but still with your eye on publishing your poetry.

Yeah yeah it'd be nice to get a job which is involved with writing but as long as I make enough money to live off I'll be happy...my main aspiration is not to do with money at all.. just as long as I've got..as long as I'm not absolutely...as long as I'm not in debt I'll be fine but I'd just quite like to do it...ideally...doing something which has got to do with what my current dream is which is to get published and go and be a poet etcetera.

That's me getting my degree (laughs)...I want to get a First (laughs)...I'm really fired up about this... I want to go university and everyone says 'oh but of course you don't go to university to learn do you go to university to go clubbing and be carefree for three years' er...that's not how I see it. I've spent the past few weeks since school reading everything I can. I think I've gotten through most of the major classics since I left school I've been reading Joyce, Shakespeare, Beowulf, Chaucer etc just all the classics that I thought I should get through which I've enjoyed, its been great... so hopefully I'll keep doing that when I do literature full time instead of just as one of my A level. Given me the opportunity to read a lot more. I want to do well...get a first... quite like to do an MA... keep going.

So getting a First is not just a throwaway...

Not at all... I desperately want to do the best I can... i'd quite like to work in university being a scholar... whatever you do at university...if I can stay at university... I don't want to get too... bit of a thing that ... scholars tend to be the quarrymen that find stuff out whereas I want to sort of just write nice poetry creatively whereas I think if I stayed at

the university too long I'd have to become part of the digging up literary bits and bobs and that might be hard work (laughs) but I'm really looking forward to the whole university experience and want to do very well. So... that's what I want to do.

That's me with Richard Dawkins' The God Delusion, looking confused. I want to have completely sorted out all of my various philosophical and religious things a little bit more cos at the moment I have no idea ...I'm not even an agnostic...I'm literally haven't got a clue. I 'd quite like to settle that with myself really.

I wonder why that's pressing?

I don't know I think it's cos I've done religious studies for the last two years and come out with no answers whatsoever so I want to keep going and decide ...I think its about keeping... ethical standards and working out what I think about everything...not necessarily whether there's a God cos I'm not really bothered if there is or not to be honest but just working out about how I want to live and what I think about philosophical things like whether I have a mind or not ...it tortures me regularly late at night like whether I have free will or not..so I'd quite like to get that sorted out...which I never will...I'd like to have a good shot at it.

It ties in with your earlier photographs about ideas

Yeah! I'm hoping at university I can do a bit of philosophy on the side and keep going and generally...I want to free of all prejudice but I also want to have some idea of what I think more strongly so that ...at the moment if I have an argument with someone I just switch sides all the time which is very annoying... I quite like it because it gives me the

opportunity to think what I like ...but I'd like to have my own idea about it...I think...I think I do anyway.

This ties in with the first one. I want to live a full life.

So that's a glass almost full?

It is actually all the way full. I didn't want to do is it half empty is it half full. It's all the way full it's one of the things about being happy is making sure you've done everything...fulfilling purposes...

Aristotle...Telos..doing it... living well...not well to do but sound minded and sound conscience and just keep myself together really... doing everything to the full extent that I can. I like throwing myself into things so I think I'll do that quite a lot at university and get the most out of it.

Sounds good

That's keeping relatively healthy not turning into a gigantic hulking Spartan. That was just the only thing I could find...I want to stay healthy for as long as possible.

That's physically and mentally?

Yes, physically and mentally healthy... I don't necessarily want an 8-pack and two gigantic breasts...so I'd just like to keep healthy and stay sound. I don't know...I haven't really got any choice whether I stay healthy or not I suppose but I would quite like it if I could stay healthy for as long as possible.

Have you thought about how you'd manage if you became ill?

I don't know I'd probably just panic to be honest. People say you become really philosophical about it and calm I think I'd just panic because I haven't done enough yet. So I think I'd just go completely mental and probably find a cure myself...(laughs) but no..i don't know I think I'd just panic... er yeah...wouldn't want to think about that too much ...too young. (laughs)

Erm next one is me putting money into a box that's about I want to do something for a good cause. Kinda thing. That's not my money box and not necessarily involving cash I just want to make sure I do something...I'm a member of Amnesty and stuff like that so I want to make sure I'm not just completely focused on myself all the time which is easy to do when your writing lots of poetry tends to be fairly self-centred so I just want to make sure that I keep on caring about everything else and other people which goes back to the whole Richard Dawkins things...and work out what I want to give...politically ...and stuff like that.

So do you have an altruistic streak?

Erm well occasionally when I can...I don't have any money but I've done Amnesty International gigs and stuff like that I've campaigned for them... give clothes to Oxfam don't throw them away.

It's just common sense. I'd like to hope I have an altruistic streak I could probably be more empathetic with people but I'd like to do well and then give something back.

What's it like being a young man growing up in Cumbria?

What's it like being a young man growing up in Cumbria? If you'd asked me a couple of years ago I probably would have said it's boring and there's nothing to do but that's completely wrong. I've gotten over that, it's fantastic, I think it's a great place to live cos its just everything the people, the area maybe if I lived in Carlisle I'd think differently but living in rural Cumbria very involved in every day to day stuff you feel that you're part of everything that goes on. You feel like you're part of almost the farming and everything that goes on there. You almost feel you're close to of the earth (laughs) sort of

thing ... you can't see the mystical hand actions... yeah you just feel part of everything in a very close sort of way. I've enjoyed living in Cumbria especially recently I've really started appreciating things over the last couple of years.

That's what I was going to ask you. What's changed over the last couple of years to make it more...

I don't know I just think you start thinking about stuff more don't you as you get older. Maybe until you get into secondary school you don't think really about it much but you appreciate it when you're taken away from it and you really like running around in the countryside with your mates climbing trees and that sort of stuff erm completely safely I think then when you get to secondary school doing gcse's and stuff you start taking on prevailing ideas and watching television and stuff like that. You really want to be part of this weird big city, go and drink lots and be dangerous. Do stuff like that it just happens I think it's just something to do with the culture...you get off the tele mainly I sound a bit 'ooh ah off the tele and all that rubbish'. No I think it's true... I think as soon as you're doing AS levels and A levels... maybe you don't have to be doing... as soon as you get to about 17 say, I think you start being able to think for yourself a bit more. Cos you're just beginning to get your own ideas about stuff I think once you can start not worrying about what the rest of the world's like you can start just appreciating what you've got now a bit more. Maybe so yeah I really do think it has been quite... I've noticed myself suddenly being really interested in everything.... aesthetically as well as sort of its purposes and the fact that it's safe... it's great having a river you can go and swim in it for free but it also looks great and you can feel good there. I think you start appreciating that once you've matured a bit... as you mature and you've got more intelligent as you gradually do ...so I'm told. So I think that's something to do with it.

Do you think maybe you also enjoy being here more when that the idea of leaving is ...?

Erm not necessarily cos I can come back but whenever I like come and stay with my mum for a few days. Erm but yeah I think that recently I — have been... I went for a walk up the fell...you could see the moor over there before they built those houses... but yeah I decided I needed to walk up there and doss about before I move to the city so yeah in a way you do start feeling 'I'd better make the most of it' but not in any long term sort of way. Just recently I've had time to make the most of it

During these past few weeks its not like I'm going to forget about it it's not just about making the most of it.

And it's not like, as you just said, you're closing a door and you're not going to come back.

No my dad lives here, my mum lives here all my mates live are here...I'm doing the full... I'm not going to uni accommodation so I have to stay there during holidays 'cause I pay to live there so I want to make the most of it. But I can still come back 'cause everyone lives here so I'm not closing a door on C and Cumbria at all.

It may not surprise you at all... the research on growing up in the countryside says that its great for people... primary age kids, like you were saying...

Your parents don't have to worry about you getting stabbed or anything...and its great for people once they're settled in their 30s but for those young people in between it can be very difficult cause they're highly visible in the community yeh yeah yeh and can't really do the experimenting dthat maybe they need to do... I think I pretty much agree with that I think I got my experimenting through by the time I hit 17 so perhaps I hit 30 early according to the . (laughs)

But you're moving away

Yeah I'm moving away I am got to there ain't no university in C and I'm too high a standard for the University of Cumbria at the moment sadly.

So if the University of Cumbria offered something more suitable for you would you have considered it?

They haven't got the history, the research reputation, the teachers, not the teachers lecturers and people there Manchester's a good strong literature university. Got a lot of people that I've read there which is interesting and a few scholars that I've read there... people like Martin Amis teaching there, which would be interesting if I got into any of his classes (laughs) so yeah Manchester if the University of Cumbria was good and of high quality its not of the same quality as Manchester by a long shot... what do they offer? They offer a creative writing course I think. I think you need about 2 Es to get that... to be honest if I'm getting 5 As I don't want to be looking at a 2E course, or 3E course or whatever it is ...that's just

— commonsense really. There was no option of me going anywhere but I think I was looking at Manchester York Edinburgh Durham Mr Easterby said to you want to go to Oxford or Cambridge I said I don't think I'm good enough and I'm glad I didn't ...I didn't get into Durham or York or Edinburgh because of my GCSEs... I really didn't do a lot of work in my GCSEs I was too busy running around... going mad (laughs) experimenting and also ...it was so boring... I mean... I got As for my science Bs in my maths technology I think I got a C or something...they're not bad A* in everything to get into a lot of universities which is quite scary and at the time they didn't tell you that and I thought screw it I'm not particularly interested in any of this the English course was quite boring as far as I remember at GCSE which infuriated me because I've always been interested cause I've been writing since I was about 15ish. So I just wasn't interested in the GCSEs at all it really kicked in...doing a lot of work for my A levels so I think that's part of maturing as well... so I'm glad Manchester accepted me otherwise I'd have to go somewhere else but I got into a top university so I'm glad . You could've taken a year out after you'd got your A Levels

I could, I could yeh but I didn't want to do it now...I'm horribly fired upyeah...it's weird considering I didn't really care about my GCSEs that much...I mean I wanted to do alright you know... it wasn't like, you know, it doesn't matter...it did matter to me slightly... I wanted to do alright... But when it came to doing my AS and A levels I suddenly decided that I was going to try to do absolutely the best. (laughs).

