THE WORLD OF ADOLESCENCE: USING PHOTOVOICE TO EXPLORE PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING IN ADOLESCENTS WITH AND WITHOUT AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY.

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Abstract

Adolescence is considered a time of change and, to some extent, upheaval. Psychological Sense of Community has been utilised as a framework for understanding adolescents' experiences in their communities. The present study explored the experiences of 10 adolescents from two urban schools in eastern Australia, a specialist school for students with a mild intellectual disability, and a mainstream school. Using Photovoice, an ethnographic research method utilising photographs generated by the research participants as the primary data source, the participants were actively engaged in taking photographs about their day to day lives in their communities. The photographs were supplemented by individual semi-structured interviews and small group discussions. Results confirmed the importance of meaningful relationships with family, neighbours, pets and peers for participants from both groups. Levels of participation in a range of activities were also explored. Concepts of community including place, neighbourhood, virtual communities and communities of interest were elicited from participants. Many aspects of adolescent life were similar for both groups, although family provided more support to participants with an intellectual disability in enabling them to participate actively within the community. Discussions about spirituality were more prominent with participants without a disability, possibly reflecting language and cognitive abilities. All participants expressed concerns about growing up, letting go of childhood and facing responsibilities associated with adulthood. Overall, the present study suggested that the day to day experiences of adolescents from both groups were similar with social interactions underpinning what they considered to be important.

Doctor of Applied Psychology Declaration

I, Lynette O'Grady, declare that the Doctor of Applied Psychology (Community) thesis entitled "The World of Adolescence: Using Photovoice to explore Psychological Sense of Community and wellbeing in adolescents with and without an intellectual disability" is no more than 40,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature: Date: 31st March, 2008

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence has long been considered a time of change and, to some extent, upheaval. Adolescence is defined as the period between the onset of puberty and early adulthood. During this time, individuals are faced with a myriad of rapid and complex changes -- physical, cognitive, social and emotional -- which may lead to a range of experiences with some unprecedented challenges. An increased discrepancy between sexual and psychosocial maturity has arisen due to earlier pubertal changes initially and social and economic factors resulting in increased dependency on parents during early adulthood (Kleinert, 2007; Patton & Viner, 2007). Although adolescence has traditionally been characterised as a period within one's life cycle when storm and stress is more likely to occur than at any other life stage (Arnett, 1999), an exploration of contemporary thoughts on adolescence within western culture suggests that this is not always the case.

Recent research has recognized the importance of protective factors and has begun to explore the promotion of resilience in adolescents (e.g., Resnick, 2005; Vassallo, Smart, Sanson, & Dussuyer, 2004). Australian researchers, Fuller, McGraw, and Goodyear (2002), have clearly defined the critical roles that families, schools and communities play in supporting adolescents in negotiating the challenges that arise during this life stage. This contrasts with previous research which tended to focus on the individualist, and often

negative, aspects of adolescent development, such as risk taking behaviours and antisocial behaviours (e.g., Maggs, Frome, Eccles, & Barber, 1997; Moore & Parsons, 2000).

The capacity of schools and the broader community to both influence and support adolescents is also only beginning to be explored. Psychological sense of community (PSOC), as the "fundamental human phenomenon of collective experience" (Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008, p.62), has been considered in relation to its relevance to adolescents (e.g., Chipeur & Pretty, 1999; O'Grady, 2000). The components of PSOC, including membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs and shared emotional connection, go some way in explaining the role of neighbourhood as one aspect of community in supporting adolescents. Neighbourhoods have also been recognized as an instrumental factor in child and adolescent development as they influence behaviour, attitudes and values and provide a range of risks and opportunities (Boardman & Saint Onge, 2005; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Sealand, 1993; Mead, 1984). The place of the school as the key institution within the community that supports adolescents has been acknowledged by Crawford and Rossiter (2006) who explored the importance of the development of identity in adolescents through the search for meaning and spirituality. They acknowledge the role of schools in providing frameworks to assist with this aspect of the adolescent developmental stage. Some research has also explored the relationship between neighbourhood and scholastic success (Kowaleski-Jones, Dunifon, & Ream 2006).

PSOC has provided researchers with a framework to improve understandings of adolescent behaviour and needs in a range of settings. Factors which have been considered in relation to PSOC in the school setting, for example, include grade level, interpersonal relations, extracurricular activities, school size and school organization (Bateman, 2002;

Royal & Rossi, 1996). Whitlock (2007) found that adolescent connectedness to community was influenced by factors such as quality of adolescent-adult exchange, availability of outlets for creative engagement; well advertised opportunities for meaningful input; safety and perceived welcome in public spaces. Pretty (2002) argued that perceptions of one's community and experiences within it, particularly PSOC and community attachment, can be important factors in the development of an adolescent's community-minded self. She claimed that an adolescent's experiences in the neighbourhood provide information as to his or her identity as a community member (Pretty, 2002).

Increasingly, questions have arisen in relation to the contemporary meaning of "community" and the possibilities of alternative definitions to physical locale or place-based communities, such as neighbourhoods or towns. It has also been observed that an individual may belong to more than one community. Traditional concepts of community may no longer apply as technological advances create new opportunities for social engagement and interaction. Accordingly, the role of relational communities (such as communities of interest and virtual communities) has been considered by some researchers (Brodsky & Marx, 2001; Obst, Smith, & Zinkiewicz, 2002c).

Issues of inclusion and exclusion apply when one identifies with a particular community. Puddifoot (2003) identified elements such as identification, distinctiveness and orientation that may form a model of community identity. His model also incorporated aspects related to evaluation of one's community and one's view of others' perceptions of the community. Gustafson (2001) described "place" as having many meanings to individuals, meanings which can be broadly classified under three poles: the individual and inter-related themes of environment (physical environment and distinctive features); self (often expressed

as experiences and memories) and others (through the perceived characteristics, traits and behaviours of inhabitants). He developed a three pole model within which various meanings of place could be mapped – not only at the three poles, but also in-between them (Gustafson, 2001).

Adolescents are not a homogeneous group, although much previous research has only considered the experiences of those adolescents attending mainstream schools. The ways in which adolescents describe community, identify with it and interact with it has been explored by Pretty, Chipeur, and Bramston (2003). Historically, people with intellectual disabilities have tended to be excluded from decision making, community involvement and research projects, despite integration having been advocated for some time (Wituk, Pearson, Bomhoff, Hinde, & Meissen, 2006). The experiences of adolescents with intellectual disabilities have only recently been explored (Bramston, Bruggerman, & Pretty, 2002; Pretty, Rapley, & Bramston, 2002). This research considered how community connectedness is related to the perception of quality of life in adolescents with an intellectual disability, particularly through the use of community facilities and feelings of belonging and how this relates to subjective quality of life. They found similarities in the perceptions and use of community facilities by both adolescents with and without an intellectual disability.

The present study aims to explore the perceptions of adolescents with and without a mild intellectual disability in relation to their experiences within the neighbourhood, their meaningful connections to others and wellbeing. This is of particular relevance as notions of community and traditional supports for adolescents may be changing at a time when adolescence as a life stage is becoming longer and more complex. The PSOC framework will be used to explore ideas of meaningful connections. A consideration of the role that

neighbourhoods may or may not play in the development of a young person's identity will also be considered..

The present study focuses on the meaningful engagement of participants in the research process. The use of a modified version of Photovoice, an ethnographic research method, to engage participants will add to the knowledge base as a methodology which respectfully aims to develop a greater understanding of adolescents through the course of their daily lives (Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000). This methodology, through the provision of a disposable camera to participants, then uses the photographs taken by participants as the primary data source. Photovoice promotes participants' active decision making about the photographs chosen to be taken and explored. Through the act of photography and subsequent discussions in interviews and small group discussions, this process aims to discover what aspects of life are most meaningful to them. This methodology is considered to be of particular benefit in providing opportunities to develop interest in the project by adolescents and for the active participation of people who traditionally may not participate in research projects such as adolescents with intellectual disabilities. The visual component, which is supplemented by the traditional verbal aspects of the research process, is particularly inclusive of adolescents and people with disabilities who may lack verbal fluency.

Given schools' and local governments' interest in recent years in building resilience in adolescents, despite methodological issues in defining resilience (Harvey & Delfabbro, 2004; Richardson, 2002; Vanderpol, 2002), and promoting student voice, it is expected that the present study will build on previous research to assist schools and communities in gaining

a better understanding of adolescents' needs (Gilligan, 2000; Nettles, Mucherah, & Jones, 2000).

CHAPTER 2

ADOLESCENCE

2.1   Adolescent health and wellbeing

Adolescence as a developmental stage typically describes the period between the onset of puberty and early adulthood. Adolescent health has been placed on the agenda in research and policy directions during recent decades. Resnick (2005) argued that there is compelling evidence identifying key protective factors in the lives of adolescents. Accordingly, the promotion of a healthy youth development has become a focus for researchers and practitioners with a goal of enhancing protective factors in the lives of adolescents. Protective factors, according to Resnick, refer to the "events, opportunities and experiences that promote confidence and competence, and protect young people from harm" (2005, p. 398). He elaborated that the study of these protective factors, with a range of different groups of adolescents, has:

> revealed the importance of feeling a strong sense of connectedness: to parents, to family, to other pro-social, supportive adults, as well as the protective effects of feeling connected to school, and experiencing a sense of spirituality – a sense of connectedness to a creative life force in the universe (Resnick, 2005, p.398).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory, which considered the individual to be the central figure in a nested system encompassing internal and external influences, has been recognised by Harvey and Delfabbrio (2004), in exploring resilience research relating to "disadvantaged adolescents".. According to the theory, a complex reciprocal interaction occurs between an individual and the people, institutions and symbols to lead to human development. Harvey and Delfabbrio argued that this theory, whilst useful as a broadly descriptive framework from which to explore issues, does not provide guidance in relation to the roles and functions of the systems. They suggested that future research should place emphasis on the reports and experiences of people who appear to have overcome adversity. This would allow for the development of cultural and socially relevant ratings of success and understandings of resilience.

Resnick (2005) noted that a growing body of evidence from brain development studies suggests that the experiences of connectedness stimulates reward mechanisms in the human brain, suggesting a biological tendency for social connections and a drive towards meaning and purpose in one's life. Further, he argued that this research appears to support long-standing literature in psychiatry and child development emphasizing the importance of bonding and attachment (e.g. Attachment Theory, Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Whilst much research relating to adolescents refers to the separation of the adolescent from family as a way of individuation, some researchers have challenged notions of separation and instead developed discourses of connection. This aspect of connection recognises teamwork between parents and adolescents, support by parents of adolescents' ideas and support for new versions of self that may develop for adolescents (Dickerson, Zimmerman & Berndt, 1994).

Rapid changes were acknowledged by Resnick in noting that adolescent development occurs in "a world where changes in communication, technology, economics, culture, politics, the environment, education, and demographics are creating challenges, vulnerabilities and opportunities unlike ever before" (Resnick, 2005, p. 398). He advocated for schools and communities, places of welcome, preparing adolescents for a future with many options and opportunities for active engagement and valued contribution. In line with such changes, an extended transition to adulthood has been identified by Caton and Kagan (2007) who explored experiences of adolescents with and without an intellectual disability on leaving school. They reported that traditionally adolescents with a disability had experienced a period of floundering after leaving school, but before gaining adult status. Increasingly, adolescents without a disability were having a similar experience when making choices about courses, travel and employment. The authors found that there were differences between groups of adolescents: with some vulnerable adolescents without a disability experiencing a rushed transition arising out of their circumstances and having to take on responsibility beyond their years. Expectations about adulthood by adolescents with a cognitive impairment were also found to differ from other adolescents. It was suggested that adolescents with a cognitive impairment may not be aware of the dimensions of life yet to be developed, considering themselves to be adults at an earlier stage as the opportunities available may have been restricted or perceived to be unavailable.

Australian research exploring health indicators found that "despite Australia's material wealth and generally high level of education, many indicators of health and wellbeing in children and adolescents are discouraging" (Zwi & Henry, 2005, p. 2). Concerns included a high rate of developmental and behavioural disorders in children,

increasing rates of children in out of home care, high teenage pregnancy rates and increased suicide rates in young Australian males. The authors argued that "child health is a barometer of social ill health and highlights the discrepancies between children from different backgrounds" (Zwi & Henry, 2005, p. 2). They also claimed that understandings of the complex relationship between health outcomes and their determinants have incorporated the concept of social capital which they defined as:

> the social cohesion of a community, and the sense of belonging that individuals feel… social capital represents the degree to which people feel they can request assistance from their neighbours, allow their children to play outside in safety, and participate in community activities (Zwi & Henry, 2005, p. 2).

Good family relationships, friendships and neighbourhood networks have been found, according to Zwi and Henry (2005), to reduce the effects of disadvantage on the wellbeing of children and adolescents. Eckersley, Wierenga, and Wyn similarly reported "apparent contradictions when it comes to young people's health, which is broadly defined to include physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing" (2005, p. 403). Some of the contradictions included a general resilience amongst young people with improvements in life expectancy and mortality rates and self-reports of happiness, yet reports of one fifth to one third of young people experiencing significant psychological stress and distress at any one time. The authors reported on a research project undertaken which explored these issues and found that social changes, such as processes of social fragmentation and individualisation, have led to an increased uncertainty in the lives of adolescents. They claimed that adolescents use various resources, drawing on trusted relationships, to create storylines about who they are and where their lives are heading.

Recent studies conducted by Australian researchers, McGraw, Moore, Fuller, and Bates (2008), in exploring Year 12 students' sense of connectedness to their schools, families and peers and emotional wellbeing found that connectedness was a protective factor against emotional ill-being. Peer connectedness, family connectedness and school connectedness were all found to act as protective factors against depression, anxiety and stress among Year 12 students. Their findings supported previous research which highlighted the importance of relationships between young people and their parents on vulnerability and resilience. Previous research undertaken by Fuller et al. (2002) suggested that family, schools and communities play a key role in supporting adolescents. Their research revealed that adolescents consistently rated feeling linked into family as the highest protective factor in the promotion of resilience. Similarly, the protective role of friends was also recognized, particularly the role that friendships played in adolescents liking school. The sense of connectedness and belonging to groups, including sporting and peer based, was highlighted. Whilst the researchers noted the important role the broader community can play in assisting adolescents to negotiate the developmental challenges facing them, through the development of prevention programs, they also acknowledged that adolescents in Australia do not tend to be overly connected to community organizations. Accordingly, schools play a vital role as the key institution supporting adolescents in contemporary western society.

The important role played by schools was recognised by Crawford and Rossiter (2006) who suggested that spirituality, identity and the meaning of life play critical roles in adolescents' personal development. They critiqued attempts by schools to promote the spiritual and moral development of their students, suggesting that this area of education has remained complex, controversial and often neglected in practice.

High levels of spiritual wellbeing, particularly existential wellbeing, has been found by Cotton, Larkin, Hoopes, Cromer, and Rosenthal (2005) to be associated with fewer depressive symptoms and fewer risk taking behaviours in adolescents attending a suburban high school in the United States of America. The authors argued that their findings supported the importance of inclusion of broader concepts of spirituality, beyond religious identification or attendance, in promoting adolescent health.

Factors impacting on the wellbeing of adolescents appear to be complex and evolving as societal pressures and changes impact on expectations, relationships and activities. Aspects of spirituality and meaningful relationships amongst adolescents are just beginning to be explored.

2.2 Meaningful community involvement and relationships

Opportunities to contribute to the social good of family or community adds to resilience or wellbeing has been recognised by Blum (1998). The importance of contribution or meaningful involvement in instrumental activity was also recognized by Maton (1990). Instrumental activity was defined as a task or skill related activity which has positive significance or value to the individual involved. The researcher conducted research on two separate groups of young people: the first study focused on older adolescents enrolled in college and the second on urban black male and pregnant female teenagers, half of whom were school drop outs. The results of both studies revealed that meaningful instrumental activity was positively related to life satisfaction, independent of social support from friends and from parents.

Maton (1990) suggested from the results of the two studies that perceived involvement in meaningful instrumental activity represented an important correlate of well

being in adolescence as both samples of young people who reported more frequent involvement in meaningful instrumental activity also reported higher levels of life satisfaction. He further argued that the research findings suggested that for some demographic subgroups meaningful instrumental involvement may be more important for self esteem than for other subgroups. For example, he argued that males were more likely than females to achieve a sense of identity, positive self concept and pleasure through occupational achievements and active participation in activities.

In considering an alternative explanation of the findings Maton (1990) observed that the individuals who experienced higher levels of life satisfaction were more likely to pursue instrumental activities that provide meaning. He recommended that further research be conducted to help ascertain the directionality of causal linkages between well being and meaningful instrumental activity. Similarly, Gilman (2001) suggested that future research employing longitudinal designs may assist in directionality between social interest and satisfaction with friends and family. His research with high school adolescents found that those adolescents who participated in a greater number of structured extracurricular activities reported significantly higher school satisfaction than adolescents with minimal or no participation in such activities. He found that, unexpectedly, those students who rated themselves high in a prosocial disposition were not necessarily those who participated in a higher number of extracurricular activities. He noted that previous research had found that extracurricular activities promoting a sense of connection with others were qualitatively different from activities relating to individualistic goals. It may, therefore, be the case that those adolescents who rated themselves high in social interest did not necessarily need to be

involved in many extracurricular activities as one or two meaningful activities which promoted social connections may have been sufficient to enhance their school satisfaction.

The importance of relationships and the community in which young people reside have been considered to be important in determining their wellbeing (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007). Wellbeing has been defined as "a positive state of affairs in which the personal, relational and collective needs and aspirations of individuals and communities are fulfilled" (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007, p. 681). They suggested that wellbeing is more than the absence of risk and aligned themselves with conceptualizations emphasizing values such as self-determination, participation, community capacity-building, structural determinants and social justice. Communities were considered a site of wellbeing for adolescents which incorporates factors such as affordable housing, high quality health care and education. Relationships were defined as sites where exchanges of material and psychological resources and goods occurred. Persons were sites where feelings, cognitions and phenomenological experiences of wellbeing resided. The uniqueness of each site as well as the interdependence of the sites was considered crucial in understanding wellbeing.

The signs or manifestations of wellbeing were also considered, including self-determination, sense of control, self-efficacy, physical and mental health and meaning at a personal level; caring, respect for diversity, support and collaboration as signs at a community level; and fair and equitable allocation of resources and gender and race equality at a collective level (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007). Evans and Prilleltensky mounted an argument that individual strategies aiming to enhance wellbeing are limited unless concordant environmental changes occur as well. Similarly, changes at an environmental level require individual changes as well in order to enhance wellbeing. The combination of

strategies at each of the three levels was considered to be most beneficial for higher levels of wellbeing to occur. An example is when adolescents are asked to improve the community they are contributing to their own development and mental health as well as helping the community.