I don't know quite what happened there I think it's just the fact that I was more interested in the higher level of course and I had great teachers...every single teacher I had was fantastic which is good...I think that makes a difference...erm... i just got really fired up for it and I think I still am.

I've worked out what's interesting about research and you know scholarship and stuff like that. Ive worked out why that's interesting.

Why is that interesting?

Why is that interesting? Like I said before it's other people's ideas working out how the world works whether it's through literature or through science and just being a part of it... it's really exciting sort of movement to work out what's going on. And describing the world and people that's what's the best bit about literature...you're describing emotion that's what it is...it's dead subjective and I want to be part of it.

— Cos a lot of people go to university cause they want a better job and stuff like that I'm going to university because I want to ...I want to learn that's why I'm going. So yeah I've been really fired up with it for the last two years...which was kind of different to my approach to GCSEs.

Participant D

Discussion of photos

I. So you're going to tell me something about the photos that you've taken that tell me something about who you are now.

I'm a very sporty person and I like to get outside as much as I can 1
to play sport, especially football and I have a football team that I play 2
for on a Friday night in a six-a-side football team, which I love to do. 3
I also like to be watching the tele and playing on my Play Station 3, 4
which I spend a bit too much time on I would say. 5

But I always have my life at school as well which I do a lot of work 6
for, 'strive to work harder and do better and I have a lot of friends at 7
school that I mix with and do my work with in all my classes and 8.
then I have my work life as well at the pub...and er,..in the kitchen 9
which I've made a lot of friends from as well and hopefully that 'll 10
go on my CV. 11

I Right, so, what sort of things are you doing at The B (name of pub)?
I cook, I do starters and sweets, all sorts. I used to do washing up but 12
I've been promoted. And I've made a lot of friends from that and I 13
think I've grown as a person from doing the work and when I talk 14

to people about what I do people are quite impressed cause I've 1
worked there for three years. 2

I that's really good

With the money I've earned from the pub that's my social life. 3

I like to go out shopping for clothes and all sorts and keep up 4

with the fashions. Mum doesn't think that's very good because 5

I spend too much on clothes. 6

At school I like to, I like drama and many people call me a 7

drama queen because I'm always singing and acting that's my 8

favourite subject that I spend a lot of time doing I'll stay back 9

after school if I have to do it.. 10

I also like reading specially biographies of sport like Steven 11

Gerrard and Pele ... I like Peter Kaye as well and comedy... 12

but I'll also read Lord of the Rings and books like that as well. 13

I'm also very into music and I'll often be heard singing songs 14

around and get told to shut up as I'm not very good. (laughs) 15

and I'm also always on my computer which I do work on 16

but I also play games and search the internet... 17

I. Are you in one of these social networking groups, Facebook or Bebo?

I'm just joining ...I joined up onto Facebook, as lot of my friends 1
are on it and I'm meeting new friends. I have lots of friends that 2
go to A School (local independent school) that I don't see very 3
often so I would of course talk to them on Facebook. 4

And then I have my last, it's like...And then there's my second 5
life, which is football, and I go to the C (local professional 6
football team) 7
matches every weekend. That's my pictures. That's who I am 8
now. 9

I. So who you want to be?

Of course football rules my life and if I wanted to do 10
something it would be to play football. I know that's not 11
going to happen. It would be for Liverpool and I want to carry 12
on football for as long as I can. It's a good way to meet friends 13
and to keep fit. Then 14

In the future I want to own my own house and have a family 15
bring them up but in the city not in the countryside cause in 16

T (the village D lives in) I find it quite... there's not many, 1
 there's not enough people my age. It would have to be in 2
 the city where there's things going on. 3
 Another of my aspirations is to learn to drive. Erm because 4
 then I'd be able to get around, do what I want to do and be 5
 more independent. And I would like my Dad's car but he 6
 won't let me touch it. 7
 As a career I'm like to be a journalist especially in sport, 8
 because that's just, I love sport and journalisms the course 9
 I want to do at university. 10
 University's my next step I think but I don't want to go too 11
 far away... I want to stick around here, maybe Newcastle, 12
 Lancaster and Sheffield. I know from certain universities 13
 and places about Lancaster and Newcastle, because my 14
 brother lives in Newcastle and my sister was at Lancaster 15
 and they sound like good options. 16
 I look towards my idols as well, especially football players 17
 like Steven Gerrard erm people like that and also other 18
 people 19
 just like in journalism like my cousin she's a sports 20
 journalist she worked for Manchester United Tranmere 21
 Rovers and Preston North End. On the side of media, did 22

the internet site. This would lead to earning a lot of money 1
so that I could buy everything I want to buy and do everything 2
I want to do in life. 3

Q. What's it like being a young man growing up in Cumbria?

erm....It's ok (sighs) but I find that... if I lived in a city, 4
somewhere like Newcastle...there'd be a lot more things to 5
do and I'd maybe not have a better life but I'd enjoy it more. 6
Cumbria, I mean, it's hard to get around. Just 'cause a lot of 7
my friends don't live in T say Scotby, so i'll have to walk to 8
Brampton then get a bus to Scotby which is just... that takes 9
a couple of hours out of the day. Erm and if I want to go to 10
Carlisle ...well I have to plan ahead. Whereas if you lived 11
somewhere else you could just get up and go.I could go and 12
do what I want then... If I drove, again , that'd be ok and I 13
mean, I know I've got things on my doorstep, like my work... 14
but there are things I would rather do. I wouldn't work if I 15
didn't if I couldn't walk to work. 16

Did you find that question difficult to answer?

It was difficult to answer yeah, because ... 17

I do enjoy living where I do. It's a very nice place to live... 18

who would not want to live in a place like this? 19

I think for a young person you have to have the hustle and

bustle of a city and I don't think Carlisle's quite that. 1
 I think I would move back here if I had the chance in later 2
 life I would move back here. I've already been told that I'll 3
 go to the city and get sick of it after a while it's probably true. 4
 I visited my brother in Newcastle. I love it I stay there all 5
 the time. 6

What are the good points about Cumbria?
 The rural area, it's quiet, you can do things, the people, 7
 the people. Like it's hard that. 8

What about the negative points? We've talked about transport and the
 logistics of getting around.

It's like theres only one bus to t in a week so it's quiet. 9
 That's a positive and a negative. I have to bike or do 10
 something to get there. 11

Because there's no shops I spend a lot of time in the house 12
 that's why I have my music and my playstation and my tele 13
 that I watch spend a lot of time doing whereas I'd rather be 14
 outside playing sport but there's not enough people here to 15
 play sport...well I could play sport with younger children 16

but that's not competitive enough for me. That's why I 1
play football on a Friday that's a neg...well not having 2
enough people around is a negative...the older generation. 3
It's an adult league, 30 teams 3 leagues. 4

Are you still playing cricket?

Yeah often, well not as much as I used to. But I work now 5
on a Sunday but it was a choice I had to make .if I didn't 6
work I couldn't lead the lifestyle I have. 7

From your photos you told me that you're planning to move away and
maybe come back. Can you tell me more about that?

Erm well I think I want to go to a good uni and I just... I 8
want to move away and I want to be more independent I 9
want to meet new people I don't want to stay here I see 10
that as a step back if I stay here because I think I have to 11
make that jump from living at home to living away and 12
doing it myself and living my own life. And not my mum 13
like cooking for me. I think I have to do that and I think 14
that's in a city somewhere ... and there is people there and 15
that's why I don't want to go too far so I've got that comfort 16
zone where mum's only an hour away and I can phone her 17
and talk to her and then there's the thing of coming back ... 18
this is where I was born and bred and this is like the only 19

place I know really. This is a place I love and I'll come 1
back one day. 2

What might stop you being where you want to be? What barriers can
you see?

Well you watch the news and see things about the credit 3
crunch and you think ohh in the future it's going to be 4
worse and you think how does that affect me? I don't 5
think I really understand how it would affect me yet . 6
There's all sorts of things that you see in the news like 7
War. I think could that be me some day? You hear stories 8
about world war 1 and WW2 and think would that ever 9
happen again, would that be me? That would stop what I 10
wanted to do 11

I'm quite focused on what I want I want to be though. I think 12
from an early age I've wanted to do journalism. I keep changing 13
my mind though about like university. It'll be...Oh I like the 14
sound of that course at university then I'll change my mind 15
when I see something else. A lot of universities have been 16
coming into school. They come in and give a good talk and 17
I think Oh that sounds good... when really it's just the freshest 18
thing maybe I've heard. I think I'm very focused in what I'm 19

going to do 1

Have you done some research around different journalism courses?

Yeah I've talked to my HoY telling me where the best 2
 courses are and what the best courses are. We have 3
 meetings and I'm on the newspaper at school which is, 4
 again, just experience and helps me to do what I want to 5
 do and for employers to look at it's good. 6

I. So you've taken some opportunities to develop your own skills.

Yeah just trying to kick on and show what I can do. Get 7
 enough things on my cv to show employers and universities 8
 what I can do and hopefully they'll see that and take me on. 9

What's motivating you to reach your goal.

Just it's something I like doing and really, something I want 10
 to do I don't know what I'll do once I'll get there. I meet a 11
 lot of people who say they don't know what they want to 12
 do I think that's..a bad thing..they have to do it later... 13
 don't they...you see people who say 'oh I don't know what 14
 to do' an they don't maybe get where they want to get to in 15
 life, whereas if you know what you want to do you've got 16
 something to work for. An I think ive got something to work 17

for and hopefully get there. 1

Can you remember when you got this idea from?

Erm I was it was well I've always loved sport and of course 2
there's my cousin and she talked about... I've been in with 3
her, just like where she was working and thought oh this is 4
really good. Of course I do English, and I've always never 5
been brilliant with numbers it's always been words. It links 6
together with all the subjects that I do with psychology, law, 7
drama and English, they're all wordy subjects. I've always 8
been ok at writing. In English I just seem to do quite well so 9
it just kind of fits together. I was going to do an English 10
language course and then it came to me 'journalism' and 11
where that might lead. It might not lead to journalism but 12
it could lead to other openings such as the media side. My 13
brother did an English Language course and he works at 14
Northern Rock. Sometimes it's just the degree isn't it. At least 15
with a degree in journalism 16
at least you've got that open to you. But I want to a course with 17
maybe journalism at the forefront and maybe drama you can do 18
a second course like drama, at Lancaster you can do that. 19

Do you think you'd do a first degree then a follow up journalism course?

I m not sure . They've always told us at school pick the right 1
course it's the most important thing you can do. So many 2
people drop out cause they didn't pick the right course. But 3
I'm still mulling over options, maybe psychology maybe drama, 4
English language but yeah it's a possibility that I did go away, 5
did a degree and then followed it up with journalism. 6

How has this process affected the way you think about yourself and your
future?

When you first asked me it sent a lot of thoughts through my 7
mind. Thinking it's who am I and what do people see me 8
as an how do I come across to people you do think about... 9
I don't know if you change but I did think is that really me 10
and do I actually do that and what do people think when I 11
do that. But I think if I did change it would change me as a 12
person and people see me awes I am. I don't think I do. 13
I don't think there's anything wrong with myself. 14
That's just me 15

Was it that you had to think about something you hadn't actually
thought about before?.

Yeah. Cause, they're just things that I do naturally and I hadn't 16
really thought about them thinking about who actually am I . 17

I just do it. I just do the things I like. There isn't anything that 1
holds me back from doing it 2

Which was harder saying who you are now or who you wanted to be?
Who I wanted to be because I found that a lot of things that 3
I do now. I'm happy with my life now. Because of working 4
and certain things that I do I've found myself very independent 5
so I think if I'dn not been so independent then it would have been 6
easier to do who I wanted to be as I I'd have had more aspirations 7
whereas I already do a lot of things on my own and with my 8
friends therefore its I found it easier to do who I was than 9
who I want to be. 10

Participant E Transcription

Photos

R. Thanks for agreeing to talk to me. We're going to talk first of all about your photographs.

G. this is a photograph showing my favourite films. It also shows that I like comedy films.

R. What is is about comedy films that you like

G. Basically they make me laugh

R. Ok is that quite important for you?

G. Yeah. This is a picture of my dog, it shows I like animals and pets. A lot. We've had Ty about 7 years. He's a family dog. We all love him

G. This is a picture of me and my friends, just means we like to hang out.

R. So what sorts of things are you doing when you're hanging out?

G. well we go and play football or play on the X-box. WE do all sorts
Sometimes have sleepovers and stuff.

G. This is a picture of me on holiday. It means I like to go to new exciting places. It's a picture of me in a temple, a Buddhist temple in Thailand. It basically means that I like to go to new exciting places.

R. What was the most interesting thing you found when you were in Thailand?

G. well in this picture you can see all the gold is gold leaf which I found pretty impressive and the way some people live in Thailand... I went up to the north to see the tribes and that was interesting.

This is three of the people I met on my holiday to Thailand. This is our guide and two of his friend. Basically it means I like to meet new people, new interesting people.

R. What makes a person interesting to you?

Well, not so much interesting people but just nice guys, I like or people who have an interesting story like these guys who've lived in the jungle and are part of a tribe.

This is picture of a rugby ball...basically it just shows that I like rugby. It's my favourite sport.

Sometimes you wear a football shirt are you into sport generally?

Mainly rugby but I sometimes watch football but mainly rugby. I really like the rush you get from it...

...is that from watching or from playing as well?

... both.

This is a picture of the Welsh fellas, basically shows I support Wales

Why do you support Wales?

I've been brought up supporting Wales, by my dad. my Dad's Welsh I've got lots of relatives in Wales.

So do you feel a connection with Wales?

— Yeah I do

This is a picture of an X-box it basically means I like playing on the X-box and computer consdoles and stuff lke that.

That's something that you do with friends as well isn't in it

Yeah I do that with friends

So do you go to other peoples houses and they've or do they come round here?

Yeah or we can play together on the internet. My friend can play on it at his house and I can play on it with him here at my house.

Now we're into the ones about who I want to be

This is a picture of Canary Wharf... it just means I want to be a successful businessman or own a big company or something like that. Be successful in life.

And what does that look like? What does being successful mean?

Having lots of money ,having a nice family, having a nice lifestyle....that kind of thing....and having lots of friends.

This is a drawing or design of a car and basically means that I'd like to have something to do with design for my job. This is wads of cash which basically

— means I'd like to have lots of money when I'm older.

Where do you think you'll be able to achieve these things?

Erm hopefully through owning a successful business, that kind of thing.

How do you see yourself getting into the design field?

I'm doing product design at school and I'm very imaginative. I wanna do computer graphics that kind of thing that's kind of inspired by seeing all the films, special effects and all that. I'm very interested in creating new things. Like on my school course I've been involved in creating a corporate image for a company. I've enjoyed that.

So are you planning to go on into the 6th form next year?

Yes

I think you might have the chance to do Young Enterprise?

Yeah maybe utilise that interest.

This is a picture of my mum with her robe after university and her degree/diploma and it basically means I'd like to go to university as well and come out with a degree in something.

Why are you thinking that you'd like to go to university?

To to help me get that boost like so I'm more likely to be successful.

Have you thought about courses yet?

Probably graphics design, that sort of thing. I'm mostly interested in maths and science cause they're my best subjects in school. This is a picture of the world which basically means I'd like to travel the world when I'm older and meet lots of interesting people and go to interesting places as you saw earlier, that's the kind of thing I'd like to do.

Have a nice family as you can see from this picture.

Family seems to be quite important to you.

Yeah. Basically having a happy life style...being happy basically. Yeah

— Then... I might join The Forces. That seems to be quite a good experience, my auntie's in there. An erm it seems to be a good opportunity and they pay for your university as well. Yeah

So has your auntie talked to you a lot about being in the forces?

Yeah. Well I went to visit her at work on Monday, 2 days ago, and that was quite interesting cause I got to meet the different people at her work place and see the kind of place she works and yeah just getting some experience.

And there's lots of different roles in the army so what are you thinking...

I don't think I'd like to be a soldier because the idea of being shot doesn't really appeal to me I'd probably want something to do with computers like IT or comms or intelligence. Something away from all the fighting I think.

How did you feel talking about your pictures?

Kind of easy because of none of them were bad things.

And I had to question you sometimes.

What's it like being a young man growing up in Cumbria?

Being out in the country all your friends are at least a mile away in fact my closest friend is a mile away. I think that's the only bad point.

Good points about growing up in Cumbria most people who I've met seem to be very nice and sociable, which is something I look for in people. Erm also it's just a nice place, erm it's very out of the way unfortunately, that's a bad point. Some of the people from England who were with us in Thailand. When I said I was from Carlisle said where's that ? no one knows where it is it's a long way from any major cities and it doesn't have an airport. That's all I can...

It's quite safe, isn't it?

— Yeah it's quite safe but there's some people, some places even that are bit rough, to be avoided.

From your photos it seems as though You've got some big ambitions about the future. Do you see yourself doing that here or do you think you'll have to move away?

Erm I think I'd have to be somewhere more central to achieve some of these things like having a big corporation or being part of a big corporation. There aren't many big corporations in Carlisle so yeah I'd have to go to a major city but I'm sure I'd come back here because it's just a beautiful place isn't it? I don't know where I could go I'm sure I'd find somewhere interesting maybe go somewhere sunny.

How do feel about having to go away to achieve what you want to even if you do come back later?

I think I'd feel ok about it because... so long as I had a place I could call home, at home I'd be happy, if you get the idea. I'd be happy to go away, to explore, as long as had somewhere to come back to.

And if you're thinking about going to university you could go to the University of Cumbria

Yeah... uhh... I'd...maybe not I'd want to go to Edinburgh or Cardiff somewhere like that... in Britain but away.

What might stop you from getting what you want?

What might stop me? Erm sometimes I don't prioritise things right or miss out on things just because... I suppose ...laziness

Is that something that 's internal to you? Is that something you could manage

As long as I can prioritise things correctly I can get it done. I know how to do things I sometimes don't know when to do things? (16mins)

What might help you to reach your goals

Erm I suppose support from my parents and friends?

And how would that support show itself

I don't know like expressing an interest in what I do and giving advice and support ing me advice, showing interest that sort of thing erm what else? that's about it

Do you know what your friends are thinking of doing?