The value of community activity has been recognised in research conducted by the Search Institute (Scales, Benson, & Mannes, 2006). The researchers used a developmental asset context and process framework and found that adolescents' greater community involvement was related to greater and qualitatively different kinds of engagement with non-family adults; higher levels of positive developmental processes of support, empowerment, and boundary setting; lower levels of risk behaviours and higher levels of thriving. Using longitudinal methods, it was found that adolescents' experience of developmental context assets during sixth to eighth grades predicted their experience one year later of the supportive, empowering and boundary-setting assets from non-family adults. Further, they found that, after controlling for earlier levels of risk and thriving, the developmental process assets of support, empowerment and boundary setting continued to predict significantly levels of adolescent risk and thriving three years later. The authors reported that early community involvement seems to affect later thriving more so than later patterns of risk behaviour, suggesting that positive engagement with non-family adults may have a greater promotive than protective role in development for adolescents. The authors provided examples from their research of the ways in which this may occur through adolescents' involvement with non-family adults: reporting both positive behaviour or misbehaviour to parents; guiding adolescents' decision making; providing them with opportunities to help others; seeking adolescents' opinions; giving them financial guidance; passing on cultural

traditions; having meaningful conversations with adolescents; playing sport or participating in other activities with adolescents and discussing religious beliefs or personal values with them.

Other ways of becoming involved in the community include more active participation such as civic responsibility (da Silva, Sanson, Smart, & Toumbourou, 2004). Civic responsibility has been defined as the willingness of an individual to actively take on the role of being a citizen, was found to be important for a well-functioning society. Da Silva et al. cited Erikson's suggestion that the development of community awareness is important in the development of identity in adolescents. This involved a questioning by adolescents about how they fit into a society. Civic responsibility, argued the authors, creates an understanding of the connections between social and political issues and the individual. Effective societies rely on civic responsibility in order to function. On an individual level, the authors argued that high levels of adolescent civic responsibility have been found to be associated with good psychosocial adjustment. They also stated that there was a relationship between the levels of civic responsibility during adolescence and during adulthood.

The Reach Out! Model is one example of a youth participation and development program which was developed with a particular focus on promoting protective factors to enhance resilience. Oliver, Collins, Burns, and Nicholas (2006) suggested connectedness and engagement in meaningful activities through adolescents working together as some of the outcomes promoted by youth participation. The specific goals of the project included the development of interpersonal and communication skills, increasing volunteers' confidence, self esteem and self-efficacy through a supportive learning environment enabling autonomous involvement and recognition for contributions.

Creative ways for adolescents to participate more actively in communities are now recognised as valuable and meaningful to adoelscnets with benefits and individual and community levels. It is likely, however, that not all adolescents are able to participate equally or are provided with the same opportunities.

2.3 Adolescents with an intellectual disability

A group of adolescents who have been the subject of minimal research are those with a diagnosis of intellectual disability. This diagnosis is usually made during childhood based on cognitive impairments as well as accompanying social and adaptive deficits. Issues associated with the wellbeing of adolescents with an intellectual disability have been explored using a Quality of Life (QoL) framework. This framework, according to Rapley and Hopgood (1997), is conceptualised as having three major components: the circumstances of each individual's life, what each individual values subjectively and the satisfaction an individual experiences in relation to their circumstances taking into account their value system. McVilly and Rawlinson expanded on this conceptualisation, defining it as a "global concept encompassing aspects of physical, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing" (1998, p. 199). They also noted that aspects of an individual's life can vary over time as a result of changes to environmental factors and the individual's personal frame of reference.

Kraemer, McIntyre, and Blacher (2003) claimed that the application of this concept has been used to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Measures of QoL have been used to determine the extent to which an individual's needs and desires are being met, to assess the service needs of individuals and to measure assessment outcomes such as empowerment, independence, social belonging, community integration and satisfaction. The researchers found that mean QoL total scores as well as the Empowerment subscale scores

were higher for those young adults who had left the school system. They suggested that for individuals who are still at school, environmental or family factors may play a greater role than participant characteristics, with the possibility of parents and non-school environments providing more choice and independence after individuals leave school.

The concept of self determination has increasingly gained prominence with the ongoing recognition of the rights of people with a disability. Transition programs in schools now have principles allowing for participation in decision making by adolescents and their families (Laragy, 2004). Laragy, in a review of Australian transition programs, found collective support for the commencement of transition some years prior to school leaving (viewing transition as an ongoing process rather than a single event) and the inclusion in planning of the adolescent's support networks as well as prospective employers and service providers.

The role of schools in developing desirable learning outcomes for students of school leaving age attending special schools has been explored by Dowrick (2004). She found that the seven most important learning outcomes identified by a range of stakeholders interviewed were communication, community living, financial management, independent living, interpersonal skills, literacy and personal development. She noted that:

> [m]any of the[se] outcome areas related to community living and life skills, however, it is interesting to note that the stakeholders also identified outcome areas such as reaching fullest potential and personal safety skills, that related to the students' well-being (Dowrick, 2004, p. 302).

Research relating to social networking for people with and without disabilities has found that people tended to compare themselves with others, feeling more comfortable being

with those with whom they share similar opinions, interests and skills (Carnaby, 1998) Arguments for recognition of the need for interdependence rather than independence for people with disabilities have been made with a model adopted in Milan, Northern Italy, provided by Carnaby as an illustration. Interdependence involved the valuing of a group's history together as well as the support they provide to each other in daily life. Social integration is then considered to be a group strategy rather than an individualistic one.

The importance of community participation has been explored with adolescents with an intellectual disability. It was found by Bramston et al. (2002) that a correlation existed between the ratings on a QoL measure and a community belonging measure, suggesting that having activities, friends and support was associated with higher life satisfaction for adolescents with an intellectual disability. Self-reported QoL domains of belonging and empowerment were found to be significantly lower for adolescents with an intellectual disability when compared to their non-disabled peers:

> Despite attending the same schools and living in the same neighbourhoods, those with an intellectual disability felt significantly less belonging and less control over their choices than their matched counterparts (Bramston et al., 2002, p. 394).

The researchers argued that this finding supported other evidence which suggested that living in the community and feeling part of the community are not the same, as the social status and power of those people with an intellectual disability is not typically as high as those in the community without a disability. The notion of integration, which includes people with disabilities within a neighbourhood, needs to take into account the choices provided to people about how they wished to live within the neighbourhood. The researchers found that adolescents with an intellectual disability used community facilities, such as shops, eating

places and recreational facilities less than those adolescents without a disability. Young people with a disability reported playing video games and watching videos more whilst visiting shops, movies and sports ovals less frequently. The researchers argued that these factors provide a:

> … tenable rationale for the lower belonging and empowerment scores on the quality of life measure. If adolescents with an intellectual disability use public facilities less and engage in solitary activities more then it is not surprising that they identify less with the neighbourhood and feel a poorer sense of belonging than their peers (Bramston et al. 2002, p. 394).

Difficulties of accessing opportunities to engage in meaningful instrumental activity or extracurricular activities, including recreational pursuits has been recognised by Peniston (1998). Whilst she listed many benefits of participation in recreation (including greater adaptability and resiliency, enhanced perceived quality of life and enhanced self-competence through improved sense of self-worth, self-reliance and self-confidence), there was also acknowledgement that a lack of perceptual, motor, memory, linguistic or organizational skills may cause them difficulties in fully enjoying leisure time. Peniston suggested that individuals with disabilities required teaching and practice of recreational skills in order to achieve some recreational proficiency. Kleinert, Miracle, and Sheppard-Jones concurred, stating that:

> without planned opportunities and instructions, students with intellectual disabilities often engage in solitary activities (watching TV, or engaging in no recognizable recreational activities at all), and this pattern unfortunately carries over into adulthood (2007, p. 46).

The authors also claimed that students with significant disabilities often have limited opportunities for decision making in valued activities, exhibit deficits in communicative and social skills and participate in separate educational experiences, which reduce opportunities for inclusive extracurricular activities. Their survey of teachers revealed that students with significant intellectual disabilities were included across a wide range of both school and community extracurricular and community activities. They found that the primary support enabling them to participate in activities was personal assistance provided by parents, teachers, paraprofessional or peers. Parents were found to be the primary support for community activities. It was also found that older students had a higher participation rate in activities.

A risk and resiliency framework has been used to explore the adjustment of individuals with learning disabilities (Morrison & Cosden, 1997). Risk factors may be internal to the individual, occurring as a function of specific neurological characteristics affecting behaviour or external, associated with the structure of family, peer and societal environments. People with disabilities can have positive outcomes in relation to employment and overall life satisfaction, which may be associated with protective factors, either residing within the individual or in the eco-cultural "fit" of the individual to the environment. This related to the meaning given to the disability by the individual, family members and others in the individual's environment. Social expectations and values may be a protective factor or place him or her at risk for failure at school and in other social environments. School and community understanding and support are required to prevent the development of emotional problems and sense of social failure (Morrison & Cosden, 1997).

Morrison and Cosden's (1997) review of the literature suggested that whilst the majority of individuals with learning disabilities did not have significant emotional problems, the behavioural difficulties that may be associated with a disability are likely to affect social relationships and impact on self esteem and emotional functioning. Self esteem and self understanding were reported to be apparent protective factors for individuals with a disability. The significance of the family as a key factor in both risk and protection was noted. They also noted the stress placed on family members associated with behaviours, social functioning and cognitions of the individual with a disability, but also the increased need for interaction with school personnel. Parental acceptance of the child's academic limitations along with recognition of the child's strengths was considered to potentially mediate stress created by the disability. The authors argued that factors related to resilience for individuals with learning disabilities had received little attention and interactional models were required to develop an understanding of the specific factors related to risk and resilience for this group.

The enhancement of resilience in individuals with a learning disability has recently become a focus, particularly in light of previous research, which had characterised the lives of individuals with a learning disability as "gloomy" in terms of a lack of independence, ongoing self-esteem and emotional difficulties and high rates of life dissatisfaction (Miller, 2002), Miller found that adolescents with learning disabilities who tended to be resilient were able to identify particular areas of strength, describe experiences of success and turning points, as well as identify special friendships which were helpful to them at times of depression or frustration. Those adolescents described as resilient in his research identified a drive towards self-determination. He suggested that the adolescents' relationships with

teachers were important, not only in terms of a supportive teacher, but also in the adolescents' ability and willingness to rely on the teacher for assistance. Miller suggested assisting adolescents to be aware of and understanding their learning disability was important in order for them to develop effective and realistic coping strategies.

Adolescents with an intellectual disability have been gradually provided with a voice, as researchers include them in research, recognising their specific needs and issues of relevance to them. The endeavour of appropriately engaging with adolescents, both with and without an intellectual disability, continues to be a challenge for researchers.

2.4   Engagement of adolescents in research

Traditional approaches to research involving children and adolescents, in reflecting the power structures inherent in their lives, have tended to rely upon language-based approaches in gathering data. These approaches typically included questionnaires and interviews, accentuating the authority of the researcher and relying upon adequate linguistic skills to fulfil the requirements. Complexities associated with research involving children and adolescents are compounded when considering research with people with intellectual disabilities. Gilbert (2004) explored the considerable issues facing researchers in developing appropriate methodologies that support people with learning disabilities, particularly in relation to the challenging of the traditional power relationships between the researcher and the researched. He stressed, however, the principle that the challenge in this regard related to method rather than the ability of people with disabilities to participate. It has also been recognized that people with disabilities are able to, and want to, participate in decisions affecting their lives when provided with an appropriate opportunity to do so, such as Listening Meetings (Wituk et al., 2006).

Bramston et al. (2002) acknowledged these difficulties in accessing perceptions among people with an intellectual disability about the way in which factors such as integration, belonging and sense of community relate to their neighbourhoods. Issues in relation to the "acquiescence response bias", the tendency of people with intellectual disabilities to reply yes to a yes/no question regardless of the content of the question, has also been recognised by researchers (e.g., McVilly & Rawlinson, 1998; Schwartz & Rabinovitz, 2003).

Epstein, Stevens, McKeever, and Baruchel (2006) stated that children have often been excluded from research due to cognitive and linguistic limitations in relation to the issues and questions that the researcher can explore. They advocated for new methods allowing research interviews to be placed within the everyday activities of children and moving away from the previous emphasis on word based approaches. Examples of appropriate methods included "show and tell" activities, puppet shows, group interviews and the integration of visual methods of data collection such as photographs and drawings. These methods allow for the incorporation of aspects of social relationships and understandings to be considered. Similarly, efforts were made by Bramston et al., (2002) to use strategies in their research methodology, such as avoiding yes/no formats, using pictograms and simplified wording, to gain insight into the perspectives of those adolescents with a disability.

Increasingly, respect for the varied knowledge and experiences of adolescents have become the focus of research projects with an emphasis on collaboration and inclusion of adolescents in the development of projects within schools (e.g., Carrington, Allen, & Osmolowski, 2007; Kaplan, Lewis, & Mumba, 2007). There is considerable current evidence to suggest that adolescents respond well to participatory approaches which include them in

the planning and fulfilment of the project (Checkoway & Richards-Shuster, 2004; Morgan, Pacheco, Rodriguez, Vazquez, Berg, & Schensul, 2004). It was argued by Woodman and Tyler (2007) that the use of mixed-method longitudinal studies, which incorporate participative mechanisms, had been crucial in their ability to challenge previously held understandings about adolescents' approaches to the transition period after secondary schooling. They found that participatory components of their project design (the opportunities for participant feedback, influence on future questionnaire design and the building of ongoing relationships with participants through regular contact) have allowed them to reflexively develop their project over time. They suggested that this approach allowed the participants to subjectively identify issues and ensured that the researchers did not restrict their interpretations to their own understandings.

Kaplan et al. (2007) suggested that their participatory photography project, undertaken with school students, provided a means of raising and engaging with issues that were of importance to the participants, enabling them to set the agenda for future discussions. They observed the enthusiasm and initiative taken by the participants in critical thinking and problem solving as discussions arose about the issues, some of which were provocative and challenging. This high level of engagement was also noted by Streng, Rhodes, Ayala, Eng, Arceo and Phipps (2004) who explored experiences of adolescents through Photovoice. The methodology was found to be effective in establishing a trusted relationship among participants, practitioners and researchers. They argued that this relationship then allowed the discovery of themes which went beyond public discourse to the disclosure of hidden transcripts.

Finding respectful ways of engaging adolescents, with and without an intellectual disability, in order to gain an understanding of the importance of community to one's wellbeing will be the prime focus of the present study.

CHAPTER 3

PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY, NEIGHBOURHOOD AND
ADOLESCENTS

McMillan and Chavis (1986) defined the elements that make up Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) as membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs and shared emotional connection, defining it as:

… a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9).

They described strong communities as those that:

… offer members positive ways to interact, important events to share and ways to resolve them positively, opportunities to honour members, opportunities to invest in the community, and opportunities to experience a spiritual bond among members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 14).

A neighbourhood has been identified as a place of significance for child and adolescent development due to its impact on behaviour, attitudes and values (Boardman & Saint Onge, 2005). Historically, place has tended to refer to neighbourhood and local communities and the roles these play in identification and attachment with a geographical

locale and attachment (e.g., Pretty et al., 2003). Increasingly, broader notions of place and community, beyond the neighbourhood, including virtual communities and communities of interest, have begun to be explored by researchers (e.g., Obst & White, 2007).

Gustafson (2001), in exploring the meaning of place, noted that it may not mean the same thing(s) to everybody and the meanings may emerge from conflicts about the ways place should be defined. He argued that meanings of place were often situated in the relationships between self, others and/or the environment, rather than just belonging to one category alone. He developed a three-pole triangular model within which the various meanings could be mapped.

Other considerations in relation to place have been developed in order to establish distinctions of an individual's experiences. Place identity is considered to be a cognitive structure which develops from acts of locating oneself within environmental contexts throughout both daily routines and during exceptional circumstances. According to Pretty et al. (2003), place attachment is described as emotional bonding and behavioural commitment, sense of community relates to affiliation and belonging and place dependence takes into account available activities, quality and quality comparison with alternative communities.

3.1 PSOC and place

PSOC is one of the most investigated constructs of community psychology despite ongoing debate about the appropriateness of measures to fully capture its elements (Peterson, Speer, & Hughey, 2006; Pooley, Pike, Drew, & Breen, 2002; Tarraglia, 2006). Bess, Fisher, Sonn, and Bishop (2002), in providing an overview of the history associated with the use of PSOC as a term to describe a range of experiences and expectations about communities, argued for qualitative approaches in researching the construct in order to better understand

the dynamic relationship between individuals and communities. Long and Perkins (2007) described PSOC as a multilevel construct with both place and social elements, which are inextricably bound. They also suggested that PSOC is closely related to social capital and other factors, including place attachment and community satisfaction.

Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) considered the dominance of physical settings of the home, school and neighbourhood in the physical world existence of the developing child. They argued that children's exposure to these settings created both a 'primacy' and 'recency' effect which influenced place-identity development and consequently self-identity conceptions and growth. Further, they suggested that these settings provided the child with the opportunity to learn significant social roles such as sex, family member, peer group member and ethnic group membership. This learning was considered to be dynamic as the child engaged in mastery of each of these settings. The authors suggested that this social role identity continues to develop and evolve and individuals may be characterised by not one role or social attribute but a number of them during their lifecycle. It will be the pattern of these roles which allow for uniqueness of the self-identity of the individual.

The way in which an individual identifies with a community at a particular time will depend upon a range of underlying dimensions, as described by a model developed by Puddifoot (1995), including locus, distinctiveness, identification and orientation. Puddifoot also included aspects of evaluation of the community functioning and quality life in his model.

Psychology as a discipline has long held traditions in exploring social constructs, but until recently studies associated with place have tended to fall within the environmental field.

Researchers such as Pretty (2006) have now begun to explore the environmental experiences of place in relation to the social and behavioural experiences of individuals. She argued that there are many overlapping terms referred to in the literature, such as place identity, place attachment and place dependence which attempt to describe the psychological dimensions of people's relationships with place. Psychological connection to place will occur when meanings are generated and an emotional bond is developed. This bond influences thoughts and behaviours toward the place and may be associated with an individual's psychological wellbeing. Pretty argued that these thoughts and behaviours can be associated with significant psychological processes such as self identity, self concept, as well as group and community identity. Her research, which explored Queensland woolgrowers' relationship with their properties, found that three distinct psychological aspects of place could be identified: place identity (cognitive relationship to place); place attachment (emotional relationship to place); and place dependence (functional relationship to place).

3.2 PSOC, place and adolescents

Attempts to explore the relationship between PSOC and adolescents have recognised the distinctive features related to the adolescent life stage. The Sense of Community Index (SCI) was developed initially to explore PSOC, but found to be limited in its use with adolescents due to a lack of adolescent issues covered, the possible irrelevance of elements such as influence in adolescent lives, inappropriate wording and the omission of aspects such as places to socialise and have fun (Chipeur et al., 1999; Pretty, Andrewes, & Collett, 1994; Pretty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler, & Williams 1996).

Pretty et al. (1994), after the development of an adapted SCI, explored the extent to which PSOC was explained by social support dimensions and whether the nature of this

relationship differed between school and neighbourhood settings. They were also interested in whether PSOC contributed to adolescent psychosocial development and, if so, what its importance was relative to social support. They found that neighbourhood sense of community was significantly correlated with factors such as the number of supports, satisfaction with supports and nondirective support. The neighbourhood and school sense of community measures and five social support scales significantly negatively correlated with loneliness. Further, school sense of community was found to be the strongest predictor of loneliness (Pretty et al., 1996). Loneliness measures were included as the authors considered loneliness to imply failure of the community, as a potential social support system, to provide a sense of community through the accommodation of integration of an individual. Social support from the community, according to Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, and Pardo (1992), played an important role in the development of resilience in children.

In view of the concerns raised by Chipeur and Pretty (1999) about the adequacy of the SCI to capture the experiences of adolescents in neighbourhoods, the Neighbourhood Youth Inventory (NYI) (Chipeur et al., 1999) was developed following interviews and questionnaires being conducted with adolescents. It included four factors: supportiveness (including neighbourhood help), neighbourhood activity, safety and friendships. They also noted the importance of earlier research (Pretty et al., 1994; Pretty et al., 1996), which had revealed that factors such as length of residency in the neighbourhood and the number of people an individual can identify impact on one's experience within the neighbourhood.

Research conducted by Chipeur et al. (1999) involved 934 adolescents from Grades 7, 9 and 11 from both rural and urban localities in eastern Australia. They found differences in perceived levels of support and activity, levels of safety and perceived friendships amongst

the year levels. As was expected, adolescents who had lived at their current address for 10 or more years reported more support in their neighbourhoods than those adolescents who had lived at their current address for less than 10 years. Perceptions of neighbourhood activity, safety or friendships did not differ significantly due to length of residency. Further, adolescents who knew more than 10 neighbours by name reported significantly higher levels of support than those adolescents who knew 10 or fewer neighbours by name. The authors noted that whilst popular thought was that adolescents were not interested in knowing their neighbours, their findings suggested that knowing one's neighbours played an important role in how positive adolescents experienced their neighbourhood to be.

The relationship between adolescents' PSOC and feeling of unsafety in Italy was explored by Zani, Cicognani, and Albanesi (2001). They found that being in the company of friends significantly reduced adolescents' perceived unsafety in a range of situations. The family was also found to play a distinct role in preparing the adolescent for dangers, although it was noted that this type of discussion can increase feelings of unsafety. There were differences in feelings of unsafety and PSOC according to the size of the urban context. It was also found that male participants appeared to hold a stronger PSOC and lower feelings of unsafety.

The impact of neighbourhoods and the relationship between the development of place identity in young people, sense of place and PSOC continues to be explored in Australia. Pretty et al.'s (2003) research investigated whether dimensions of sense of place can discriminate those residents who identify with their rural town, and prefer to stay, from those who do not, and whether patterns of association between these dimensions differ between adolescent and adult residents. The authors noted that location itself did not create a sense of

place, rather a sense of place emerged from involvement between people and between people and place. They acknowledged the difficulty in clearly articulating the differences between place identity, place attachment and sense of community due to the considerable overlap between factors such as emotional bonds, affiliation, behavioural commitment, satisfaction and belonging, all of which are loosely included in theoretical understandings.

Pretty et al. (2003) acknowledged that whilst, theoretically, the concepts are considered as different ways of thinking about the same phenomenon, self-in-community, their research aimed to assess place attachment, sense of community and place dependence separately. The authors hypothesized that whilst there appeared to be an association between the sense of place dimensions, they may have been distinctive in terms of their relative importance in predicting people's identity with place.

A survey with questions drawn from the Neighbourhood Cohesion Instrument, Neighbourhood Youth Inventory Strength of Group Identification Scale, as well as focus groups was used by Pretty et al. (20030, findingthat several sense of place indicators were significantly related to each other. The researchers concluded, however, that despite their efforts to use distinctive measures of the concepts, they continued to face the statistical and phenomenological reality of the inseparable nature of the sense of place dimensions. They did find that the age of the resident seemed to be an important factor, both in terms of the "… amount of sentiment held towards the community and in the relative importance of the different dimensions in discriminating those who situate their sense of self within the community and those who do not" (Pretty et al., 2003, p. 283). It was also of interest that the dimensions of sense of community, place attachment and place dependence were able to

account for more of the variance in place identity for adults than for adolescents, suggesting that there are other aspects of community sentiment that are important to adolescents.

Some differences between adults and adolescents were found during the study. Younger adults and adolescents indicated that opportunities for variety in the town were important to them. Anecdotal evidence from some adolescent focus group participants suggested that internet access prevented them from feeling isolated from friends and family in other regions. Adolescents tended not to report as many instances as adults of neighbours helping each other although both adolescents and adults perceived the same level of behavioural commitment to the community. Pretty et al. (2003) concluded with a word of warning about the potential for negative aspects of strong community sentiments. They revealed that some participants in the focus groups commented on a desire to leave which could not be acted upon due to pressures of elderly family and their own roots. Therefore the sense of "spatial identity" could mean that people cannot take advantage of opportunities and life changes because of their commitment to a particular locale. It may also be possible that people do not recognize that their locale no longer meets their needs. Therefore, whilst place attachment and identity can contribute to a sense of wellbeing they can also result in a sense of being trapped or having negative consequences.

Feelings of inadequacy and impotence were recognised as possible consequences of connectedness and belonging for adolescents in research conducted by Arcidiacono, Sommantico, and Procentese (2001) in Naples, Italy. An exploration of issues related to unemployment for adolescents found that the family played a significant role in looking for a job, demonstrating the cohesiveness of family as a social institution, but that this reliance on family indicated a deprivation of resources beyond the family. Although strong emotional

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connectedness was apparent for the participants, this co-existed with dissatisfaction and a sense of powerlessness. Bonding was found to occur through negative social attributions, which then resulted in a dimension of impotence as the adolescents felt looked down upon by outsiders.

Recent research exploring adolescents' experience within communities has also recognised the role that families play in their lives. Arcidiacono, Procentese, and Di Napoli (2007) explored the relationship between belonging and power for adolescents in Naples, Italy. They found a sense of alienation as adolescents described not feeling supported by their community, a lack of opportunities and taking refuge in the family. "The bond is not to a place, nor to a community, but mainly to the interpersonal family domain; so we are referring to interpersonal relations more than to place identity and place attachment" (2007, p. 290).

Research undertaken by Albanesi, Cicognani, and Zani (2007) with Italian adolescents found that sense of community predicted social wellbeing and explained some of the association between civic engagement and social wellbeing. Their findings suggested that involvement in formal sporting and religious groups that offered adolescents opportunities to establish meaningful relationships with adults outside of the family and school was associated with an increased sense of community. Sense of community, in turn, showed a significant positive correlation with civic engagement.

The involvement in community and political activities by adolescents in Canada was also explored by Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, and Alisat (2007) who found that adolescents first become involved in an activity through the operation of various initiating factors such as encouragement by a favourite teacher. This interest may or may not be sustained depending upon factors such as support from friends. Their research suggested that parents and peers

may be important in sustaining engagement in activities. They also asserted that the engagement process is multifaceted with environments, such as schools, which encourage and reward participation in activities or not.

Communities have been identified as critical arenas for adolescent development as adolescents situate themselves within a larger social context than they did as children (Whitlock, 2007). In a study, in the United States of America, which asked adolescents about their experiences in their town, she identified a range of influences which supported adolescents' connectedness to their community, including the quality of exchanges with adults, availability of outlets for creative engagement, well advertised opportunities for meaningful input, safety, perceived welcome in public spaces, knowledge of community events and awareness of impact on community policies. Positive relationships with at least one parent, grade level, group involvement and race were also found to contribute to connectedness.

Communities, therefore, appear to have a meaningful role in the lives and the developing identity of adolescents as they provide opportunities for participation, the development of relationships and contributions to society. A range of factors, however, appear to determine the reliability of a community in providing support to adolescents.

3.3 Neighbourhood as community for adolescents

Neighbourhoods have been considered to be an instrumental factor in child and adolescent development for some time with implications for policy and practice in terms of the provision of public health services. Mead argued that the:

> …neighbourhood is the place where children are brought up to become members of their society. Inevitably within a neighbourhood, children encounter various older

adults from whose experience they learn how to adapt themselves to the kind of society into which they are growing … (1984, p. 3).

She further argued that neighbourhoods can meet many of the needs of children including multi-sensory stimulation and the development of autonomy so that children can learn how to "… take chances safely and move freely away from the familiar with confidence, trust and toleration of strangers and the strange…" (1984, p. 4).

Complexities associated with neighbourhoods as an influence on child and adolescent outcomes have been explored by Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, and Sealand (1993). They noted that the linkages between neighbourhood characteristics and family level resources are somewhat problematic. Family resources are correlated with neighbourhood economic characteristics, although directionality is unclear. Selection into a particular neighbourhood by families further complicates the scenario as it not clear what role families are able to play in this decision. It is argued that neighbourhood factors, such as economic status, play a role in determining the benefits offered by the neighbourhood in the areas of high quality public and private services such as schools, parks and sporting activities for adolescents. The informal job networks, neighbourhood level monitoring and positive role models available (or not) may also be important factors in determining the impact of neighbourhoods on adolescents. In addition, considerations such as social isolation, single parent families, ethnicity and employment levels were also taken into account by the authors. They argued that single parent families may have an effect on the supply of adults to monitor and socialise children and adolescents.

Parental perceptions of the contribution that neighbourhoods and schools make to their children's psychological wellbeing has also been explored (Jutras & Lepage, 2006). The

researchers found that parents identified emotional support and a supportive learning milieu as two key aspects of schools, and qualities including child-friendliness, environmental amenities and the presence of cordial and supportive neighbours as key assets of neighbourhoods. The authors found differences between parents living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods when compared with parents living in wealthier neighbourhoods, suggesting disparities in the environments in which they lived and raised their children, although parents from both neighbourhoods identified cordiality and support as important. The contribution of neighbourhoods to the development of positive self-identity was inferred by parent responses in this research.

Jutras and Lepage (2006) found that although the issue of identity was not explicitly mentioned, parents referred throughout their answers to ways in which the neighbourhood can contribute to children's positive sense of self. A disadvantaged neighbourhood was perceived as having many drawbacks by parents who lived in it. Fewer of those parents mentioned child-friendliness and the presence of environmental amenities as assets of their neighbourhoods. Conversely, many of these parents consistently raised concerns about social disorders, linked to violence, substance abuse, traffic concerns and prostitution. These concerns affected their willingness to allow their children to play outside in the neighbourhood. This was supported by police statistics which revealed considerably greater crimes against persons in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods as well as by data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth in Canada which recorded differences in relation to parents' perceptions of their neighbourhood being dangerous as related to parental income. Whilst the research involved parents of 6 – 12 year old children, it would appear that many of the concerns would continue to be valid, or increasingly so, as their

children become adolescents and potentially spend more time independently within the neighbourhood.

The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (an American nationally representative study exploring the causes of health-related behaviours of adolescents in grades 7 to 12 and their outcomes in young adulthood which was initiated in 1994) was used to examine the extent to which neighbourhoods influenced adolescent outcomes (Boardman & Saint Onge, 2005). This study considered 34 characteristics nested in four areas of: engagement in risk-related behaviours; educational outcomes; physical and mental health; and their integration within social institutions. They argued that there are many reasons for neighbourhoods playing a salient role in determining the wellbeing of adolescents when compared to the wellbeing of either children or adults:

> … adolescents spend a larger share of their day to day lives interacting with others in the immediate spaces and places outside of their homes compared to either children or adults. Secondly, the relative contribution of neighbourhoods to global identity formation may be greater among adolescents as they tend to view themselves almost exclusively in terms of their day to day activities; and thirdly neighbourhoods are associated with adolescents' immediate wellbeing (2005, p. 139).

Boardman and Saint Onge (2005) also outlined macro, meso and micro-level processes related to adolescent wellbeing. Their research focused on the extent to which variations in adolescent developmental outcomes were associated with the neighbourhoods where they lived. The results revealed that neighbourhoods were equally relevant for adolescents' educational outcomes, the likelihood that they would engage in risky behaviours (such as drug use and sexual activities) and the extent to which they were integrated within

health and religious institutions. It did not appear that an adolescent's mental health status was directly impacted by their area of residence, an unexpected finding given the linkages between the social environment and health related practices. The authors argued that their findings suggested that rather than the area of residence not being important for health outcomes (such as obesity), the mechanisms through which neighbourhoods were operating may have more to do with the characteristics of individuals who reside in particular neighbourhoods rather than actual neighbourhood-level characteristics.

Neighbourhood context has also been considered by Lee and Cubbin (2002) as a factor in the physical health of adolescents, particularly cardiovascular health behaviours. They found that changes in neighbourhood social structures and policies that reduce social inequalities may enhance cardiovascular health behaviours in adolescents. The researchers found that adolescents who reside in neighbourhoods characterised by low income, high levels of poverty, low education, low housing values, and a high proportion of blue collar workers were more likely to have poorer dietary habits than adolescents living in higher social economic status neighbourhoods. They argued that this may occur as a result of socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods having fewer large supermarkets and fewer nutritious food options.

The concept of neighbourhood was explored further by Bass and Lambert (2004) who used geo-statistical methods to examine whether adolescents living in close proximity perceived their neighbourhoods more similarly than adolescents living further apart. They described this phenomenon as spatial dependence. Their research indicated that the perceptions of adolescents residing in close geographic proximity were more similar than

perceptions of adolescents residing further apart, even after accounting for individual- and family-level variables of gender, race and parent marital status.

The relevance of neighbourhoods as places to address issues in the development of policy and practice to deal with adverse health and developmental outcomes that does not focus only on the characteristics of individuals has been noted by other authors. Caughy, O'Campo, and Brodsky (1999) argued that their research had identified that economic and social processes of neighbourhoods had an influence on the health and wellbeing of residents in both direct and indirect ways. They argued that this had considerable implications for program development which needed to address the multiple issues facing residents in ways that took into account the variations between neighbourhoods. The authors stated that a complex mix of factors interact and impact on outcomes including environmental stress (in the form of high density housing or high crime rates) leading to higher rates of individual stress which may then lead to an increased risk of poor health. Further, community involvement, according to the authors:

> as indicated by the presence of community groups, voter registration, and neighbourhood organizational involvement, represents the ability of a community to identify and solve problems in the community. High levels of community involvement may be associated with improved health outcomes by resulting in higher resource availability in the neighbourhood or through empowering residents to access services as individuals (1999, p. 620).

Transience within communities was also noted to reduce the levels of social support for community members.

Caughy et al. identified neighbourhoods as a place where "…supportive interactions between neighbours in communities where residents are socially isolated are the basic building blocks of positive feelings towards one's neighbourhood" (1999, p. 626). Thus neighbourhoods can become places of meaningful resources that enable the resilience of residents as well as a place of potential for true community development actions. In this way, characterizing neighbourhoods as at risk paints a "… simplistic, two dimensional picture of the community" (Caughy et al., 1999, p. 626).

Despite the evidence base affirming their importance, neighbourhood, as a concept, has not always been easily explained or understood (Wood, 1974). Wood used questionnaires to develop an understanding of what part of the local area was considered to be the neighbourhood. Whilst he found some overlapping of borders, there was no congruence among the spaces defined by the students. When students were asked to describe the spaces, explanations included "I think it's a neighborhood because there's homes all around and next to each other …" (Wood, 1974, p. 31). Mapping activities allowed a greater analysis of distinctions between home, neighbourhood and region. Students were also asked to define neighbourhood and a variety of definitions were provided, including "[a] neighborhood is where there are people you can walk out of your house and say hi to" and "Kids hanging around make a neighborhood" (Wood, 1974, p. 34).

Wood (1974) argued that the residence alone was not sufficient in order for students to consider the space to be a neighbourhood – it required a connection between people and the place (history such as having grown up there) and amongst people (such as people acknowledging each other). The recognition of each other as part of a neighbourhood was considered to be crucial to the concept. He noted the importance of neighbourhood to the

students regardless of the difficulties in articulating the location accurately, arguing that the students considered the neighbourhoods as "… not products of thought, but processes in life" (Wood, 1974, p. 35) in that they had made the space a neighbourhood by their very presence in it.

This was supported by research conducted in the Western Metropolitan Region of Melbourne by O'Grady (2000) who found that the neighbourhood appeared to contribute significantly to the adolescents' sense of who they were. When asked what the difference was between the neighbourhood in which they lived and other neighbourhoods, responses included "Me, that's where I live, I make it fun", "I'm in it" and "It's mine and no-one else's". This sense of pride or ownership of one's neighbourhood was also supported by references by participants about liking the cleanliness of their neighbourhood and disliking graffiti and vandalism. One participant summarised the importance of his neighbourhood in the following comment: "My neighbourhood means who I am. It is where I spend all of my time. And although some times I may say bad things about it, it is who I am" (O'Grady, 2000, p. 42). It would appear for those adolescents that there was a level of attachment to their neighbourhood which impacted on their identity at that particular time.