At the moment all my friends are going to college or 6th form at WHS same as me. I don't know what they're thinking of doing after that.

And what you hoping to do at whs in the 6th form?

Erm maths biology, chemistry and technology in my first year, probably fdrop biology in the second year

What's motivating you for these ambitions

Just the idea of getting good grades and being successful. Dad has put in a few rewards some 'incentives' to help me

And does that work for you? does it motivate you? does that help?

Yeah that helps as long as I feel I get something positive out of it I'll try harder..

And you were going for a job the other day did you manage to find something?

They said they were full but I'm going to try and find other places over the summer to help fill my wallet.

How has this process changed how you think about yourself in any way?

No not really

Or has it made you think about yourself in a way you haven't thought about yourself before?

No cos I've always wanted to be successful and have all these nice things like money, family, er and nice life style and they've basically been the incentives for me to do well and I think they still are and these pictures just describe how I feel about them.

Last question

How will you know when you're successful?

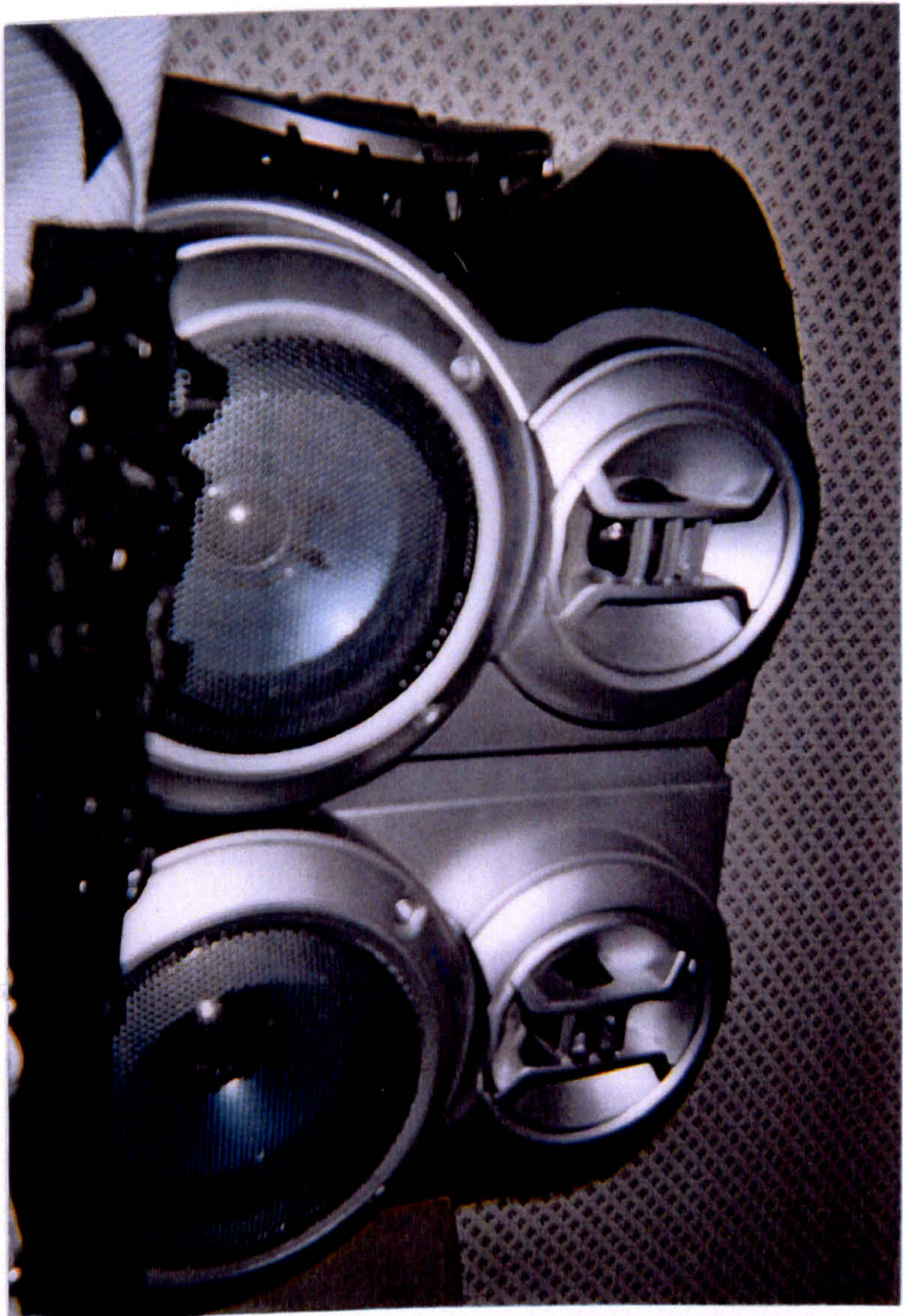
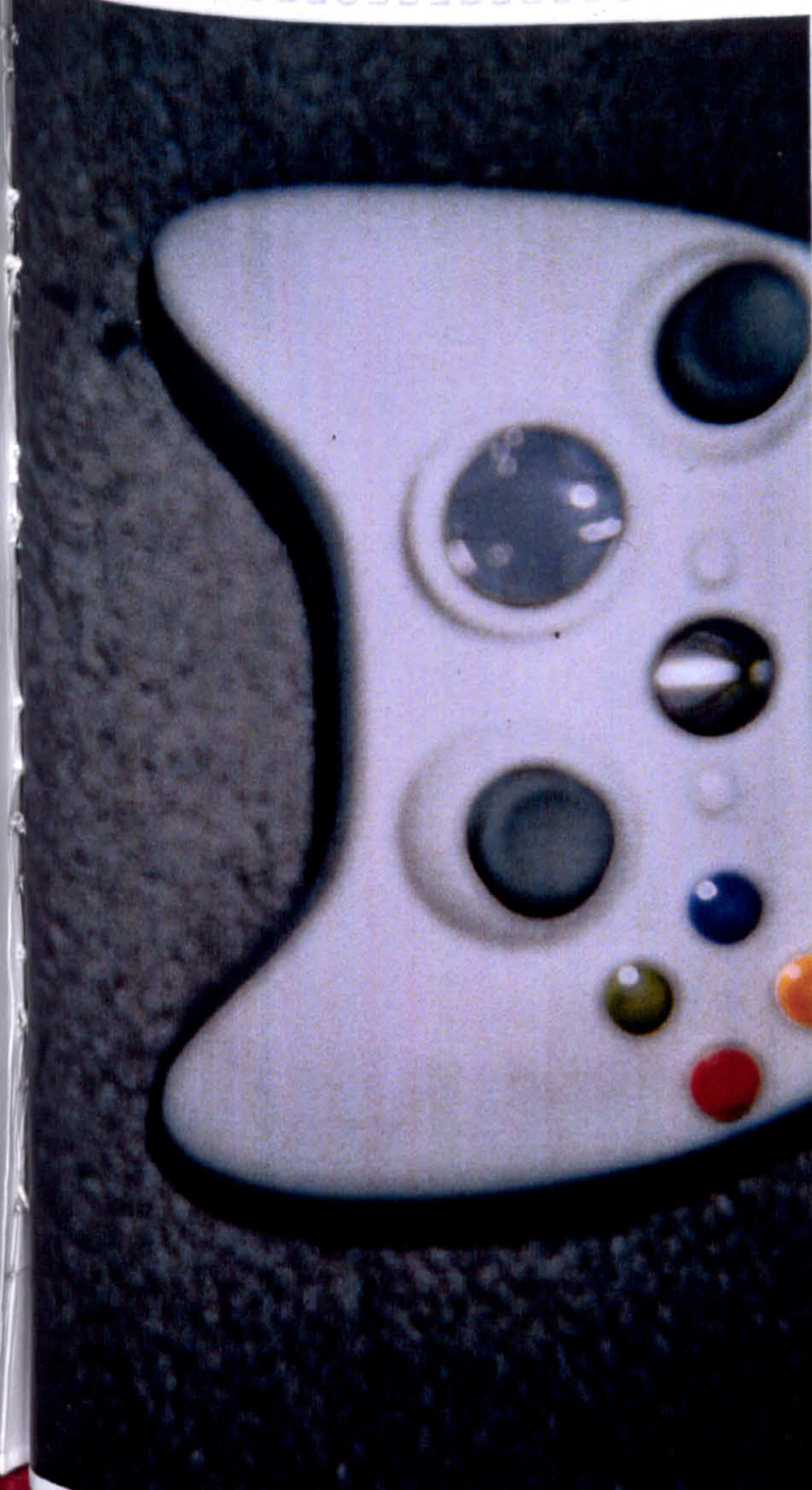
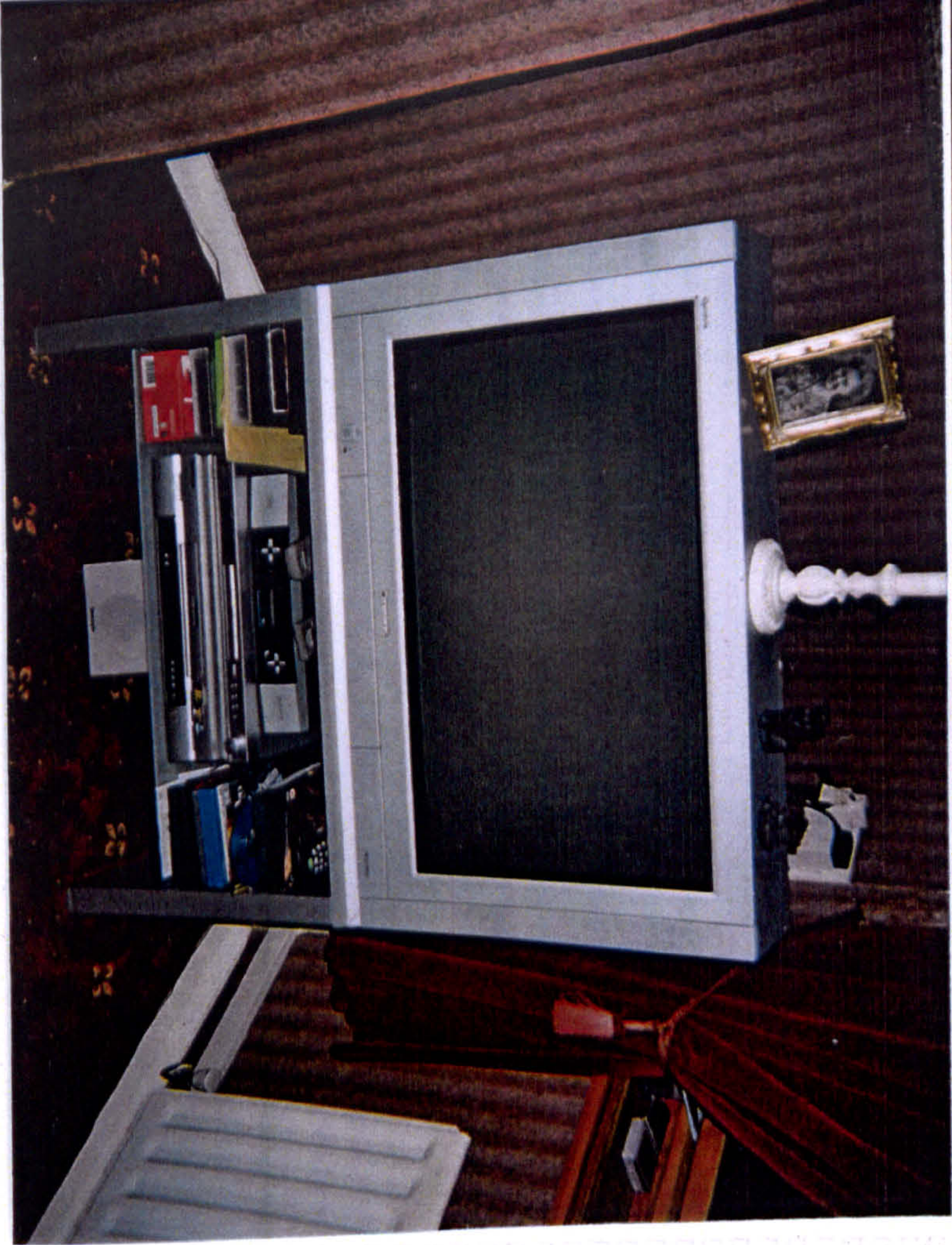
When I ... I want to say when I've got a nice family...when I've got lots of money when I have got a big corporation but I've already said that.