Challenging adults' negative stereotypes of adolescents within neighbourhoods was the focus of research undertaken by Zeldin and Topitzes (2002). They hypothesized that the experience of volunteering, and residing in a neighbourhood that is perceived as safe and having adequate resources, would be associated with positive beliefs about adolescents. They also predicted that community connectedness, as assessed by individuals' sense of community and perceived norm of adult caring, would mediate these associations. Telephone interviews with adults and adolescents were undertaken to test the hypotheses. Results

indicated that an understanding of beliefs about adolescents lies, in significant part, in the neighbourhood experiences of adults and adolescents and in their sense of connectedness with the places in which they live. The researchers suggested that when the neighbourhood is experienced as safe and in good repair it may be more likely that adults will become aware of the strengths of adolescents. Additionally, adults with a higher sense of connectedness appear to be able to engage internal generative processes that positively influence the adoption of a belief system that views adolescents as neighbourhood assets rather than community problems. The research also considered adults' perceptions of adolescents to take on leadership roles within the neighbourhood. They found that whilst adults were likely to judge adolescents as "friendly" to their neighbours they were less likely to see adolescents as interested in "helping to improve" their neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhoods represent one type of community but it would appear from recent research that a consideration of broader definitions of community may be necessary in order to capture PSOC for adolescents. This is particularly relevant given the difficulties in defining what actually constitutes a neighbourhood and the impact of technological advances during the last decade.

3.4   Notions of community

Green, Cohen, and Pooley (2006) explored the concept of community in a qualitative study of adults in Western Australia. Participants in the study identified seven interrelated concepts: geographic attachment to place, communality, social interaction, active involvement and participation, family, sense of belonging, and transience. The authors argued that the results of the study suggested that the term community had far reaching

implications, which may then have implications for traditional approaches and assumptions underlying community development initiatives and programs.

The concept of community no longer only referring to geographical or territorial zones or regions was raised by Colombo, Mosso, and de Piccoli (2001), who stated that a non-territorial approach has gained momentum due to modern advances in communication reducing the importance of territorial proximity. The authors challenged the traditional assumptions underpinning PSOC arguing that a more dynamic and complex view of the community taking into account issues of conflict and power is possible when considering issues of influence and active participation of citizens in the community.

Obst, Zinkiewicz, and Smith (2002a, b) and Obst, Smith, and Zinkiewicz (2002) further explored the role of identification within PSOC in a variety of different communities, including an international community of interest (science fiction fandom) and geographical communities. They found that the more a resident identified with their particular community, the greater likelihood there was of a strong sense of community. Identification also emerged as more important in the interest community than in the participants' geographical communities when comparing the same participants' PSOC with geographical and interest communities. Identification was a strong predictor of global sense of community with belonging and ties being the next most important predictors.

The relationship between social identification and PSOC has also been explored (Obst & White, 2005). In particular, they found in a research project with first year university students that acknowledgement and awareness of community membership (i.e., ingroup ties) was important in the development of a sense of community. Further, the authors in a more recent study (Obst & White, 2007) examined whether the degree of choice of community

membership influenced levels of overall PSOC, social identification and their dimensions. Obst and White (2007) argued that choices in where people live may be limited by variables such as finances, work, significant others and schools, however, members have a much greater degree of choice to belong to communities where there is a common interest. The perception of choice, they argued, has been shown to have a positive impact on a number of psychological and behavioural variables, including greater intrinsic motivation, greater trust and enhanced environmental climate. They cited a study by Compas in 1981 which found that individuals who perceived a greater degree of choice in belonging to a group reported a greater sense of community than those who felt they had less choice in belonging.

Based on the above evidence, Obst and White (2007) expected that their study would find that social identification would increase as the degree of choice over group membership increased and that this would be reflected across the cognitive and affective dimensions of social identification. Using a questionnaire assessing PSOC and social identification, 219 first year university students participated in the research. The authors found that, as hypothesized, the degree of choice people have in being a member of a community group was associated with higher levels of social identification and PSOC, regardless of the situational context. Participants showed the lowest levels of social identification with their local neighbourhood community and identified more strongly with the student category. They identified most strongly with their self-chosen interest group, membership of which was based on participants' own individual interests. Participants' levels of overall PSOC increased significantly as the choice associated with membership in the community increased. Sense of belonging and emotional connection scores increased with greater degree

of choice of group membership. The highest mean level of needs fulfilment was seen in the self-selected interest group.

The authors argued that the results evidenced the changing nature of community with respondents feeling lower levels of membership, emotional connection, influence and needs fulfilment with their local neighbourhoods compared with their self selected interest groups. They stated that this indicated a growing importance in current society of communities that develop from common interest rather than geography, which "provide new community networks to meet needs traditionally met by the neighbourhood setting" (Obst & White, 2007, p. 86).

3.5 The present study

The present study aims to explore young people's experience of their community using a modified version of the Photovoice methodology. The impact of communities on young people's identity development as well as barriers to inclusion in the community will be explored. Both young people with and without an intellectual disability will be included in the project.

In order to enhance participation, the present study will explore alternative ways of communicating with young people through the use of photographs of the neighbourhood taken by the participants themselves. The present study therefore aims to engage participants in the research project using an approach which incorporates active participation. It is anticipated that this will provide the researcher with the opportunity to gain greater insight into issues facing young people as well as factors that enhance wellbeing and PSOC.

Specifically, the present study aims to use PSOC as a framework to understand the role of neighbourhood in the lives of adolescents, explore factors related to the wellbeing of

adolescents and to identify similarities and differences between the two groups of adolescents

– those with and without an intellectual disability.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1   Traditional approaches

Traditional approaches to research involving children and adolescents have tended to reflect the power structures inherent in their lives. For example, children and adolescents have not usually been invited to give consent to participate, but rather their teachers or parents have given consent on their behalf (Burman, 1997). Topics under investigation usually have followed adult agendas with little opportunity for children and adolescents to explore issues of meaning to themselves and their day to day lives. Typical methods utilised in research projects, such as questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, have tended to be passive in the response required of the child or adolescent.

Recent recognition of the interest and abilities of children and adolescents to more actively participate in decision making about their lives has been instrumental in leading to a questioning of methodological approaches and values underpinning educational approaches and research projects. This has been evident in recent youth participation projects, such as the SAY (Social Action with Youth) project conducted by Morsillo and Prilleltensky (2007) and in documentation supporting the notion of "student voice" in schools:

Traditionally, the views and opinions of children were often discounted as having less legitimacy than the views of adults but as attitudes towards children and young people changed, different views have arisen associated with these changes… [Meaningful involvement of students means providing] …opportunities for them to become active participants in their education, including making decisions about what and how they learn and how their learning is assessed (Manefield, Collins, Moore, Mahar, & Warne, 2007, p. 4).

Finding respectful ways to give voice to people who tend to be marginalized by society has been of interest to researchers in the field of Community Psychology for some time. The merits of qualitative research methods have been recognized as a way to empower such groups of people (Stein & Mankowski, 2004). They presented a framework involving "four acts" of qualitative research – asking, witnessing, interpreting and knowing. The authors argued that through these acts community researchers can "help the disenfranchised to discover their voices and to be heard by those in power" (Stein & Mankowski, 2004, p. 23).

Research involving people with disabilities has been explored in recent years with the use of narrative methods considered to be an appropriate and useful form (Smith & Sparkes 2008). Owens (2007) considered the use of language as a symbolic system for meaning making and the ways in which the researcher attempts to understand and represent the perspectives and experiences of people whose voices have previously been unheard. This approach of storytelling, she argued, places the participants in the driver's seat – as the experts in their own lives, thus addressing the traditional power imbalance which can arise in research projects. The use of narratives provides a structure for the active consideration of

one's sense of identity, including personal, social and cultural domains, with the potential to explore agency (Smith & Sparkes, 2008).

Whilst it could be argued that engaging and interviewing adolescents can be challenging, the additional challenges involved in interviewing people with learning disabilities have been well documented (Owens, 2007). These additional challenges include: inarticulateness, unresponsiveness, lacking a concrete frame of reference (particularly in generalizing from experience) and problems with time. Owens claimed that the interviewer becomes speaker, listener and interpreter at the same time. This includes speculating and speaking aloud what she thinks the participant wants to say, while constantly checking for accuracy of the understandings and interpretations. She stated that the overall aim of the process is to provide an inclusive experience for the participant. This approach allows for the inclusion of participants who may not fulfil traditional criteria for a successful interview and who may otherwise continue to remain silenced in research projects.

The tendency for people with disabilities to acquiesce has also been considered as a barrier in traditional research, although Owens (2007) claimed that the use of narrative methods has enabled active participation of people with disabilities. Additionally, researchers in recognizing the problems that may arise when undertaking research with people with learning disabilities have suggested the use of methods such as pictorial aids and other visual methodologies to assist in making research more inclusive (Aldridge, 2007).

4.2   Photo-elicitation techniques

An approach which has been used extensively in international research projects, especially with marginalized and disempowered groups who traditionally tend to be excluded from research projects due to accessibility and language barriers, is Photovoice (Booth &

Booth 2003; Streng et al., 2004; Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000; Wang & Pies, 2004), which is a qualitative research method closely related to the naturalistic approaches used in ethnographic research. Drawing on theoretical underpinnings from Freire's Critical Consciousness, Feminist Theory and documentary photography, Photovoice uses photographs generated by the research participants as the primary data source (Wang et al., 2000). The photographs are then supplemented by narrative and interview data. "By sharing and talking about their photographs, they use the power of the visual image to communicate their life experiences and perceptions" (Wang et al., 2000, p. 83). Strack, Magill, and McDonagh specifically explored the use of Photovoice with adolescents, noting that:

[a] process such as photovoice provides youth the opportunity to develop their personal and social identities and can be instrumental in building social competency... By providing an opportunity for youth to gain perspective on issues such as culture, community norms, behaviours, social structures, and desires, youth are encouraged to develop an understanding of themselves and their community (2004, p. 50).

Booth and Booth (2003) noted that the unique features of Photovoice make it particularly suitable for use with sighted people with learning disabilities. The combination of the photographic and voice elements of the methodology allow for the participation by people with learning disabilities who may lack verbal fluency. Further, the active nature of taking photographs allows for the concreting of information that may otherwise be lost when cognitive disabilities restrict the sharing of information and exploration of important issues. The authors also refer to the empowerment which comes with the handing of a camera to a person giving that person complete control over the images that are taken and choices in what will be discussed at the interview. They noted that Photovoice not only serves to engage

the participants, but also enables them to define themselves in terms of the things they most valued in their lives (Booth & Booth, 2003).

The use of photographs to capture aspects of cultural behaviour and understandings is not new – having played an important role in early anthropology (Harper, 1998). Harper cited the work of Mead and Bateson in 1942 who used 25,000 photographs over a two year period to explore Balinese character. The work of Collier and Collier (1986) promoted the use of photographs to elicit interviews in order to further understandings from the viewpoint of the research participants. Collier and Collier, commenting on the power of photographs as a data source, stated that:

> [t]he impact of photographs in interviewing is in the response to imagery reflective of the life experience of the informant. We believe that photographs, film, or video challenge the informant more than verbal feedback or artwork because the literal character of their images intercepts the very memory of the person (1986, p. 122).

Hurworth (2003) argued that photo-interviewing can be a useful tool for research. It can trigger memories, challenge participants, lead to new perspectives and understandings and, importantly, can assist in avoiding research misinterpretation. The method can bridge psychological and physical realities, allow the combination of visual and verbal language, assist with building trust and rapport and promote longer, more detailed interviews when compared with verbal interviews alone. Hurworth cited Collier: "Picture interviews were flooded with encyclopaedic community information whereas in the exclusively verbal interviews, communication difficulties and memory blocks inhibited the flow of information" (2003, p. 2). The photographs can also provide a component of multi-methods triangulation to improve rigour. Hurworth (2003) provided examples of the use of photo-elicitation across

many disciplines and topics including work with young children or school students as well as for talking about difficult, abstract concepts.

The use of photography to provoke reflection and discussion can lead to tensions between "fixed meanings and open interpretations, between the definitive and the indeterminate, and it is within these tensions that photography's power of engagement lives" (Kaplan, Lewis, & Mumba, 2007, p. 25). Arguments about truth exhibited by photographs has arisen as researchers, including Van Maanan and Spindler (cited by Harper, 1998), have questioned the use of photographs as an actual research technique. They argued that photographs were mere reflections or confirmation of how things were, which drew on the viewpoints of the photographers and the choices made about what images to record. Accordingly, photographs were considered to represent social and technical construction rather than reality or truth. Issues of validity, reliability and sampling were also raised in terms of how a particular image could or should be used to represent an event or behaviour of a cultural group. Ethical issues were also called into question as the potentially intrusive nature of photography was acknowledged. It was recognized that care needs to be taken in the recording of culture as "culture itself is not precisely boundaried and continually evolves" (Harper, 1998, p.138).

Photovoice, in handing the camera to the participant, differs from previous photo-elicitation techniques in terms of the power balance between the researcher and the participants. The Photovoice methodology ensures the accuracy of the record taken by the photograph through the discussion with the participant who had taken and chosen the photograph. The role of the researcher then is to record the participant's report of the

meaning of the photographs and to discover why the photograph was taken in terms of significance in the life of the participant.

Ethical dilemmas raised by the use of Photovoice have been acknowledged and addressed by Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001). Dilemmas included concerns specific to the use of a camera such as intrusion, representation of people, ownership of images as well as the safety of the photographers. The authors stressed the importance of developing specific methodological techniques which minimise the potential risks to the participants whilst maximising the benefits of the methodology. These techniques include consent forms to overcome issues related to intrusion and ownership of the photographs and written information for the participants to provide about the project, if necessary. The most important strategy described is the preliminary workshop to be held with participants prior to the distribution of cameras. During the workshop a range of ethical issues would be explored with participants, such as the "use of cameras, power and ethics, emphasising safety and the authority and responsibility that come with using a camera" (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001, p. 570). The authors also acknowledged the limitations associated with these strategies and emphasised the role of project facilitators or researchers in reinforcing and practising the ethical principles underlying Photovoice.

The stages undertaken in Photovoice are important in setting the scene for the process as well as utilising the opportunities it provides to discover meaning. The induction workshop provides an opportunity for the researcher to meet with the participants, explain the purpose of the project, establish ground rules about the use of the camera and begin initial data collection through discussions which take place. Participants then take the disposable cameras to film their day to day lives. The cameras are returned and the films developed by

the researcher. Individual interviews take place with each participant using the photographs to explore what is important in their lives. Interviews are then transcribed and an initial thematic data analysis is undertaken by the researcher to develop common themes and to consider what issues may require further elucidation. Small discussion groups are then held to explore issues within a small group setting. Further transcription and thematic data analysis then take place to identify common themes. In traditional Photovoice projects, there is an action phase where the photographs are used to work towards community awareness raising and change.

4.3.1   Research philosophy

A constructivist, grounded theory approach was used in the development of the research project and data analysis. This:

> assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognises the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings…A constructivist approach to grounded theory reaffirms studying people in their natural settings … (Charmaz, 2003, p251).

It values the participants' creation of the data and analysis arises through interaction with them. Causality is not definite, rather the theory remains open to change with variables being given meaning as they are played out in a participant's life In order to effectively analyse data using this approach it is essential that a relationship is developed with participants which ensures their stories can be told. The analysis then focuses on themes drawn from the stories and ensures that the lives of participants remain in the foreground (Charmaz, 2003).

The role of the researcher in the process has been recognised as part of the research product in that the research:

> includes more than what the researcher learns in the field… The constructivist position views research as an emergent product of particular times, social conditions, and interactional situations. Constructivists argue that researchers' perspectives will direct their attention but not determine the research (Charmaz, 2008).

4.4   Method

4.4.1   Participants

Participants were 10 adolescents (4 males and 6 females) in an urban locality in eastern Australia. Five participants attended Year 10 in a mainstream government secondary college and were aged 15 or 16 years. These participants resided in close proximity of their school, usually walking or catching public transport to school.

The other five participants attended a government specialist school for students with a diagnosis of mild intellectual disability. Whilst the participants from the specialist school had a primary diagnosis of a mild intellectual disability, they were relatively high functioning within the school and community settings. These participants travelled from a number of suburbs to attend the school by train, tram and/or bus. Some of the students met each other during the journey to and from school. They did not have any physical disabilities. These participants were aged 18 or 19 years. Whilst no formal demographic data was collected, the participants reported a variety of living arrangements. All participants from the specialist school resided with both parents. Whilst two of the participants from the mainstream school reside with both parents, the others reported a range of family constellations, including step parents and a shared custody arrangement where the participant spends alternate weeks with

each parent. The mother of one of the participants was recently deceased. All participants had at least one sibling.

Two of the participants (both from the specialist school) had resided at their current residence since birth. The other three participants from the specialist school reported residing in their current residence since preschool or for one participant "a few years". One of the participants from the mainstream school reported having resided at her current residence for over 13 years, another lived in the same house for eight years after having moved from a neighbouring street. The other three participants from the mainstream school reported having moved within the last two years, with one participant reporting several moves since his parents' marriage break up.

Staff input from the specialist school was received in relation to those participants' ability to understand the requirements and participate actively in the project, including the interviews and small discussion groups. In keeping with a non-pathological approach, no further screening was undertaken.

Pseudonyms were used for all participants to protect their identity and privacy.

4.4.2   Materials

Each participant was provided with a disposable camera with the capacity to take a maximum of 24 photographs. A literature review was undertaken in relation to the role of neighbourhoods in the lives of adolescents. Broad themes in relation to day to day activities of adolescents were identified as the most appropriate way to develop an understanding about the ways adolescents spend their time as well as those things that are meaningful to them. The participants were therefore instructed to take photographs, revealing how they spend

their time in the neighbourhood and broader community, and then return the camera with their name on it to the school office for collection by the researcher.

4.4.3   Procedures

Invitations to participate in the research project were extended to the mainstream government school and the specialist school, following the receipt of ethical approvals from the University's Ethics Committee and from the Department of Education and Training. Potential participants were advised of the steps involved in the project: an initial workshop to explore issues related to the project and camera use, taking of photographs, individual interviews and small group discussions using the photographs to initiate discussions. Written notification of the project was also forwarded to the relevant Regional Directors of the Department of Education and Training. The researcher visited each participating school, attending a Year 10 assembly at the Government school, and the morning assembly for all students at the specialist school, to introduce the project and invite participation.

A letter explaining the research project (see Appendix A) and including consent forms (see Appendix B) was sent home with those interested in participating. Participants were asked to sign the consent form and obtain their parents' or guardians' signatures and return the consent form to the school.

The following process was undertaken on return of the completed consent forms:
(a) An induction workshop during which the project was introduced, parameters were set and cameras were distributed. Clear protocols with guidelines for participants in relation to the type of photographs to be taken were provided. Considerable explanation and discussion, which took into account the participants' developmental and disability needs, was incorporated into the session to ensure that the participants had an adequate understanding of

the protocols (Appendix C). Although the nature and subject matter of the photographs was primarily determined by the participants (in keeping with the Photovoice philosophy), issues relating to the acceptability of photographs were explored with the participants. Participants were specifically alerted that photographs depicting violence, illegal or other antisocial acts would not be considered appropriate. Ethical issues such as safety of participants, respect for others in relation to the power involved in being a photographer and the appropriateness of photographs to be taken during the project were also discussed. The participants were provided with a letter outlining the project and clarifying their role to take with them during the photography phase of the project (Appendix D).

An initial discussion was also held during the induction workshop to begin to explore the ways the participants spent time in their neighbourhood. This provided the researcher with a data source in relation to the activities undertaken and assisted the participants to begin to plan the types of photographs to be taken during the project. Participants were then provided with the cameras and asked to take photographs of their day to day lives to show the researcher how they spend their time. The workshop was tape recorded and transcribed following the session.

(b) The researcher attended the schools to collect the cameras and develop the films once they were delivered to the office at each school.

(c) An individual interview was undertaken with each participant during school time in a classroom or small office at the School. A semi-structured individual interview was undertaken to explore the photographs taken by the participants. A list of pre-set questions, guided by the PSOC framework, was developed to encourage the participants to explain where their photographs were taken and describe what was significant about each one.

Participants were encouraged to tell the stories behind the photographs and to use the photographs to reflect on their lives in determining what was important and meaningful to them at the time. (Appendix E). An approach to the interview drawing on Narrative Therapy, more particularly the work of Michael White, was utilized to assist the participants to consider the broader social and emotional connections inherent in their life stories. According to White:

> … re-membering conversations are shaped by the conception that identity is founded upon an "association of life" rather than on a core self. This association of life has a membership composed of the significant figures and identities of a person's past, present, and projected future, whose voices are influential with regard to the construction of the person's identity (2007, p. 129).

The interviews were tape recorded. Interviews varied between 35 minutes to 60 minutes. Debriefing was provided by the researcher following one interview and options for further support if required were discussed with the participant at the time. In keeping with the Photovoice philosophy, participants were provided with a copy of their photographs. The participants were also informed that the researcher had a copy of the photographs on CD Rom.

 (d)   The participants were invited to participate in a small group discussion at their school to explore shared experiences and identify common themes. Two small discussion groups were held – one at each school with a total of nine participants in attendance. The groups were held in a classroom or administration office. A semi-structured format was also used during the small discussion groups held at each school, drawing on an initial analysis of the individual interview data and guided by the PSOC framework (Appendix F). The discussion

groups allowed a shared process of naming and acknowledging the collective experience to which the photographs bore witness.The discussions were tape recorded and later transcribed. The small group discussions took approximately one hour each. Ground rules were established at the commencement of the small discussion groups. These included respecting each other and sharing information in a general, rather than a specific or personal, manner. Participants were asked to keep confidentiality but also informed that confidentiality could not be guaranteed. They were advised that the researcher and Schools had a duty of care to report any disclosures made of abuse or illegal activities. Participants were informed that they could leave the small group discussions at any time. Group facilitation skills were utilized by the researcher to reduce the potential of any distress arising from the participation in the small group discussions.

Discussions ensued with participants in relation to those photographs which would not be used, including photographs of other people even though the participants had been given verbal consent to take the photograph at the time. The copyright release forms were provided at the end of the interview process, following agreement about the use of the photographs (Appendix G). Two forms were not returned and accordingly the photographs taken by those participants were not used in subsequent documentation. Interviews and small group discussions were taped, transcribed and analysed to draw out themes and explore commonalities between participants, particularly focusing on the two groups. The small group discussions provided an opportunity for validation and further exploration of initial themes. Themes explored included family, community in terms of neighbourhood, virtual community and communities of interest, activities, pets, safety, self-identity and letting go of childhood. As the small group discussions were held some time after the photographs were

taken they also served as a reminder to participants about what had been important to them at the time and to check on the currency of the issues or any change of perspectives that had occurred since taking the photographs. The small group discussions also provided the researcher with an opportunity to feed back her understandings to the participants and to encourage clarification or enhancement by them.

4.5   Researcher statement

The researcher is a registered psychologist and employed by the Department of Education and Training to support schools in the Western Metropolitan Region of Melbourne. She has worked in schools as an Education Support Worker and Student Wellbeing Officer previously. This included employment with a specialist school working with children and adolescents with an intellectual disability. As a psychologist, and an employee of the Department of Education and Training, the researcher is bound by a range of ethical and procedural reporting requirements, including reporting of child protection concerns, illegal activities and any other concerns which place children and adolescents, or others, at risk of harm.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to use PSOC as a framework to explore the experiences and perceptions of adolescents with and without a mild intellectual disability in relation to their neighbourhood. The modified use of Photovoice as a methodology aimed to engage the participants through their active involvement in deciding what photographs to take and discuss. This approach enabled the researcher to access the world of the participants through discussions that elicited the meanings of the photographs and how they reflected the lived experiences of those who took them. In this way, the participants were placed in control of how they depicted their situation and the researcher's role became less directive and more facilitative than traditional methods of research.

As has been described by Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001), there can be several stages to the Photovoice process – training and induction workshops (including identification of the thematic areas to be explored), the participants taking of photographs and deciding

which to include as data, individual interviews, and group discussions. Each of these stages provides data for both the participants and the researcher. In this thesis, information from each stage has been combined in order to identify a set of themes relevant to the lived experiences of the participants. The action component of Photovoice was not developed during the project. Rather a modified Photovoice method was used as the research tool to elicit discussions.

5.1   Themes arising from the data

The interviews and small group discussions with the participants revealed a range of experiences and involvements with their family and community life, providing support for previous research. According to the adolescents who participated in their study, Fuller et al. (2002) found that support, love, security and belonging were the main positive aspects of family. Along with family, connectedness with peers and fitting in at school were reported by those participants as important protective factors in their lives. The themes in the present study also highlighted the significance of meaningful relationships and contributions that previous researchers (e.g., Blum, 1998; Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007) referred to in relation to resilience and wellbeing in adolescence. Aspects of the results reflected the complex and dynamic nature of adolescence with multi-faceted and changing lives, which was evident even within the time frame of the study.

In keeping with previous research (e.g., Pretty et al., 1994; Pretty, 2002), the neighbourhood was reported to have significance in the lives of the participants for many reasons, despite reports that the participants had felt more of a presence in it during their childhood than during adolescence. The major themes which arose in the photographs and during discussions also included:

- Role of place and the neighbourhood

- Level of participation within the neighbourhood and community

- Other factors impacting on the wellbeing of adolescents:

- Home and family

- Friends and the use of technology;

- Letting go of childhood.

Whilst some differences were apparent between the participants with and without an intellectual disability in relation to participation and independence, unlike the findings of Bramston et al. (2002), there were many similarities discovered in what was considered meaningful and important to both groups. Bramston et al. reported that adolescents with an intellectual disability felt significantly less belonging and less control over their choices compared to adolescents without a disability. It was evident from the present study that some of the participants with an intellectual disability did require support from family in accessing activities, however, there was no evidence suggesting that they did not gain a sense of belonging or control in this regard. Carnaby's (1998) claim that people tended to compare themselves with others, feeling more comfortable with those with whom they shared common interests and skills may be significant in this regard, as the participants with an intellectual disability attended a specialist school and participated in sporting clubs with others with similar disabilities.

Given the efforts undertaken by the current researcher in pursuing a method that was respectful and provided the participants with opportunities to take control of the research

project through the choice of photographs, they were invited to comment on the method. Overall they remarked on the ability of the approach to engage and draw out many areas for discussion which may not have been elicited otherwise. Some of the participants were able to contrast the current method with other research methods they had experienced and responded positively in terms of their interest level as well as the opportunity it provided for them to capture their lives in a pictorial sense.

5.1.1 Role of place and the neighbourhood

5.1.1.1 The importance of place

The physical presence of the photographs highlighted the importance of place. Gustafson's (2001) classifications of "place" are relevant in describing the meanings the participants associated with place in the present study. Some places related to physical environments such as holiday houses with scenic views and peaceful times (Photograph 1) whilst others (Photographs 2, 3, 4 and 5) related to personal experiences and meeting needs such as relaxation, work or sporting activities. Other places related to relationships with others such as people's houses where parties or celebrations occurred. This was often associated with history or memories of previous gatherings. Although the photographs represented places, each participant described the relationships that existed at each place – family, sporting club members or work colleagues. It, therefore, appeared that the place itself was most meaningful in the context of relationships.

Photograph 1: Photograph by Jayne[1]. Holiday house in the country.

Jayne described experiences of family time at the holiday house:

…We did get together when we had an anniversary on the house last year 30 anniversary… and we go down there when we meet and they've got markets, lots of markets, so we go down on that weekend … We've got a pool down there. I go fishing with my godparents. We go to art galleries. We go [on] outings and we go to the town.

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[1] All names used for participants are pseudonyms to protect their identity and privacy.

Photograph 2 Photograph by Jayne. My library.

Jayne described going to the library because she liked reading borrowing books from the library. She had participated in a read-a-thon and "was getting books out every single week" during that time.

Photograph 3: Photograph by Ben. Side view of karate dojo.

Ben explained that despite the karate dojo being in another suburb he trains:

… quite frequently, every Thursday and Saturday and every other day I can

get down there… My karate instructor who lives near me comes and picks me

up …

Photograph 4: Photograph by Jayne. My gym.

Jayne explained her exercise regime at the gym involving three occasions

per week, stating that she attends with her mother:

It's got like a sauna, men's and ladies' change rooms. Me and mum go quite a bit

in there – we went on Monday and we forgot about the time [laughter]. *In the sauna*

we met some people and we talked and then we didn't ask what the time was.

Photograph 5: Photograph by Lisa. My work.

Part time work has been identified by Gilligan (2000) as a potential mediator of stress and arena of comfort for adolescents experiencing stress in other settings, such as the family. Lisa, from the mainstream school, explained that she had taken the photograph at night to represent being night staff. She described her enjoyment of working with people that she cared about as well as having a space away from home:

> *… I love the people I work with. I'm very close with all my managers and stuff like that. I'll go out with them and stuff. I love 'em. It's just because we're in a little house with so many people there's no space there and so when I go to work that's my personal space.*

Having a space away from home was also identified by John as useful when his grass at home is too wet to play football (Photograph 6). Whilst he identified the park as a place to play, it also provided interaction with others (which he did not always welcome).

> ... [Yeah and is there anybody else that sort of hangs around the park or is that …]
>
> *Ahh little kids but they get in the way, they get in my way… They get in the way when*

they try to play on the playground. [O.k. so they're a bit annoying?] *They're all right. Just one kid that tries to put me off when I kick the ball… He goes are you going to miss it this time?* [Laughter]

Photograph 6: Photograph by John. The park at the Junction.

The park provided a thoroughfare in her neighbourhood from home to school and the broader community for Crystal, from the mainstream school. Further discussions, about the reason for taking two photographs of the park, revealed that one photograph showed where her friend lived. The two photographs also held greater significance for Crystal, however, as they related to memories of a time when she and her friend threw her "emo bear", a toy bear she used to help her cope when upset. Accordingly, the place was important for Crystal because of an emotional connection she had with it.

Photographs 7 and 8: Photographs by Crystal. Park I walk through to get home.

5.1.1.2 Role of the neighbourhood

Mead (1984) referred to the neighbourhood as a place for children to learn to become members of their society through exploration and adaptation. The role of various adults in the neighbourhood was considered crucial in this regard. The importance of the neighbourhood in the lives of the participants was explored in the present study. It was found that the participants from both groups of participants identified relationships with neighbours. This often involved ambivalence as neighbours were identified as providing support, but also surveillance of their life. In keeping with Mead's assertions, the neighbourhood increasingly served as a gateway from home to the external world where the participants accessed communities of interest and ventured to meet friends or visit family.

Regardless of which school the participants attended, those who had resided at their current home for most of their lives tended to know more neighbours than those who had recently moved. This supports research undertaken by Chipeur et al. (1999) which found that adolescents who had lived at their current address for 10 or more years reported more support in their neighbourhoods than those who had lived there for less than 10 years. However, some of the participants in the present study who have resided in their neighbourhood for a

long time reported not talking to some of their neighbours or not knowing those neighbours who were new to the neighbourhood.

One participant reported a range of ethnic backgrounds amongst her neighbours. She did not report any contact with these neighbours and did not express an interest in developing a relationship with them. This lack of interest may reflect a lack of in-group ties as described by Obst and White (2005). The researchers claimed that in-group ties were related to the perceptions of similarity and bonds with other members. It may be that, based on social identification theory, the participant's experience reflected an in-group preference to her own ethnicity and a rejection of the out-group (Obst & White, 2007).

Conversely, another participant detailed regular activities undertaken in their street with neighbours such as an annual street barbecue. She reported that she knew people in every couple of houses. Another participant, who had recently moved, stated that although he had not yet met his neighbours his family kept in regular contact with people from his previous neighbourhood, suggesting that relationships formed within neighbourhoods are considered valuable and worthy of maintaining despite distance. Some participants reported only knowing the neighbour immediately next door, whilst others named up to five neighbours they knew. A participant from the specialist school reported that one of his neighbours drives him to the railway station each school day.

Participants reported knowing friends from their current and previous schools and sporting as well as from activity groups out of school. One participant reported having friends in his street, although not spending as much time with them as he had in previous years. Participants, therefore, reported having to use technology, such as the internet (MSN or email) and telephone, to keep in contact with their friends from school and other areas. In

this way, the local neighbourhood did not appear to be continuing to meet their needs as their interests and contacts broadened to communities of interest rather than geographical communities. This supports research undertaken by Obst et al. (2002b) which explored the place of identification within PSOC. They compared geographic communities with communities of interest (science fiction fandom) and found that participants reported higher levels of global PSOC with fandom than with their geographic communities. Participants reported feeling more belonging, ties, shared values, and influence with fandom than with their local communities, suggesting that interest rather than locality is more significant. It would appear from the present study that the ability to travel outside of their neighbourhood combined with technological advances, such as the internet, may be enhancing accessibility of communities of interest for adolescents. Many of the participants reported being close to shopping and youth activity centres, but also reported having to travel out of their neighbourhood to participate in certain activities, such as karate, school and to visit friends.

Previous research (O'Grady, 2000) explored what adolescents liked and disliked about their neighbourhoods and found that interactions with people were important, as was access to amenities such as shops, transport and things to do. Participants in the current study identified similar factors they did and did not like about their neighbourhoods. Both groups of participants were able to clearly identify those things that were aesthetically pleasing as well as their relationships with neighbours as positive or not.

Location was considered important to participants who reported being close to shops and friends. Jayne, from the Specialist School, reported that "… we can walk or catch a bus to shops. We've got the beach near us…" Similarly, Naomi, from the Specialist School, stated "I live near the shops. You don't have to drive." Lisa, from the mainstream school,

reported that she did not tend to leave the neighbourhood much because her friends and the shopping plaza were there. Martin, also from the mainstream school, concurred, stating that the youth centre was close to his neighbourhood, which had "bands and you can use the computers for free. They've got all sorts of stuff there."

The diversity of the neighbourhood was noted by Aleisha, from the mainstream school, who reported that her street was "full of surprises. It's got everyone you can possibly think of – Muslim, Chinese …" Several participants noted friendliness amongst neighbours as features that they liked about their neighbourhoods.

Graffiti and noise were named by some participants as features of their neighbourhood which they did not enjoy. "Well sometimes I don't like when they do burnouts" (Clare, from the Specialist School). Similarly Aleisha, from the mainstream school, stated that "it is also kinda bad … people drag racing". Crystal, from the mainstream school, identified a number of concerning behaviours within her neighbourhood: graffiti, gangs and gatecrashers attending parties. She reported that she had not had a party after her formal because of the risk of gatecrashers. For Aleisha from the mainstream school, her memories of childhood holidays in a country town provided vivid descriptions of what she liked within a neighbourhood and reflected on how these contrasted starkly with aspects of her current suburban life:

> *All my memories are there. It's so settled. The best bakery in the world. It's old, it's small. I used to go for adventures. In suburbia you have no time out. You could ride your bike and no-one cared. No-one judged... If you don't look the part, you don't fit in.*

5.1.1.3 Safety

Safety has consistently been associated with the experiences of adolescents within communities. It was identified by Chipeur and Pretty (1999) as a significant factor in the Neighbourhood Youth Inventory and feelings of unsafety were explored by Zani et al. (2001). Similarly, O'Grady (2000) found that safety was the main recurring theme in her research with Year 10 participants who identified a range of safety concerns, including parental concerns about allowing their children to spend time in the neighbourhood, street lighting being inadequate, differences in attitudes towards safety between males and females and changes over time in relation to community safety. In the present study, various aspects of safety, including personal and community safety within the neighbourhood, were also raised during the discussions. Sometimes the neighbourhood provided a place for perceived safe activities, such as playing in the park. John, a participant from the specialist school, in describing the park shown in Photograph 9, revealed that "… It's pretty safe there… I have to tell mum when I get back. .. Um she worries that I might fall over, stuff like that."

Photograph 9. Photograph by John. The park.

Violence and noise tended to be the main criteria by which participants determined whether their neighbourhood was safe or not. Christopher, from the specialist school, described his neighbourhood as safe:

Yeah it's [neighbourhood] very safe really. Umm it's good that it's safe I don't really see any bad people there in the court but sometimes down at the milk bar behind our house you can hear a lot of burnouts and that. No seriously where I live is quite safe there's no stabbings or nothing nothing's bad it's just safe.

Safety concerns were raised during discussions about the neighbourhood with participants, particularly those from the mainstream school, who may have had greater awareness of risks than participants from the specialist school. Issues of safety included both personal safety in relation to the participants' health as well as community safety*:*

Lots of kidnappings around my area and school. I take [dog] with me for safety and medical help if I need it. One time he went and got help for me because of my illness. (Aleisha, mainstream school.)

I've been a bit concerned about the neighbourhood. There have been some stabbings. I'm scared about my little brother he's three and has autism... Just a couple of days ago a guy tried to take my bike. He made a grab for it... I told my mum about it. My mum said you couldn't do much about it...I'd never had anything like that happen before. (Ben, mainstream school)

And I've got my work and I've got a misty one [photo] of my work because that was one of my safe places but there's been big brawls outside of my work so that's not a safe place anymore. (Lisa, mainstream school)

[Do you feel safe walking in your area?] *No not really because the place that we live is just a 10 minute walk from a known gang area…* [How do you know?] *There are tags there and from friends that got beaten up around there.* (Crystal, mainstream school).