I think what I'm really asking you is how will you know when to stop. How rich is rich enough? How happy is happy enough?

I think happy enough is going smoothly and everything in my life is good and when I have enough money to afford the things I need on top of some little treats. Yeah that;s pretty much it.

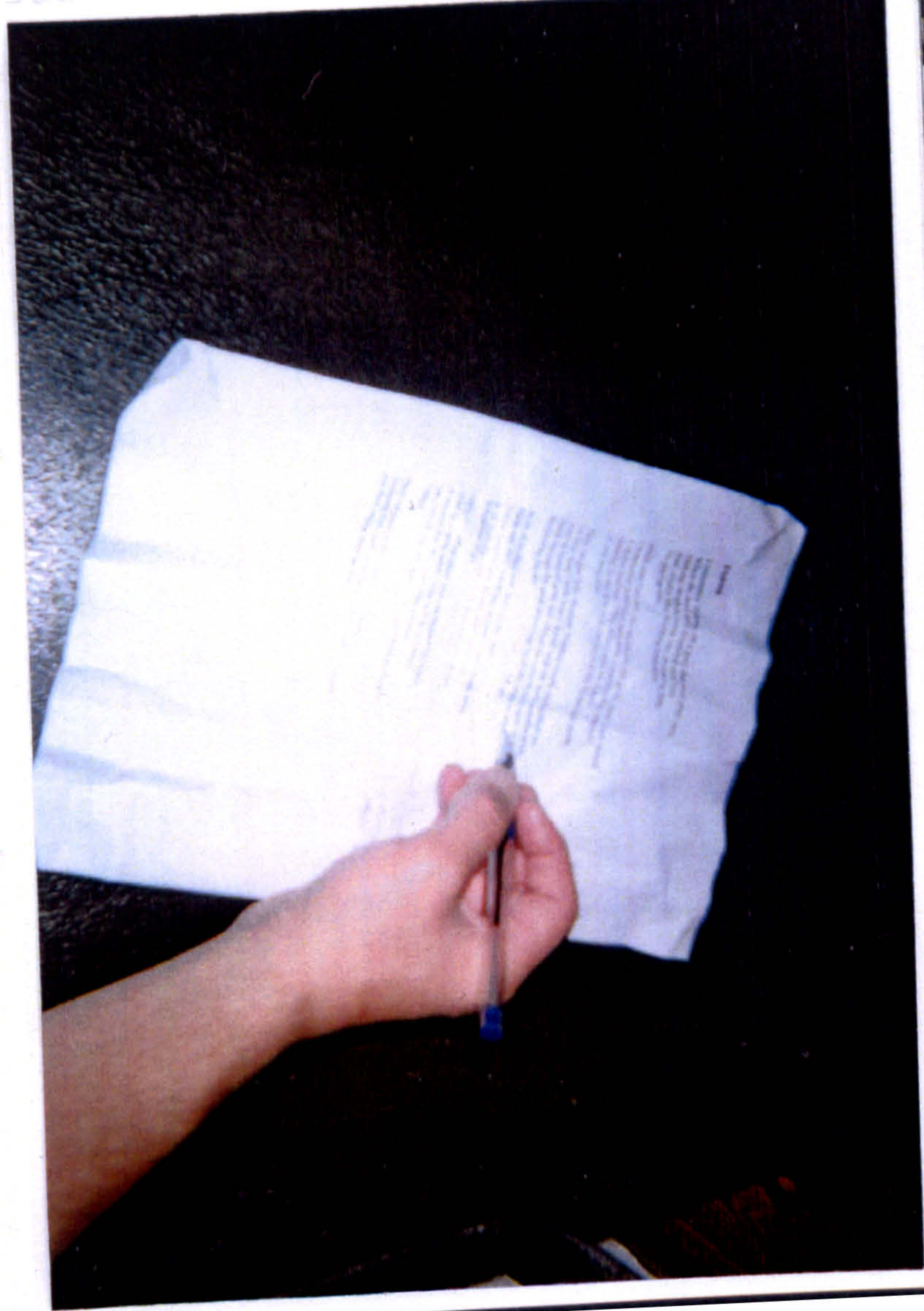
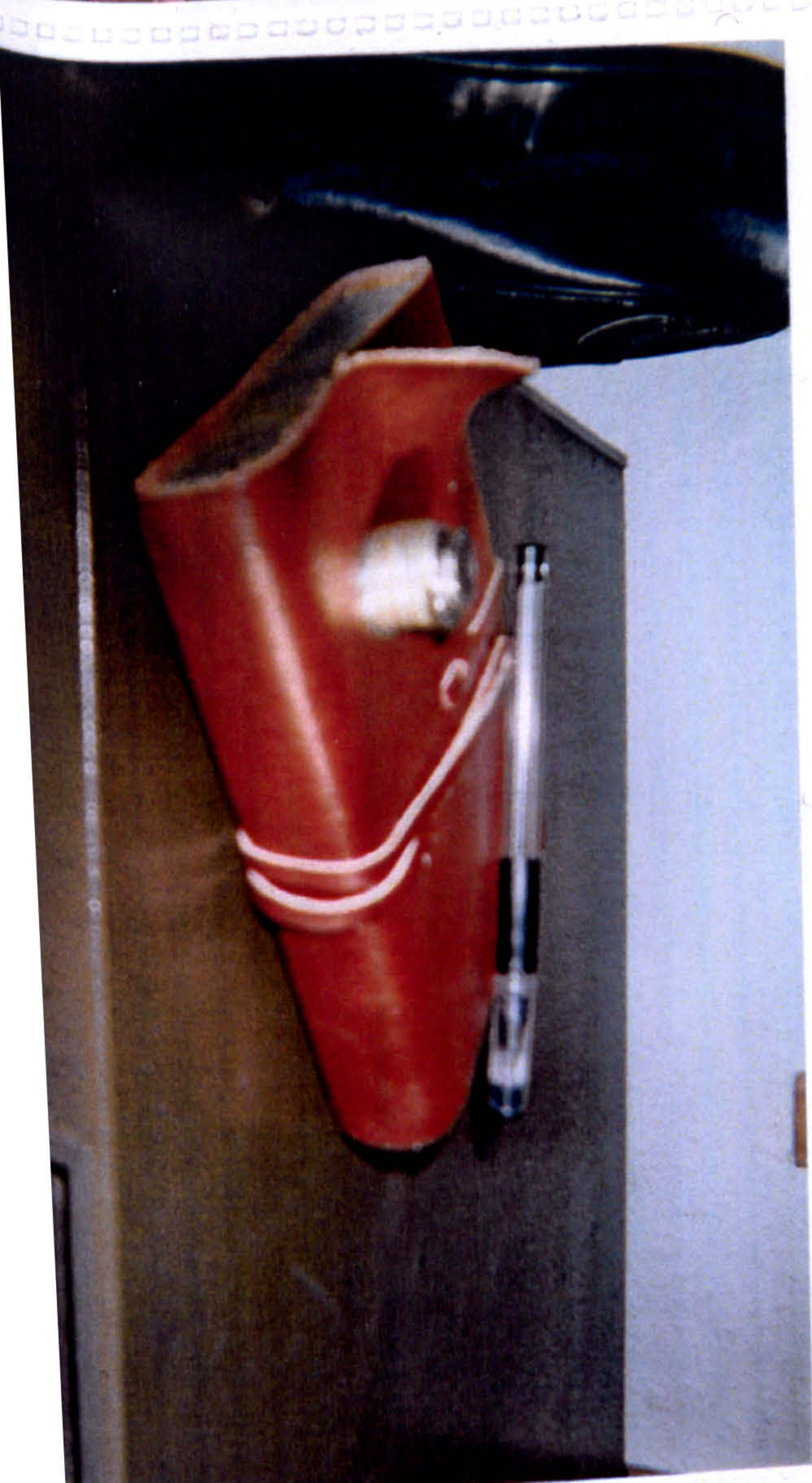
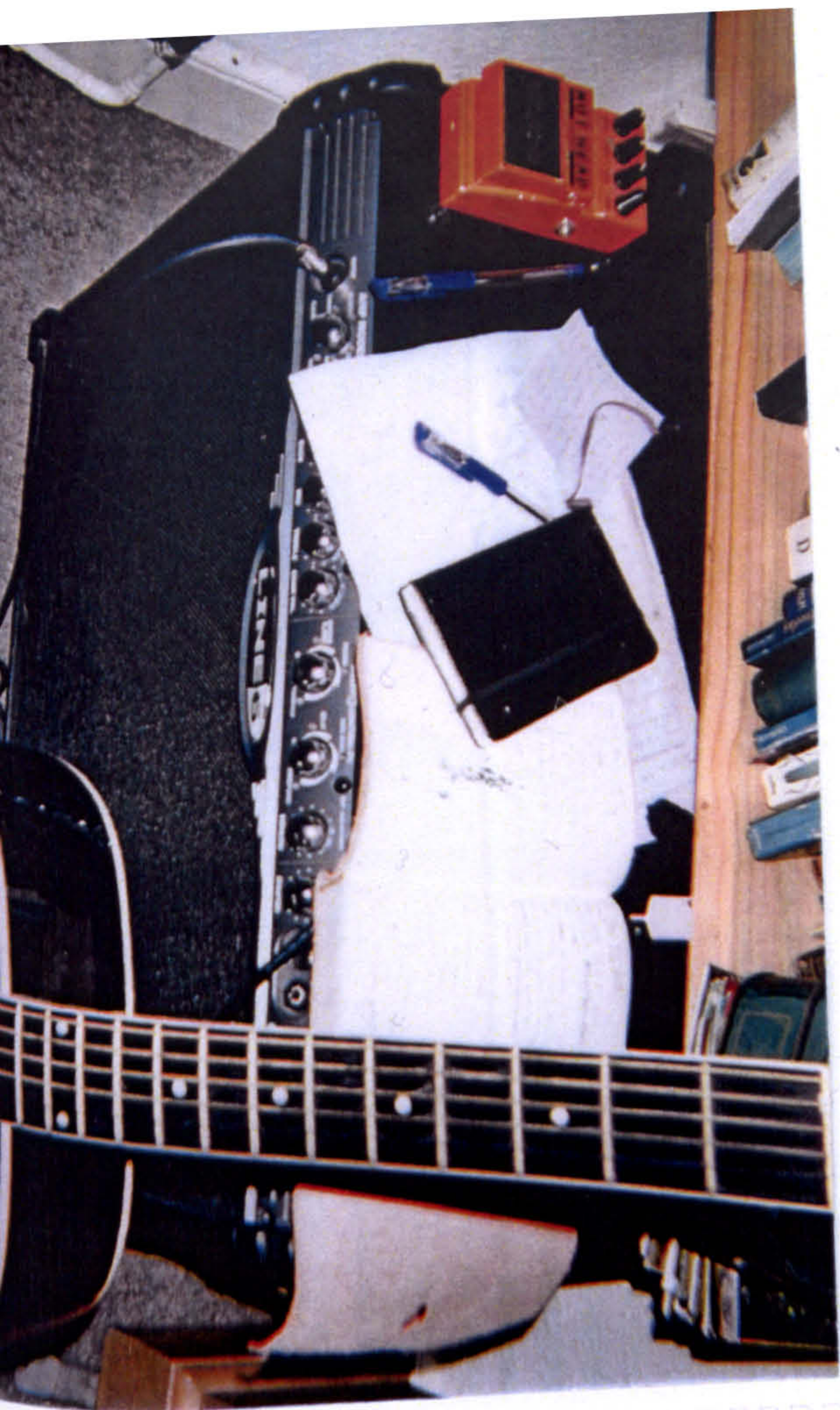
Appendix E