Perceptions of safety appeared to be significant for some of the participants who tended to rely on anecdotal evidence in relation to gangs or appeared to associate graffiti with gangs. For Lisa, the presence of a Safety House Zone, Photograph10, offered a sense of safety and she associated this with friendliness within her neighbourhood:

There's a primary school just around the corner from us and we're in a safety zone and we've got all the safety houses and stuff. It's really good. Everyone is really friendly.

Photograph 10. Photograph by Lisa. Safety House zone*.*

5.1.1.4   Relationships within the neighbourhood

For many participants, their neighbourhoods represented relationships with others and discussions often included examples of ways the participant or their family members interacted with others. This was particularly evident during the group discussion at the specialist school.

On Tuesday at the supermarket I bumped into some people: teachers and stuff and yeah all of mum's friends.

Sometimes they stop at my house and talk.

Yes they mum and dad talking to some woman I forgot her name. Yes she's an older woman.

The neighbour next door if she's going away she asked us to um collect her mail and if we don't go away ... Oh mail we take the mail for them... And the one next door if they go away and they've got pets sometimes we feed it.

The neighbour on that side they buy us things like chocolates at Christmas ... and they've got a garden light and they've got hot peppers. Yeah and they're so nice.

We give our close neighbours Christmas cards and they give them back.

Umm he [next door neighbour] takes me to school every morning to the station. Cos he works in the city as well. That's good rather than my parents taking me.

My old next door neighbour came to my 18th.

Yeah she took me to the circus.

As noted by Chipeur et al. (1999), these interactions often included tangible support or friendly gestures. Similarly, Wood (1974) found that neighbourhood for adolescents involved more than residence but a deeper connection between the people and the place.

The participants from the mainstream school described their neighbours as a range of people with whom they had different types of relationships. Their observations tend to critique the relationship and offer opinions about the value of the relationships:

It's funny how you make friends with old people but not little kids.

I know I have this old man that lives around the corner from my house. I've spoken to him every morning since I was in grade 3 and he kind of keeps an eye on all the children in the street to make sure we don't get drunk or we don't have parties in the street.

We have a priest who when you have parties will always come and knock on your door... Yeah we did it once and he kind of went to our parents and we thought you could trust a priest but obviously not.

` *The only time I see my neighbours when they're not in their cars going to work is when the rubbish is meant to go out everyone we can see everyone looking through their windows waiting to put either both bins out or one bin out then we all know. (laughter) Then you see everyone go get their bins and put them all out. That's the only time I see them...There's always one that doesn't you see him in the mornings screaming at the garbage wait, wait. (laughter) You see the whole neighbourhood laughing at him.*

Both groups of participants appeared to consider their relationships with neighbours as significant for various reasons. This would support the findings of Pretty et al. (2003) which found that rather than location alone a sense of place emerged from the involvement between people and between people and place.

Some of the participants, particularly those from the specialist school, identified that whilst they may see people they had attended school with, they would not necessarily be included in their friendship groups. "Some of them my old high school friends live down there but I see them sometimes. They wouldn't hang with me (laughter) I don't see them that much" (John, from specialist school). This suggested that John did not view himself as

belonging to his neighbourhood in the same way as adolescents without disabilities, providing support for Bramston et al.'s (2002) assertion that living in and feeling part of the community are not the same.

The responsibility that came with residing in a neighbourhood was considered by Christopher who commented on the time when he first played his drum kit at home:

Oh the first time I was playing it oh boy a big sound it had a really good sound but the thing is that there are a bit of complaints and that... The neighbours were happy like they were happy about the way I was playing it but when you play it it's really loud it's got a really good sound too. It's got a good sound.

5.1.1.5   Shared public spaces

Research has found that public spaces, such as shopping centres, can be problematic for adolescents as they can be the subject of, and subject to, the gaze of others. Adolescents' unsupervised presence in public space represents adolescents as in-between, not children or adults. This has led to media and adult representations of adolescents as disruptive and threats to the safety of themselves and others. (Panelli, Nairn, Atwool, & McCormack, 2002). Regardless of this research, it was agreed by participants in the current study that the local shopping centre provided a safe place for young people to gather:

There's never been a fight down there. The Plaza's probably one of the safest places... There are people around if something happens they'll see you. In the streets if it's dark no-one will see you. (Aleisha, mainstream school)

We get no trouble at all just sitting around and talking... Although one time I was drinking a bottle of "V" and they're [security guards] like you're not allowed to drink that here and I'm like what do you mean and they're like no alcoholic substances on the premises and I'm like no this is a "V" it invigorates you. [laughter] *Yeah they're like sorry man so I was being blasted for nothing I'd done wrong it was one of those maybe you should have checked before you...* (Martin, mainstream school)

Lisa described her neighbourhood (as symbolised by her court sign in Photograph 11) as a special place for her as she participated in her morning routine of waking up and walking to school:

It's kinda got all of the clouds and everything. It's right at the end and it's always very foggy in the morning and stuff. I love it, it's mystical. I'll look out my bedroom in the morning and I'll just see all these clouds and it's so pretty. I love it. So I pictured the court sign and the clouds...I wake up and see the fog. I walk to school. I used to go to (name of school) and um I'd walk to school in the morning and it would feel like I was walking in the clouds. It was so nice.

Photograph 11. Photograph by Lisa. My court sign.

Lisa, in reflecting upon her photograph again during the small group discussion, described how circumstances had changed for her since taking the photograph:

And um I've got pictures of my area but they were like misty because I said that was my mystical place. I don't know I don't feel like that anymore that's changed. [Ok so what's different? Why was that important at the time?] *I don't know. I just it was my safe little place …*

5.1.2 Levels of participation in activities within the neighbourhood and community

5.2.2.1 Leisure time

Maton (1990) found that meaningful instrumental activity was positively related to life satisfaction, independent of social support from friends and parents. Bramston et al.

(2002) found that adolescents with an intellectual disability accessed community facilities and participated in the community activities less than those without a disability. Accordingly, the present study aimed to explore the types of activities undertaken and the level of participants for both groups of adolescents.

Whilst an initial analysis of data in relation to activities undertaken by both groups suggested that the participants from the specialist school tended to be involved in passive and indoor activities, further discussions and data analysis suggested that there was a wide variety of activities that participants from both school settings engaged in. These included:

- Sporting activities – watching Australian Football League football, watching family members play sport, informal and formal sports participation;

- Spending time with family and friends, including parties, shopping and going to restaurants;

- Playing computer games and talking on MSN;

- Music – playing guitar and drums, listening to music.

Although some of the participants from the specialist school participated in disability-specific programs such as soccer and the circus, they also participated actively in many mainstream activities, such as going to the Australian Football League football, bowling, movies and the gym. The current research did, however, also identify differences between the two groups in relation to some opportunities for participation. This was particularly evident for one of the female participants from the specialist school who stated:

I want to [play sports] but I don't know what team and my mum and dad goes oh what are you going to do that for? They always say stuff like that. I hate that. My brother says you're good at it you should play.

Participants from the mainstream school reported performing (singing and dancing) and writing (songs and a book) – activities not shared by participants from the specialist school. Martin, from the mainstream school, was a member of a local community group which organized music events.

There appeared to be a greater reliance on the support of family for participants with a disability, with many activities (such as bike riding, going to the library and attending the gym) undertaken with family members. This finding confirmed previous research which found that parents played a crucial role in enabling the participation of adolescents with a disability in school and community extracurricular and recreational activities (Kleinert et al., 2007).

Participants from the specialist school also included their work experience and TAFE activities when discussing ways they spend their time. It, therefore, appeared that they tended to participate in more organized and structured activities than participants from the mainstream school, although John, from the specialist school, did identify playing football by himself in a local park and Jayne, from the specialist school, reported that she sometimes goes shopping independently by herself or with friends. Participants from the mainstream school appeared to be more independent in their activities although spending time with family members was included. One of those participants reported that her ill health had reduced her ability to participate actively in sports and had also impacted on her interest in socialising with friends. These experiences confirm the desire for autonomy and potential barriers (such as illness) which affect adolescents from both groups as they strive to negotiate the developmental trajectory between childhood and adulthood (Noom, Dekovic, & Meeus, 1999).

A participant from the mainstream school, Ben, used his photographs to capture his varying interests and achievements. The seriousness with which he undertook the activities and the links they created for him with friends and family members was evident in his descriptions of the photographs.

Photograph 12. Photograph by Ben. Computer.	I use it for photos when I take photos, homework, mainly for MSN when I catch up with my friends. A lot of people at karate have it. If I can't catch up with them at karate I catch up with them on web cam. I can call them through MSN. I can talk to people. Very good.
Photograph 13. Photograph by Ben. My PSP.	Umm At the moment I haven't played it much but I use it for music and a photo book. But I LOVE playing games and all that… My favourite game is called Halo… Me and my friend are counting down until the games come out.
Photograph 14. Photograph by Ben. X-Box 360.	My dad bought this… Very good games. Good graphics.

 Photograph 15. Photograph by Ben. My karate trophies and awards.	These are all of my karate trophies and awards I've won over the last couple of years. That one just there. I won that award at the end of the year 2005 so two years ago and it was out of our entire club and that in all of [states] which is nearly 1,000 students and I won the award for most outstanding student and I was very, very indebted. Admittedly I trained very hard to get it.
 Photograph 16. Photograph by Ben. Motorbike helmet.	Yep. I love motorbike riding and me and my girlfriend go motorbike riding together. We do a lot together… I've always wanted to get a motorbike but my parents always said no. Because my mum works for Transport Accident Commission so you could see where she was coming from… I've wanted a motorbike since I was like 5 years old and every time it was like no no no no and then when I met my girlfriend and she was going motorbike riding and she kept asking me and I asked my parents one more time… Now I've got three motorbikes [laughter].
 Photograph 17. Photograph by Ben. Karate stick known as a bow.	This is actually my karate stick known as a bow which is one of many weapons we have. We ahh I'm only allowed it's the only legal weapon we are allowed to have. You're not allowed to walk around the streets with it. It actually symbolizes back in the over in China over in those areas farmers who work in crops and have people coming people who want to kill everyone they would have all they would be able to use was their brooms and their digging tools and that's what that symbolizes so rather than having a gun on you and really killing someone or mortally wounding them you're only using it for self defence. Yeah. I like having it on me. It's a 6 foot tall stick too so it has to be around your own height… Sometimes I can't take it because I've got to catch transport like I said so you can't take it… I'd be asking for trouble I think if I was walking around the streets with that and that's one of the reasons that you're not allowed to have it on you… Like I said it's six foot so technically if I was to hit something or strike I've got another extra six foot distance on me so that's pretty good knowing that I've got to defend myself or to get away from someone that sort of stuff. Hopefully I won't have to use it on someone… Everything I've learnt at karate I never want to use on someone.

  Photograph 18. Photograph by Ben. Dance shoes.	Well my girlfriend's got her deb coming up – debutante ball. So she asked me to go to that with her and so I've been doing dancing for the last few months learning how to professionally dance. They're also my school shoes. [laughter]… Is it a bit like karate?] Surprisingly there's a lot of similarities if you really think about it. Admittedly in dance you talk a bit more but you're allowed to than in karate but we have to learn a sequence of moves like in karate like katra in karate – learning a sequence of moves to impress the instructors whereas in dance we're learning a sequence of moves to impress everyone. [Will you continue dancing after the deb?] Well I'm actually looking into going into break dancing. Maybe next year or something. Once I've got my black belt look into that next year.
  Photograph 19. Photograph by Ben. Bag and sparring gear.	Because I do a lot of fighting in karate. More of just when I say fighting I don't mean to hurt people. I mean to help them get better at fighting and to help myself get better. So working on speed and all that kind of stuff. That's my karate bag as well as with my brown belt across it. Hoping to be a black belt in December. My girlfriend actually got me that bag so which was very nice of her.

5.1.2.2 The role of school in supporting participation in activities

All participants attended school and, accordingly, a lot of their time was spent there. Although their experiences at school were not the focus of the research project, it was evident that school played a crucial role in the lives of the participants through the opportunities for participation that school provided. Students' school PSOC has been explored by Bateman (2002) who found a number of characteristics which were associated with higher levels of sense of community for students at both the classroom and school levels. These included multiple opportunities for collaboration, connections with multiple communities (in and outside the school), active student participation, meaningful activities and a safe environment. Lee and Breen (2007) argued that there is a growing literature suggesting that the school context is not always supportive of all students. They explored the role of a sense

of belonging in experiences of adolescents at school. They found that factors in the school context such as a failure to provide opportunities, power and control, which led to feelings of inferiority and resentment, contributed to students leaving school early. Similarly, McGraw et al. argued that:

> the research on school connectedness shows a strong link between young people who feel that they belong to their school and levels of engagement, enjoyment of school and investment of themselves in the process of learning compared to young people who do not have a sense of connectedness (2008, p. 28)

For participants from both schools in the present study, school provided opportunities for them to socialize informally and formally as well as to contribute to the school and broader community. The specialist school environment, for example, enabled the development of friendships with most of the participants knowing their friends from the school. They sometimes travelled to school together, using their travel time for socialising. Both schools provided opportunities to participate in activities that appeared to be meaningful for them, including the Student Representative Council for Aleisha, from the mainstream school.

> *School means friends. I couldn't survive without school because of friends. Sometimes I don't want to be there because I've been bullied or … But now it's all right … I've been voted as student leader since Year 8. We talk about the issues a lot – bullying, drugs, smoking, behaviour towards teachers. That's a real problem, no-one respects teachers. And they are trying to find a way of improving.*

Ben, from the mainstream school, described his transfer to the local school which allowed him the opportunity to develop and maintain friendships. "Now that I go to school

here I can catch up with people after school. At my other school it took two hours to get there so I do that [go to the Plaza] more often." Ben referred to the importance of discipline in his life and the way in which his current school provided this for him:

Well I love working in a disciplined area. [Karate] That's why I moved to this school as well... Well my old school had no discipline. I won't mention it [school's name]. They had no school bell, they had no school uniform. Kids came and went pretty well as much as they pleased. To me that is not a good environment to be learning in. If the teachers didn't like it the teachers would pretty well walk out and that's not good. School uniform is really about family. At this school I haven't got into any fights. At my old school I was getting into fights almost daily, which is not good.

The role of the school in the promotion of goals and aspirations was also noted by Ben. "I want to study and get good grades. [VCE] has to be [the priority]. It determines my life really - what I can do for the rest of my life. Very important. I think anyway." Similarly, Lisa, a participant at the mainstream school, spoke with pleasure of her interest in the area of psychology and the opportunities the school had provided for her in the development of activities allowing her to apply her knowledge:

I just got an award today for Year 11 Psychology. I love it so much finding out about mental disorders, about how to find work. I just love it... it just felt really good. I got two others one was for advancing the community. I worked with ESL [English as a Second Language] students so that was really good. So it's all great ... We all got given a buddy at the school who needed help with their schoolwork who came from another country. We went to the city centre and did surveys. We had a project to find things out. So we found out about immigration in Australia and it was really good.

It's finished now. (Student's name) is in one of my classes, my maths class. So I can still work with her because that was the subject we most worked at. So I can still work with her and everything.

The school provided Lisa with an opportunity to meaningfully participate in a project enabling her to take on a civic responsibility by supporting her peers, and in so doing allowing her to set future career directions. This supports the argument of da Silva et al. (2004) that civic responsibility, whilst important for a well functioning society, is also significant in identity formation in adolescents.

The specialist school actively promoted work experience opportunities within the community and the students attended regular out of school programs as part of their Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) curriculum. This allowed some participants the chance to consider possibilities for work as described by John: "I do some gardening… [Is that something you would be doing when you leave school?] That's second one if I don't get the zoo that's second" (Photograph 20).

Photograph 20. Photograph by John. Work – Ceres.

It would appear that the provision of work experience and community access programs provided the participants with opportunities to gain those community and life skills, identified by Dowrick (2004), as essential for the inclusion of people with disabilities in community life. The sense of safety and connectedness offered by the specialist school was evident when participants spoke of their concerns about leaving the school, as indicated by Clare:

> *Um I reckon that [leaving school] will be scary because I don't really want to like I was talking to the teachers about me staying another year one more year, but then I'll be ready but now I'm not really ready. I am confident but I just don't think I would meet new people that would like me at another school and it would be like hard because I fit in here and I know everyone here and I don't want to you know it takes a long time to meet new people and to get to know 'em.*

5.1.2.3   Membership of sporting clubs

According to Gilman, "social interest involves a sense of belonging whereby an individual relinquishes their individual desires for a social commitment to others" (2001, p. 751). He suggested that although the concept is not new, its role in positive mental health and contributing to an individual's life satisfaction is now recognised. Participants from both groups spoke of belonging to sporting groups, including football clubs, gyms and karate centres. This was particularly apparent in relation to membership of sporting clubs such as local football teams, the Australian Football League and Melbourne Victory Soccer Club. Discussions about football teams were consistently undertaken in interviews as participants from both groups identified their favourite teams and spoke of how they became interested in the team:

I've liked Western Bulldogs all my life. I liked the colours. I go once a year and [do] footy tips at home. (Aleisha, mainstream school)

Footy's huge in my family. We're all Bulldog supporters. (Lisa, mainstream school)

Collingwood [is my team].Umm I used to go for Essendon. And then they lost too many games so I didn't want to go for them anymore... [How come you changed to Collingwood?] *They had good team spirit...good team members. My family barracks for them, my grandma, cousins, mum, the whole family barrack for them.[I go] nearly every week...I got [a membership ticket] for a Christmas present last year from my mum and dad.* (Naomi, specialist school)

It's funny because I'm like go [team] and the other people like whoever we play against they go, go the other team and I'm like go [team] go and get fired up...Yeah and then they sing oh it's so funny. They crack when our team lose they crack me up laughing because they do a song and then they jump up. [Laughter] Yeah but yeah my brother's friends on the team are really nice to me and stuff. (Clare, specialist school)

Photograph 21. Photograph by John. My bedroom.

Sporting teams provided an opportunity for social engagement with family and friends and there were often stories related to a family history of team membership. This was the case for both John and Christopher, participants from the specialist school, who associated football with family. John stated that he had barracked for the Swans since attending his first game with his dad.. A shelf in his bedroom held his collection of football memorabilia (Photograph 21). Christopher's story about following St. Kilda involved a family tradition involving his father and grandfather. He reported that his mother had also tended to support St. Kilda more than her old team (Photograph 22).