Photographs

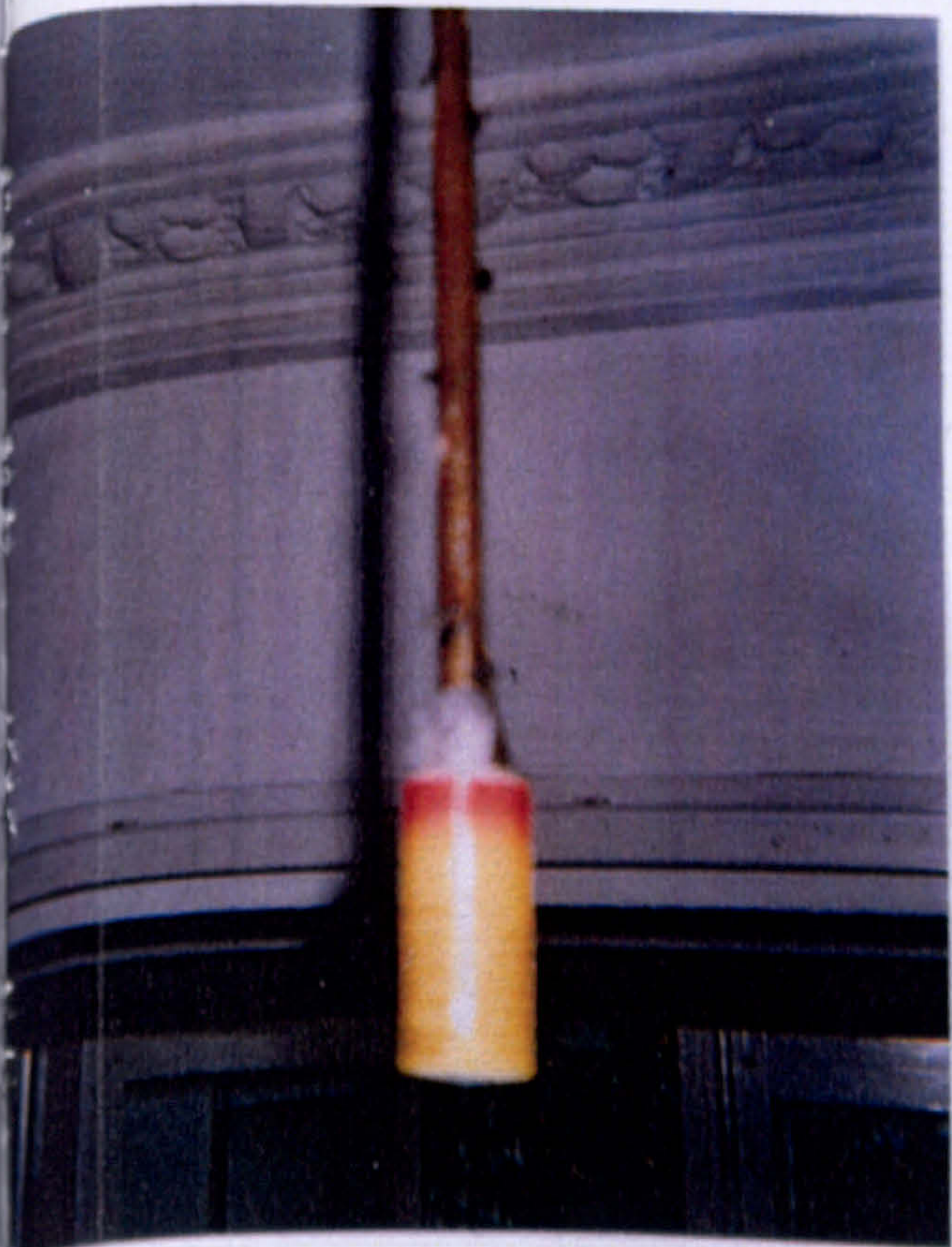


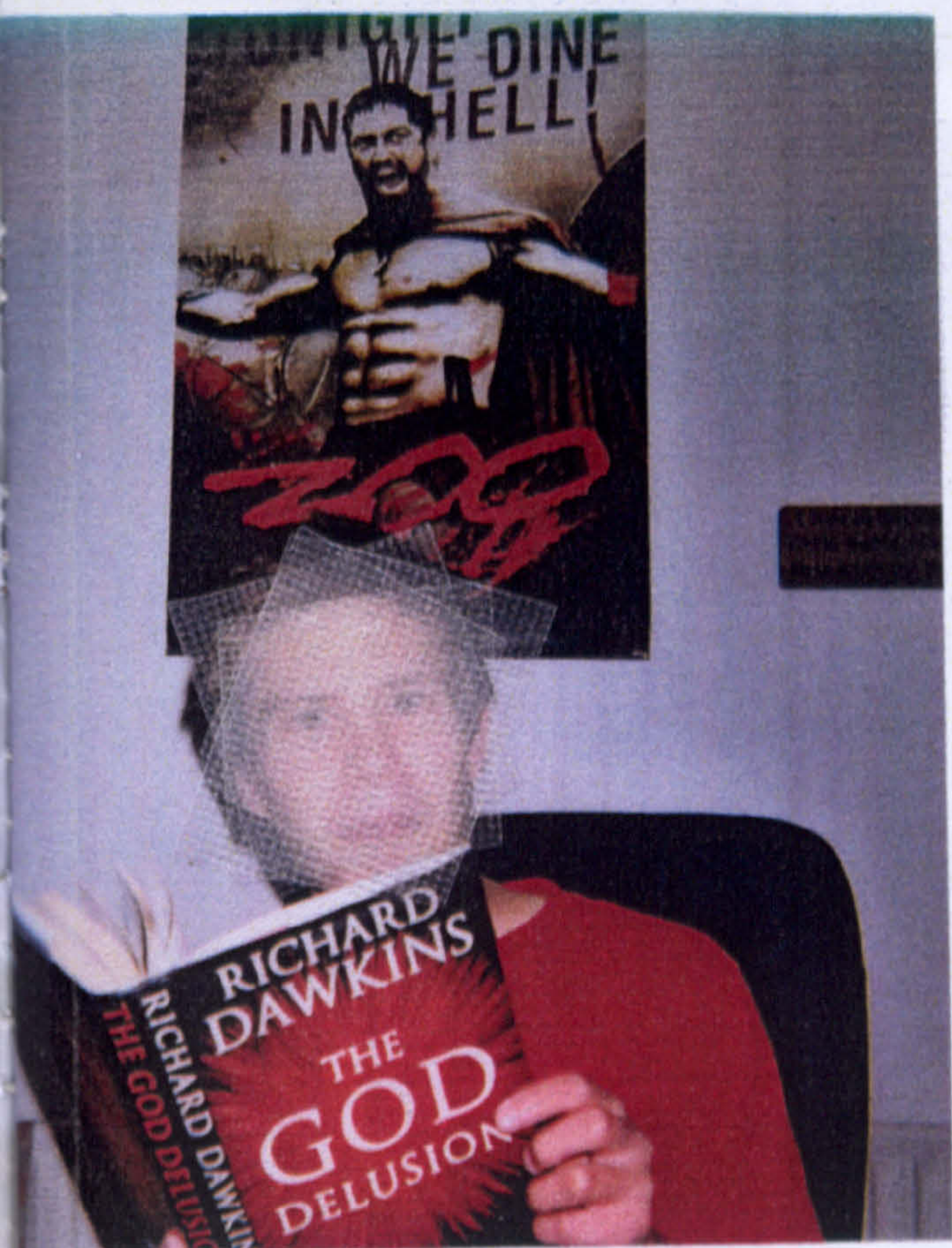


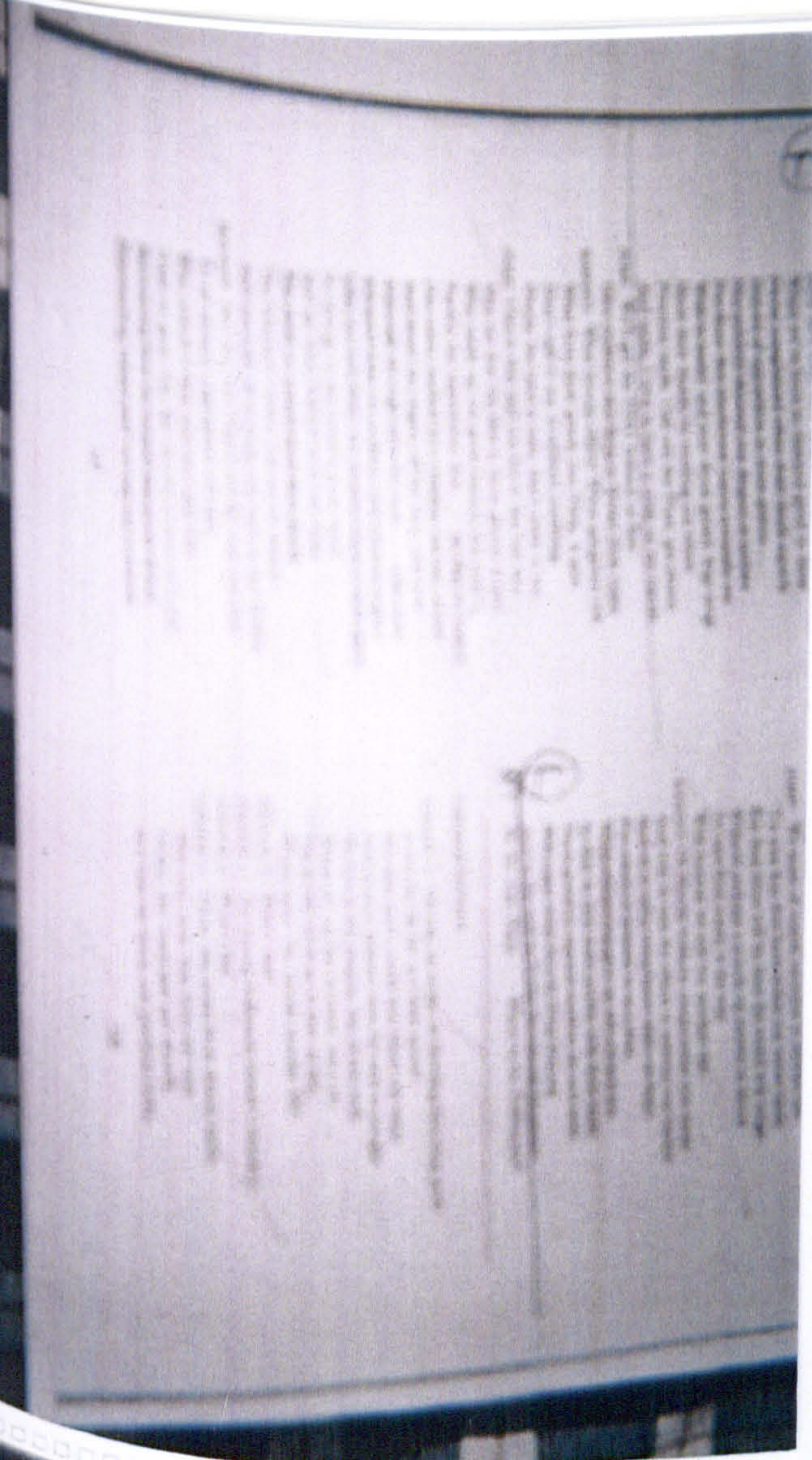








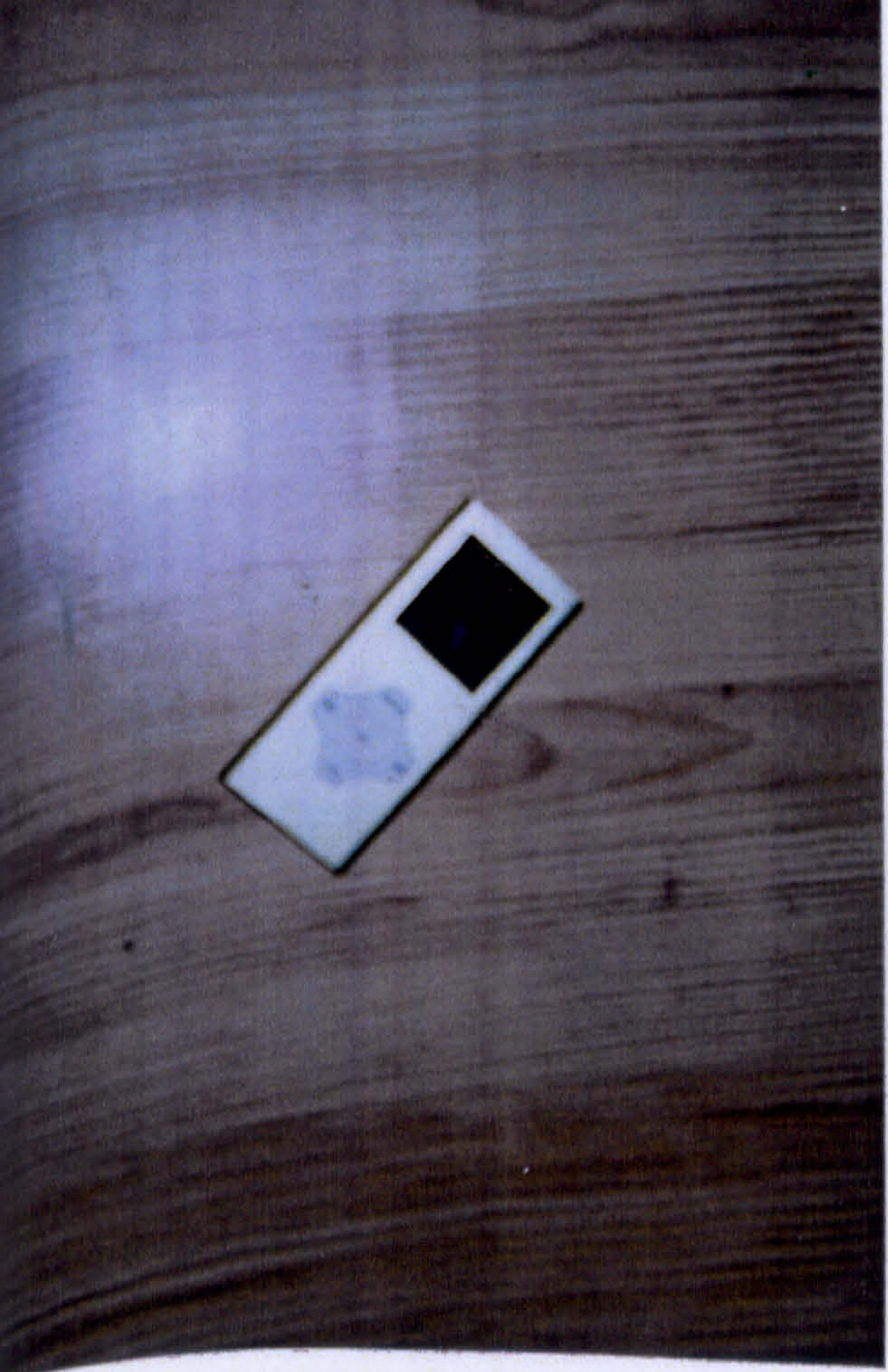


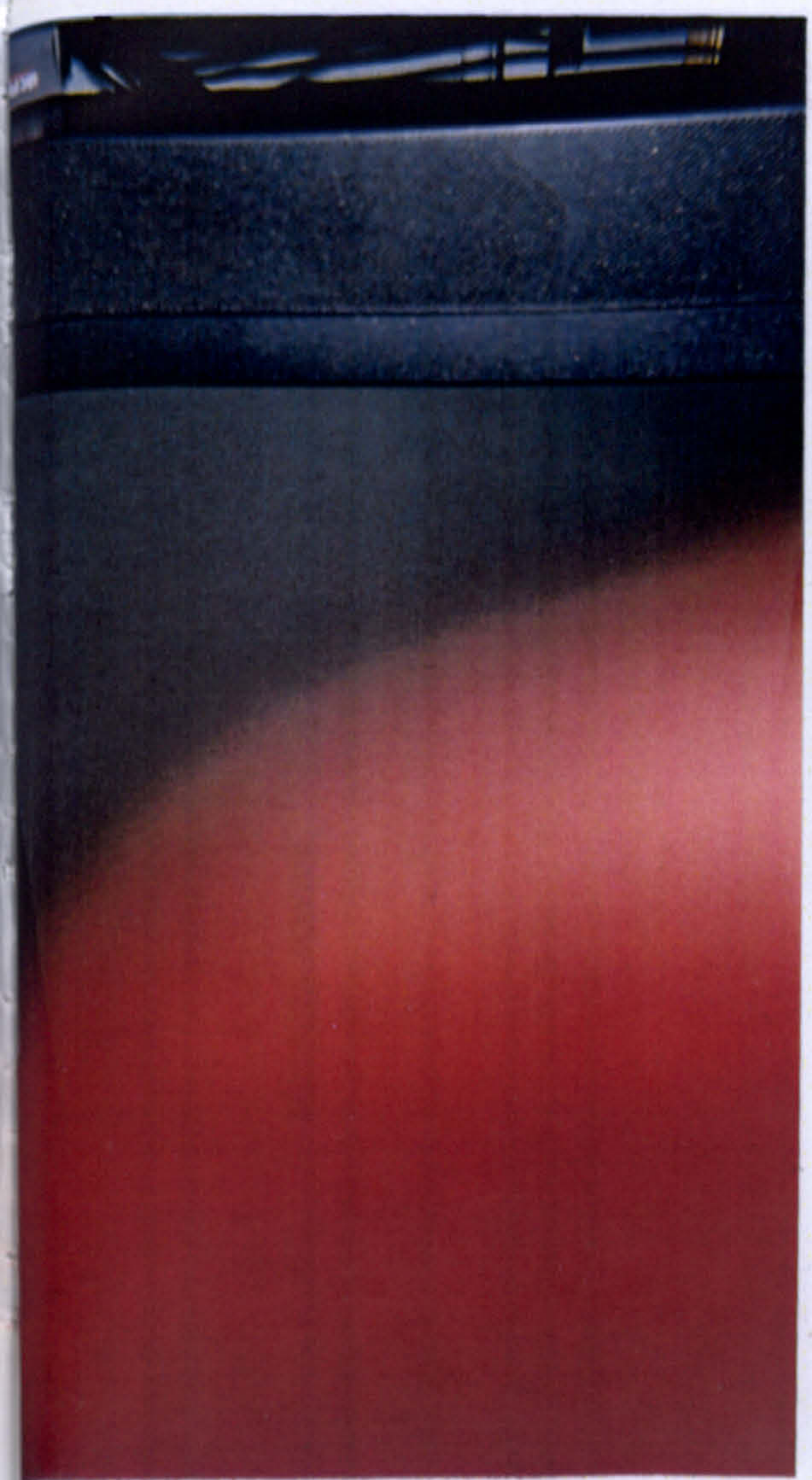
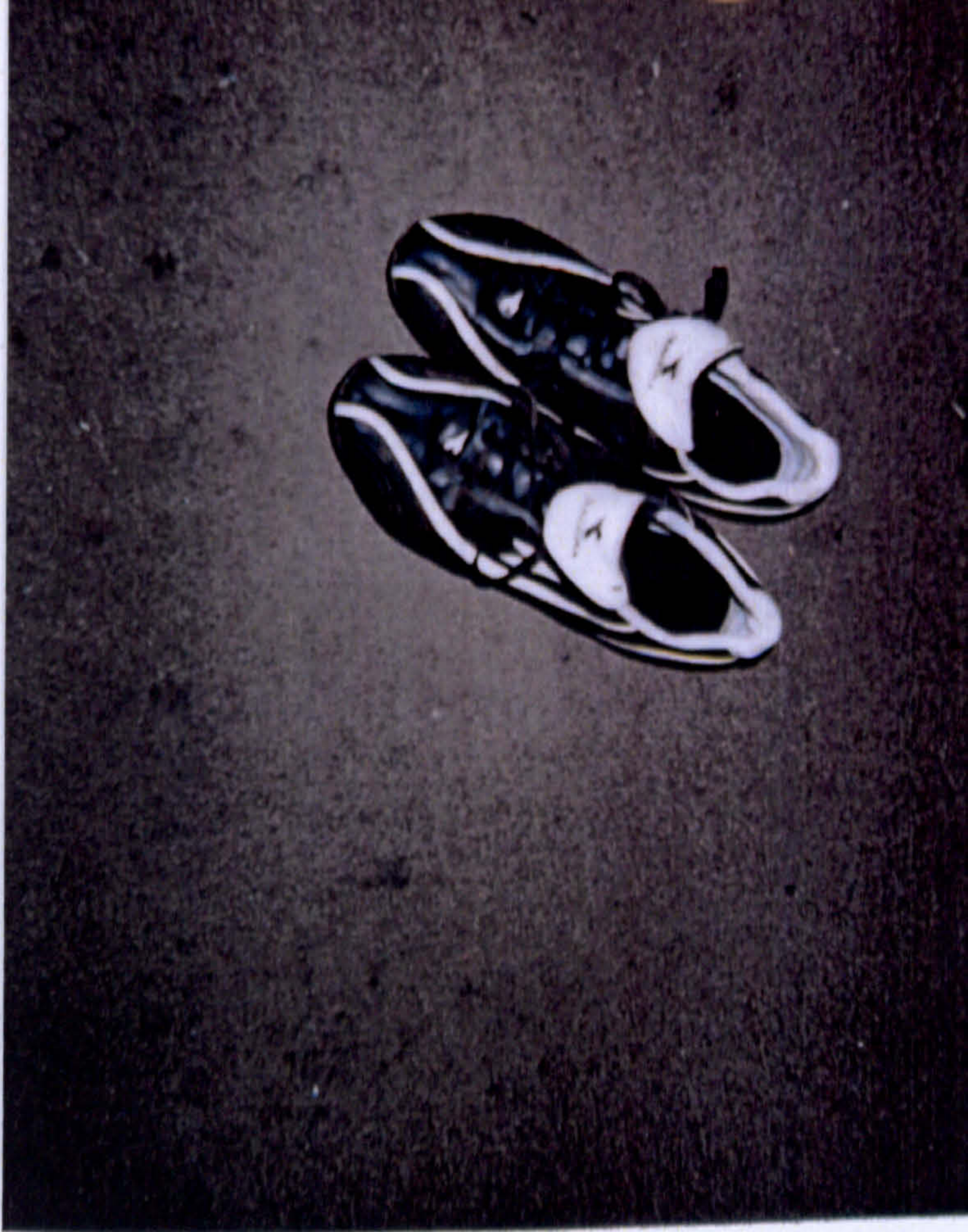














Appendix F

Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

What is it like to be a young man growing up in Cumbria?

What are the good parts?

The bad parts?

How are you going to get where you want to be?

What are the barriers?

The things that will help you?

What do you want from life?

How has taking part in this research been for you?