Photograph 22. Photograph by Christopher. Football.

Membership of a football team appeared to provide both groups of adolescents with an opportunity to assert themselves with their family and peers, either through shared support of the team or intense rivalry between teams. It may be that this provided an opportunity for the adolescents to influence others, a factor considered important in PSOC theory.

Photograph 23: Photograph by Clare. Brother playing football.

For participants such as Clare, from the specialist school, football was supported at a local level with her brother's involvement (Photograph 23). Clare's family regularly watched him play with friends and extended family members. The politics of the game and loyalty for her brother was reported by Clare who expressed considerable frustration at her brother not being chosen to play:

… but now the coach said that he doesn't really get a game anymore. I don't know why but yeah. I'm starting to get angry… Because he shouldn't you know whenever he comes he goes on the bench and it's not fair to him. Everyone else gets a game and I think my brother should tell the coach what's happening and that and sometimes I have like tea there and yeah…

The support provided by a local sporting club to which the family belonged was acknowledged by Lisa, from the mainstream school, who reported family involvement with

the football club as her brother had played, her father had coached and she had been the club photographer. She described the support provided by the club following a family tragedy:

Yeah we're still close with everyone we've sort of had the football club organize a fundraiser for our family so we're very close with them but yeah dad just doesn't he's been coaching for the last four years and he's decided not to coach this year. And [brother]'s messed up his knee quite a lot.

Discussions about belonging to football teams suggested that this involvement allowed participants to experience PSOC as their participation involved membership of the team, provided fulfilment of needs and a shared emotional connection with others. At times they were able to influence their family or friends with their opinions about the team's performance or predictions about future progress. There were usually symbols such as scarves and jumpers which acknowledged their membership. Their membership of the team may also have involved an identity with the team but also with others who shared the membership.

5.1.3   Other factors affecting the wellbeing of adolescents.

5.1.3.1   Home and family

In the present study, the importance of home and family was a strong theme throughout, with all participants discussing aspects of life within the home and relationships with parents and other family members. For participants from the specialist school, the family often provided the link to the external world with family members accompanying

them to the many activities they participated in or observed. Whilst this appeared less necessary for the participants from the mainstream school, the role of family was also considered important by those participants as role models and as sources of emotional and practical support.

Home was often identified by the participants as a place where they spent a lot of time. Lisa, a participant from the mainstream school, identified a tree at her home as a special place for her to sit and think away from other people (Photograph 24).

Photograph 24. Photograph by Lisa. Tree.

Bedrooms were considered by Jones, Taylor, Dick, Singh, and Cook (2007) to be environments which could be regulated by adolescents to construct a space influenced by personal characteristics. Jones et al. explored gender differences in the design and use of bedrooms, finding that girls' bedrooms contained a mixture of masculine and feminine items whereas boys' bedrooms almost exclusively contained masculine items, particularly related to sports and things for building. Crystal, from the mainstream school, identified her bedroom as a place to relax and escape from other family members to listen to music or do homework (Photograph 25).

Photograph 25: Photograph by Crystal. My bedroom.

Crystal also described home as a place for day to day routines. The bathroom was reported to play an important role in her mornings in getting her hair and makeup completed (Photograph 26.).

Photograph 26: Photograph by Crystal. The bathroom.

Further discussions with Crystal allowed other understandings of what was important to her to be elicited from photographs representing her morning routine as she discussed the importance of being healthy and fit, beginning with breakfast each morning (Photograph 27).

Photograph 27: Photograph by Crystal. Breakfast.

Spending time with family members at home and outside of the home seemed to be valued by all participants. Some participants took photographs of their family members – parents, siblings as well as extended family. This was often the case when the participants had attended a family function or party during the photography period. For Aleisha, a participant at the mainstream school, the importance of her family was acknowledged when she realized that she had taken many photographs of home and spoken a lot about her family. After reflecting on her photographs she commented:

> *Obviously family means a lot to me even though I didn't see it. My family has just*
>
> *been there… I was in and out of hospital all the time and mum and dad were very*
>
> *protective.*

This comment suggests that participants may take family for granted, not always being conscious of the valuable role that family plays in their lives. Ben also stressed the role that family played in his life in terms of care for each other:

Friends come and go but family's there forever... Family is extremely important to me. I'll always be there for my family and we'll be there for each other... Our uncle stayed at our place. We always look out for family... Family are people you love but are not in love with. People you really care about.

As identified by Fuller et al. (2002), family is a protective factor in the development of resilience for adolescents. Other researchers, such as Noom et al. (1999) and Gilligan (2000), have also stressed the importance of adolescents having a secure base from which to explore the world and identified attachment as an important developmental goal for adolescents. Attachment to parents was reported to be positively related to academic competence and self esteem and reduced engagement in problem behaviour and feelings of depression. White (1996) asserted that family processes such as emotional bonding, role relationships and rules equip the adolescent with the necessary skills to interact with the broader social environment. Home was also recognised by Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) as part of the physical world existence for the developing child. Dickerson, Zimmerman, and Berndt (1994) questioned the dominant narrative of separation from parents during adolescence to find one's identity, suggesting rather that a counter-narrative of connection may be more apt to describe the evolving process of change which occurs within families as children become adolescents.

Research suggests that a relationship with a consistent caretaker during early childhood is significant for healthy development and wellbeing (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991;

Zwi & Henry, 2005). It would appear, however, from the discussions with the participants in the present study that family relationships continue to be as important during the adolescent life stage. The current research suggests that families are prominent in the lives of adolescents for a number of significant reasons:

5.1.3.1.1 Identity*:*

Family members, unlike other people, have remained a constant in the lives of adolescents since their birth. They know the adolescents well and assist in their development of an identity, particularly in light of the changes that adolescents recognise about themselves. It may be that the family provides a grounding opportunity for adolescents when multiple changes are occurring.

> *They've seen me grow up.* [What would they say about you?] *Umm I'm a nice person* (Christopher, specialist school).

> *I'm Irish and German … my grandma shows me off like a show pony. She thinks I'm one of the best dancers there and I'm not really. I'm more of a tomboy. I like going skateboarding with my brother* (Aleisha, mainstream school).

> *My mum says I'm like a leo. Brave, caring, a leader, a boss* (Ben, mainstream school).

5.1.3.1.2 Connection:

Adolescents often reported keeping in contact with extended family members, including those living interstate or overseas. "A large part of my family is Turkish so speak

always in Turkish but they're trying to speak English. We need translation to be understanding it" (Ben, mainstream school). This contact or sense of connection often took the form of family rituals or get-togethers, which usually involved enjoyment and fun as well as stories that helped to identify the family and the adolescent's role within it.

Umm sometimes I don't see them much but I sometimes speak to them on the phone. And the time I usually see them is maybe during birthday parties and that (Christopher, Specialist school).

Oh another thing is I forgot to take a picture is my cousin's baby. Seven months old. And he's so cute. Yeah I've been holding it a lot and that. He's coming to my 18th. And his name's [name] and when he came to my brother's birthday I changed his nappy. Because I wanted to you know give it a shot. And I did it good. Yeah and it was so cute when I was doing that because he was laughing [laughter] and he was like blowing bubbles [laughter]. So cute. And my friend it was quite embarrassing because my cousin was there my other cousin on the other side and my friend was there and it was just embarrassing it felt like it was my baby. (Naomi, specialist school)

Every Saturday we have a family lunch at my house. With my nan and pa and my godfather come over and we just have a big platter me and my nan make a big platter of sandwiches and we just have a big lunch together and just hang out for a couple of hours... Yeah me and my Pa we watch wrestling and everyone else hated wrestling and told us to turn it off. But we actually caught my nan watching wrestling by

herself. We busted her... We're a very close family. Both sides. My dad's side they're pretty close. They're a bunch of bogans [colloquial Australian expression referring to people of, or perceived to be of, low socioeconomic background] pretty much [laughter] (Lisa, participant from mainstream school).

5.1.3.1.3   Shared characteristics and interests:

The participants also explored ways in which they shared characteristics and interests with family members and in so doing helped define themselves and their own passions. It was sometimes through discussions about family members that the adolescents recognised their own qualities or passions:

> *Because grandpa he tapes a lot of shows really I tell you what he doesn't miss too much. He's always got his tapes because he likes to tape his t.v. shows. Yeah he wants to watch other t.v. shows. [Is that like you?] Yeah I like watching the footy show that's good and just watch other sports shows...* (Christopher, specialist school)

> *The whole family rides bikes for exercise.* (Crystal, mainstream school)

Other participants, such as Lisa and Ben, were aware of the significance of family members and the impact of their influence on their lives, including future hopes and plans:

> *Me and mum always had a plan to set up like this place where kids from the streets could come and stay and we'd get like contracts so they'd have to go to school and stuff and get em back in touch with their family as well. Ever since we were little my mum always said that and um yeah so I always just want to work with people. I couldn't do a job that's not helping someone.* (Lisa, mainstream school)
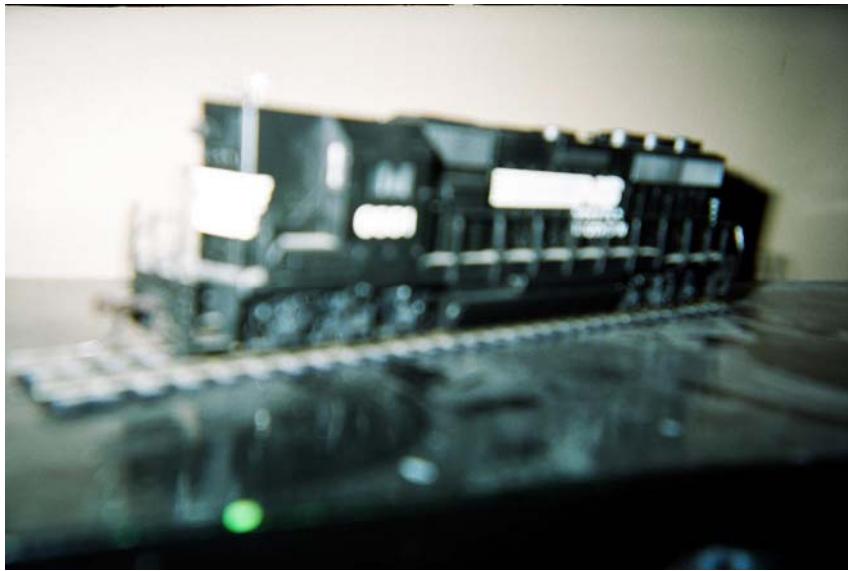
Photograph 28: Photograph by Ben. My model train.

Ben's model train (Photograph 28) represented his memory of his grandfather who drove "a similar train to this…He'd ring me pretty much almost every day before he died and would tell me all about it. He made me really want to do that. He really enjoyed it. It's good fun." Ben spoke of his second choice of work (after a karate instructor/club owner) being a train driver to follow in his grandfather's footsteps: "I know there's going to be a bit of paper work and that in train driving but I want to look out pretty much of the control panel of my train is my desk being able to look out and see that sort of thing."

5.1.3.1.4   Mutual support:

The ability to seek help from family members (and others) is considered crucial in the prevention of mental health problems and contribution to wellbeing for adolescents. Help-seeking as a process was conceptualised by Rickwood, Deane, Wilson, and Ciarrochi (2005). This process involves translating the personal domain of psychological distress to the interpersonal domain of seeking help. Zimmer-Gembeck and Locke (2007) found that

adolescents with positive family relationships used more active coping strategies with problems at home and school.

The constancy of family members was reported by participants to provide support to participants at times of stress or illness and appeared to assist the participants in dealing with distress. This is more crucial for the participants from the specialist school who may require considerable support to understand and manage the cognitive and emotional aspects of distress and help seeking.

Probably my uncle (name) because he's a concreter he might be a bit busy when he's working uncle (name) yeah he'd be good to talk to. [What would it be like without these people?] *"Very lonely... I just think it's good because they've probably always been for me and that...* [What things have they done for you?] *Gosh it's been a fair while but maybe when I've been in hospital or something they'll always be there. Yeah when I was younger. Probably some operation or something. (*Christopher, specialist school)

For Christopher changing from his mainstream school to the specialist school was a particularly difficult time as he left the familiarity of his old school, teachers and friends. He described the way in which his father supported him at the time:

The first time was really hard you know what I mean it was probably the hardest time I've probably had... Oh dad had a chat to me he said to me you know (name) I know it's hard for you but this school you go to it's good for you rather than doing VCAL at the VCE campus at (name of school) he goes you know (name) it's in the past you know I know it's hard for you, but since then I've moved on because me and him did have a chat yeah me and dad get along all right...it was very difficult but I could

understand what he was saying when he had a chat to me ... I'm feeling more settled

I'm feeling a bit more confident this term...

Another participant cited the role she played in supporting family members, suggesting that she saw herself as actively involved in the care of others:

[What is important about family?] *Well you visit them when they're sick. If they live on their own go visit 'em* (Clare, specialist school).

5.1.3.1.5   Guidance:

Parents were often named as models for behaviour or attitudes for participants from both schools. Parents play a role in helping the participants define their values and beliefs in relation to health and other attitudes about life.

Oh I picked up a little bit more maybe from dad because my dad won heaps of trophies in cricket and he probably told me he goes (name) it's probably good opportunity you know like... just what my dad's always said to me he said (name) just do the best you can and yeah I did the best I can really... Yeah because my dad he won you know batting he won bowling you know he won fielding you know coaches he's done everything you know really I think he's won a premiership at that club and yeah because my dad won heaps of trophies especially for football and that and he probably told me (name) it's a great opportunity to do something and I was lucky to win two trophies because I won the coach's award and encouragement award. (Christopher, specialist school.)*

The way my mum thinks because you hear on t.v. these skinny people it's revolting how skinny they are and that's stuck in my head not to try to be so she's taught us

that people should accept you for who you are…Yeah cos if they don't like me for who they are then that's their loss. (Crystal, mainstream school)

Um well my mum brought me up the right way… Yeah you should treat people like you wanna be treated with respect but sometimes it doesn't always work out the way you treat them like you treat them nice and then they treat you … (Naomi, specialist school).

When asked where his values about family came from, Martin, a participant from the mainstream school, replied: "From my mum… She had a very hard life. She moved out when she was 16 years old… Mum is protective of me." His comment suggests a high level of maturity in that he appreciated that his mother's protection of him was a result of her own difficult life experiences during adolescence.

Broad definitions of family were described by some participants. These definitions were based on shared values and beliefs with people from outside of the family. Ben, from the mainstream school, described his karate club as family: "Admittedly in my karate all the kids I first started with that are still there we are like family. Every time we grade and that we catch up … we have a celebration down at Maccas..." He also described visiting his karate instructor in hospital:

When she was in hospital when she first found out [about her illness] and that I'd visit her everyday and so would everyone else we'd always go there and visit her and … so like that we're sort of like a family if anyone's ever in trouble we're there for each other.

Ben used the term "family" when describing what his karate and school uniforms represented. The uniform acted as a symbol of family for him and as such had had an impact on his behaviour:

It's like the karate uniform and that's our family so school uniform is really about family. At this school I haven't got into any fights. At my old school I was getting into fights almost daily, which is not good.

John, from the specialist school, referred to his parents' friend, who works in the shoe shop, as family (Photograph 29): "Our friend she's known me since a little kid … She says I've grown up a lot but she talks a lot but I say she's my auntie."

Photograph 29: Photograph by John. Where I buy my shoes from.

5.1.3.1.6   Memories and shared history:

Participants often shared memories of times spent with family. For Ben, from the mainstream school, the request to take photographs of things that were important to him provided an opportunity to reflect on his relationship with his deceased auntie. Ben's photographs of stone dragons (Photograph 30) bought by his auntie prior to her death were significant to him, sitting on a shelf beside a photograph of himself and his girlfriend. Noting

that the dragons wore armours and held swords, he commented that the dragons provided protection and could defend him. "They have a stare on their face and they look like they really are looking out for me. She was always looking out for me."

Photograph 30: Photograph by Ben. Stone dragons

Aspects of spirituality in terms of connections with family members, particularly deceased family members, were apparent in discussions with Ben and other participants. Such discussions only occurred in this study with participants from the mainstream school, perhaps as they involved quite complex thought processes. The sense of history and shared experiences, aspects of PSOC, seemed particularly apparent when adolescents spoke of their ongoing sense of connection with deceased family members. For Ben, this involved a collection of objects which he considered played a protective role for him. For other participants the experiences and identities of the deceased family members seemed to play a critical role in the adolescents' developing identity formation and future plans, as suggested by previous researchers (e.g. Cotton et al., 2005; Crawford & Rossiter, 2006).

As well as discussing the useful roles that family played in adolescents' lives and memories, there were times when the participants shared difficulties they had encountered with family members.

I'm not usually allowed to go out. My parents are very strict...I went away to camp for three days and that was good. Sometimes it's frustrating because mum's got OCD. It's not too bad. Gets a bit yelly. A tantrum if something is out of place... I went to the Good Food Show with my brother...Our parents haven't trusted us before.
(Aleisha, mainstream school)

5.1.3.2   Friends

Social relationships with peers have been reported by researchers (e.g. McGraw et al., 2008; Noom et al., 1999) to be significant factors, along with family relationships, in psychosocial adjustment for adolescents. They argued that adolescents who had confidence and trust in their relationships with peers were likely to be socially competent, although this could also increase engagement in problem behaviour.

All participants spoke of time spent with friends. A difference between the two groups, however, was evident in where participants knew their friends from. The participants from the specialist school reported knowing most of their friends from the school – sometimes travelling on public transport together and seeing each other in school holidays. Whilst they reported knowing people from TAFE courses, work, work experience or their previous schools they did not tend to consider them to be current friends or did not see them very often. As the participants attending the specialist school travelled from many suburbs to attend the school, meeting up after school was sometimes reported to be difficult: "[Do you see friends after school?] No because all my friends here are [western suburbs]. No-one is

near me. Except one near me he's in [suburb] (laughter) not near me." (Jayne, specialist school)

Some participants reported having made friends at their sporting clubs where they shared common interests: "I made some friends there… They go to different schools. After a while I met them and got to know them" (Clare, specialist school, referring to a disability specific sporting club).

"Yeah I've got lots of friends. That's the best part" (John, specialist school, referring to his cricket team).

These results are consistent with Carnaby's (1998) argument that people with an intellectual disability are restricted in opportunities to meet others and accordingly, their social networks tend to include other people with disabilities. He cited previous research by Ralph and Usher (1995) which questioned whether a goal for people with disabilities of increased contact with people without disabilities is valid, stating instead that it may be an individual choice. It would appear from the present study that the participants with an intellectual disability expressed satisfaction with the range of activities and interactions that were currently available to them and did not seek to have increased contact with people without disabilities.

The participants from the mainstream school appeared to have a broader circle of friends from previous schools, activities and camps as well as from their school. "On Friday I'm going to Federation Square to meet friends – people from other places [not school]. They live up in Sunbury or other places. People I can actually open up to." (Aleisha, mainstream school). Some of the participants from the mainstream school also reported that they had a

boyfriend or girlfriend whilst none of the participants from the specialist school reported this. Lisa referred to the high level of support provided by her boyfriend during difficult times:

> *We're so close we spend all of our time together. Umm. Actually we've just been getting closer. He's been really good with me at the moment. I spend most of my time with him even if it's just walking to and from work...We've known each other for about a year and a bit. We've been going out for nearly 10 months...He's a great guy. He's very special.*

At times having a boyfriend or girlfriend was reported to have impacted on other friendships.

> *It kind of balances out cos I only get to see him [boyfriend] on weekends whereas all my other friends are at this school so I see them everyday* (Crystal, mainstream school).

Martin from the mainstream school was able to identify three separate groups of friends with whom he participated in different activities.

> *Umm not so much [going out] with the group of friends these days but sometimes I go to the city.* [What's there?] *Umm more video games so friends and cyber cafes and occasionally go shopping at the Vic Market. They're the friends in my year level. And then I've got all my best friends who are in year 11... My best friend lives just up the road from me... They're my three main groups and then I just hang around talking to different people.*

Aleisha, from the mainstream school, reported having had difficulties developing friendships during primary school and contrasted this with her secondary school experience. It appeared that she considered others' perceptions of her as a factor in her previous difficulties:

I had no friends in primary school. I was a bit of a loner... Oh I wanted to make friends I was just too nerdy for some people. Um just [now] I hang around people that are you know are quite intelligent so they accept how smart you are and even if you weren't smart they wouldn't care.

Friends were named by participants from both groups as a source of support during difficult times. Participants provided vivid descriptions of friends when explaining the value associated with the friendships, suggesting high expectations of friendships:

[What do you do if you are upset?] Umm call my boyfriend he calms me down a lot... I've got one friend who once she sees someone like this she'll come up and hug them ... it makes you happy. She's just one in a million. (Crystal, mainstream school)

And um I like talking to em going out with em and having a great time. Movies, shopping and sleepovers... and talking... yep and being there for one another.[When is that important?] *Well if they go through stuff like losing a friend or something I'd always be there for them because I think that's important to them and myself ... By being there with them it helps them by having support and supporting them and being there for em... yeah it makes them feel better... Friends don't lie to each other. They should whatever they've gone through they should tell you not lie to you. And you should always be there for one another.* (Clare, specialist school)

5.1.3.2.1   Use of technology in maintaining friendships

Most participants in the current study reported the use of technology to keep in contact with friends, although this tended to be more prevalent amongst participants from the mainstream school. This may be due to the broader friendship groups these participants have which required flexible communication styles or that technology required a range of cognitive and adaptive skills, which participants from the specialist school may have experienced difficulty with. Christopher, from the specialist school, however, reported keeping in contact with a friend from his previous school by text messaging: "Probably texting more … Text yeah rather than probably call cos it probably costs too much. Um I don't really use MSN." Other participants from the specialist school reported using MSN or emails at times, sometimes with family. When asked if MSN is a good way to keep in contact with friends, Naomi noted, "Mmm sometimes depends if you're good on it". The participants seemed frustrated by receiving emails from unknown senders*: "*I got a few from this newsletter place and um something I don't know what it is*" (Clare, specialist school).

Participants from the mainstream school used the internet to keep in contact with known friends rather than using the internet to meet people. Just as the participants had expressed concerns about safety within their communities, they also appeared aware of the possible risks associated with internet use and parental concerns about safety: "My mum went to this intervention thing talking about … the internet and she was going on and on and on and I'm like well mum I promise I won't talk to paedophiles." (Aleisha, mainstream school).

Mum and dad know I'm on MSN but what they don't know is who I always talk

to... I have friends from school and sometimes they know but sometimes they

don't or I can just say oh I'm talking to friends and they say who and I'll make

up some name even if I'm not talking to them. (Crystal, mainstream school)

I knew this person by their nickname or something like that and then forgot

who this person was and I'm like umm ahh I just made up some random name

(Ben, mainstream school).

My parents when I'm on the computer for too long they go get off the computer

(Aleisha, mainstream school).

When asked if the internet assists participants in keeping in contact with friends, participants agreed that it could be useful *"if you can't be bothered getting dressed and going out then"* (Crystal, mainstream school). It had also proven useful to keep in contact with people who live in other suburbs although the complexity of internet friendships was recognised by Crystal, from the mainstream school:

I don't have MSN but I have MySpace. I have friends from camp... I don't really like

using MySpace ... I speak to my friends but... I think they're not really my friends. I

use [the computer] for email and looking for work.

Participants commented that parents did not necessarily understand the important role that technology such as the internet played for adolescents, although some parents also used

it. "It's because they didn't grow up with it and they don't really understand… how important it is… how much it is part of our lives" (Aleisha, mainstream school).

For many of the participants spending time with friends and family was important, but keeping in contact through technology such as mobile telephones and internet (such as MSN or MySpace) seemed to also meet the needs of many of the participants for contact with others. This appeared to be particularly the case at times of illness or when friends and family did not reside close by or even when the participants just wanted to stay home but still remain connected to others outside of the home. The importance of connections through internet access supports the anecdotal evidence reported by Pretty et al. (2003). Whilst those researchers explored the relevance of internet in the lives of adolescents residing in rural areas and the impact of this on enhancing a sense of belonging or exacerbating feelings of isolation, the current results suggest that this technology provides adolescents in urban areas with increased options in terms of how to communicate with their peers and family on a day to day basis.

Prensky (2001) argued that there is a growing divide between adolescents and adults in relation to technological advances. His descriptions of digital natives and digital immigrants reflect his view that adults born prior to the digital world will always be, like immigrants, having to adapt to the digital environment which exists for children and adolescents. Recent Australian research exploring the role of mobile phones in the lives of adolescents and young people found that mobile phone use was believed to provide numerous benefits to users and had become an intrinsic part of most young people's lives (Walsh, White, & Young, 2007). Subrahmanyam and Lin (2007) argued that whilst their research revealed that the internet has become an integral part of the social context

surrounding adolescents, research has not kept pace in incorporating this as a contextual factor when studying adolescent development. American research with adolescents in relation to their use of the internet, particularly social networking sites such as MySpace, found that the overwhelming majority of participants were responsible in the use of the web site, despite the popular media's demonization of such sites (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

5.1.3.3 Pets

Along with family and friends, most participants identified pets as another source of support and connection. For some participants, a special relationship with their pets was reported as they took care of them or the pet seemed to prefer them compared to other family members. "He's a family dog but Mum thinks he's attached to me … I don't know what I'd do without him." (Aleisha, mainstream school). It was not unusual for participants to speak of their pets as if they were human: "He mainly just sits around, doesn't socialize with anybody. He used to be very friendly but now he's not and he's getting fat" (Ben, mainstream school).

Many participants appeared to enjoy sharing stories about how they received their pet, the naming of their pet, their pet's adventures and ways they identified with their pet.

 Photograph 29. Photograph by Crystal, mainstream school. My cat named Beefy.	I can tell you a story about him … Nobody else likes him - my mum doesn't like ginger and my brother doesn't like the hair so… He sleeps on my bed and keeps my feet warm… It's funny seeing them two [cat and boyfriend] because they don't like each other. Because they're both male and if I'm hugging [boyfriend] Beefy will just give him an evil stare…

 Photograph 30. Photograph by Ben, mainstream school. Male cat, Narla.	He's one of the most affectionate cats but not to other cats. [Laughter] If you pick him up and he doesn't know you he'll protect himself which is understandable. That's on the front lawn. The cat lives outside. We've got a really big fern bush sort of thing that he lives in… He's a very nice cat. He's nearly 12 years old and still playful.
 Photograph 31. Photograph by Ben. Feral cat named Skuttles.	My dad brought him home he was going to be killed and my mum and I were sitting there one day and we were saying what can we call him and no joke my mum was watching Little Mermaid and as I've said that we've looked up and there was a bird looking through the window and at that exact time my cat ran into the wall…
 Photograph 32. Photograph by John, specialist school. Eastern blue tongue lizard.	… It's mine… I was planning a place for lizards and snakes and for Christmas last year we bought them. I've opened the door and said yeah. My auntie jumped right back. (Laughter)… My mum's fine with them… I started at about 12. I was reading a lot of books.
 Photograph 33. Photograph by John. Family dog.	[Do you take care of him?] She. Her. Um. I do I feed her. I've had her for 7 years now. [Do you go for walks with her?] She doesn't go for walks anymore but she has a big backyard and she runs a lot in there so. [O.k. and is she a bit special to you?] Um yeah her name is Lucky and she's like when I come home she always gets excited…Well I'm the one who spends most time with her. I'm always out there playing football and she likes to join in when I kick the football… (Laughter) She tries to catch the ball.

[How many chickens have you got?] Two… Oh we've had them for a long time since I was a little kid. The most we had was like up to 15. [Who looks after the chickens?] My brother does. [Do you have a favourite chicken?] No I don't mind. Both of mine died last night so…

Photograph 34. Photograph by John Chickens.

Some participants expressed concern about their pets getting older and becoming unwell as well as grief associated with the previous losses of pets.

I've got a dog named Gemma she's a border collie half sheep dog. She's getting old now. [How old?] Oh I think 6 or 11 or something and yeah she's I'm really worried about her because she's not eating well... And I think she's got arthritis or something and yeah and... [And she's your dog?] Yeah well everyone's pet, family dog. And yeah she misses our cat that we used to have because (laughter) it's funny whenever I say because I used to have a cat named Booffy and I used to call Booffy come here and then um Gemma comes and looks for Booffy and then he died so. And I miss him but what can you do? Yeah I like playing with my dog like pat her. I give her treats she loves those smackos (laughter)... (Clare, specialist school)

The responsibility of caring for pets was recognised and, at times, caused concern: "Fish… you have to clean it, get its food. I forgot to give it food last night." (Naomi, specialist school)

For some participants, the family owned many pets and shared the responsibility of caring for them: "Dad usually feeds the dog because the dog bowls are out in the garage … I usually feed the cat and the rabbit and I'll change all the waters and Dad will feed the bird."

(Lisa, mainstream school). Gilligan (2000) promoted pet ownership as a way of encouraging autonomy during adolescence, as well as an opportunity for a therapeutic relationship to develop between the pet and owner.

During the small group discussion at the mainstream school participants appeared to enjoy sharing their pet photographs and stories with each other. Ben remarked "I reckon they're like us really. If you look at your pets and what we do they're like us." The support provided by pets was acknowledged by Aleisha: "He's [pet] always there making me feel better. Because I go to hospital a lot he's always there…"

5.1.3.4 Letting go of childhood

An unexpected finding during the present study related to the participants' attitudes on growing up and letting go of childhood. Participants from both schools spoke of the physical, social and emotional changes that were occurring for them during adolescence as they left childhood behind to face the adult world. Blum (1998) suggested that the process of development occurs as a social construction in which the self develops through ongoing interactions between the individual and the social contexts and social groups with whom he or she has contact. Arnett argued that "adolescents in rapidly changing societies will be confronted with multiple changes not only in their immediate lives but in their societies as well" (1999, p. 323). It could be argued therefore that the rate of change and pressures within the lives of the participants is impacting considerably and resulting in a desire to maintain the present and avoid the transition into adulthood.

This argument is supported by the results of a recent online survey conducted for the Australian Childhood Foundation (Tucci, Mitchell, & Goddard, 2007). The report outlined the fears and pressures of children and adolescents aged 10 – 14 years, finding that a quarter

of the children (n – 600) surveyed reported worrying about the state of the world, believing that it would end before they got older. A large majority of the participants (88%) believed that companies tried to sell them things that they did not need. Nearly half of the participants reported that they did not feel confident about themselves, worrying about what others thought of them and feeling like they were not doing well enough. Interestingly, 19% of the participants also stated that they believed they were growing up too fast. It is possible that these fears and pressures continue to escalate as children develop further and begin to feel the pressures of adulthood, as was the case with the participants in the current study.

Seginer and Lilach (2004), in exploring the relationship between loneliness and future orientation, suggested that human motivation is related to the ways in which individuals use goals, plans and hopes for the future in constructing their future orientation. They stated that this requires motivational, cognitive representation, and behavioural variables that can be applied to several prospective domains, including work and career. It is possible that the participants in the present study experienced difficulty in conceptualising their future as a result of cognitive impairments and/or lack of plans or interest in the future. It appeared from the photographs that the present was very important as was the past in making sense of life experiences. These factors may lead to a resistance and preference to maintain aspects of childhood for as long as possible.

Fears of the unknown and fears of failure were reported by Gullone (2000) as amongst the top three fears of adolescents aged between 11 and 18 years, providing further evidence that the reluctance of the participants in the current study to leave childhood may be associated with uncertainties about the future. It is possible that the new opportunities

offered, along with higher expectations placed upon them, during adolescence create anxieties and fears which may not always have been acknowledged by adults.

Some of the participants from the specialist school in the present study recognized the physical changes that occurred whilst others recalled memories from childhood and how things are different for them now with pressures to work and to focus on the future. "You've got memories from when you were younger. When they got to hold you when you were a little baby (pause) and have photos taken." (Naomi, specialist school).

> *It feels weird when you grow up because your body's changed so much that it feels really weird like specially 16 17 your body just changes so much ooh... It feels like an adult but it feels very weird in your tummy for some reason like it feels a bit weird... Umm it feels a bit funny. People say you're getting a bit old. Yeah they expect a bit more* (Christopher, specialist school).

This experience of physical growth was not shared by another participant:

> *They think I'm like 13 or 14 and I can't go anywhere without taking my i.d. because to prove I'm over 18 it's the way I look ... I haven't grown at all... I've stopped growing so if I go anywhere I get trampled on ... Sometimes I'm like in sports play basketball I feel invisible like I'm not really there* (Jayne, specialist school).

Exploration of the activities within the neighbourhood often led to a discussion about changes that occurred during adolescence and the loss of childhood and associated activities, some of which had occurred within the neighbourhood with friends. For some participants, they had played as children within their neighbourhood – riding bicycles or spending time with friends. As their interests changed and they no longer rode bikes they tended to report spending less time with friends in their neighbourhood. This resulted not only in spending

less time within the neighbourhood but a different way of viewing themselves as they began to identify with people outside of their neighbourhood.

> *Yeah when I was younger a lot more time. I used to go on bikes yeah you know kick a footy yeah and maybe play a little bit of basketball because my body you know our bodies have changed so much like you just talk and that ... Yeah because when I was younger I used to ride bikes a fair bit* (Christopher, specialist school).

> *... but I don't know I'm not around my area much when I go to see friends. It's not like my little area anymore* (Lisa, mainstream school).

For some participants from the specialist school growing up had led to an acknowledgement of the limitations they may have in participating in adult activities, as noted by John: "[I've played] cricket for 10 years now. One year to go. I'm not good enough to be in the seniors." Clare noted that expectations of others can be unrealistic for adolescents with an intellectual disability:

> *Some people don't like doing it [work placement] but we just like do it for the money... I don't mind but it's just the teacher he gets annoying he yells at people sometimes like if they're only trying their best he just yells at them. He just wants people to do a top job like good but some people can't help it especially (name) he's trying his hardest.*

The risks associated with work place practices were evident to Christopher:

> *...there's another thing you have to do there is change the [cooking] oil but that's fairly hard and that's fairly responsibility you know what I mean and I'm happy with what I'm doing now like cooking, cleaning because it's easy for me and I understand it. If I do the other thing I probably don't understand it much. It could be dangerous*

because one accident I forgot to switch it off. That was this year I forgot to turn the cooker off and the thing is cooker caught on fire and got away and I thought oh no... Oh it wasn't on purpose it was by accident but I forgot to switch it off. You've really got to know what you're doing.

Despite the recognition of his limitations in some areas, Christopher was also able to acknowledge his many successes during his adolescent years, in sporting events, saving money and coping with his change of schools. "Yeah I've set some really good goals in the past like completing work, playing sport, getting trophies, yeah that sort of stuff. Yeah I've been happy with success… I've got the success that's good." He was continuing to set goals for himself including the challenge of getting his learner permit to drive but again recognized the difficulties he faced in doing so:

…hopefully I can get the Ls and that's something I want to get my Ls. If I can get my Ls I'll be even more rapt. The Ls would be really good for me because I've passed I want to learn how to drive this year I did some of the test last week but you know you've got to know I'll be really rapt if I can get the Ls because that's something I want to achieve now but I'm hoping I'll get it either this year or next year... But the thing is I've got to read the book too so. I know it's hard too because sometimes like I can read signs but it's just some of the information you know I'm like what the hell's that? (laughter). Yeah but mum would help me too like maybe later on the computer because it must have been last week or the week before I only did 10 questions and that's it because on the computer right you have to do 32 so I only did 10 and that's it and the thing is you have to read through 32 and that's too long.

This ability to acknowledge limitations yet continue to set goals was noted by Miller (2002) as a useful coping strategy for adolescents with disabilities, who suggested that professionals can assist children in the identification and interpretation of experiences which can be elements of resilience. Statements of self-determination and taking steps towards accomplishing stated goals were cited as elements requiring particular attention, which were evident in Christopher's explanations of his experiences and hopes for the future.

For other participants, turning 18 years of age brought ambivalent feelings as it meant growing independence, yet new worries and responsibilities:

I used to get money from my mum like my mum used to give me money but now as soon as I'm turning 18 it's like I've got to do my own thing... But I'm looking forward to it. Everyone says they can't wait until they turn 18 and then again when they do they wish they were younger and the age gets higher and higher... Um I reckon that [leaving school] will be scary because I don't really want to like I was talking to the teachers about me staying another year one more year but now I'm not really ready. I am confident but I just don't think I would meet new people that would like me at another school and it would be like hard because I fit in here and I know everyone here and I don't want to you know it takes a long time to meet new people and to get to know em (Clare, participant from specialist school).

This ambivalence also appeared to be present for participants from the mainstream school:

"I want to do both like licence wise I want to grow up fast but I want to be a kid"

(Martin, participant from mainstream school).

"I don't want to grow up. I don't want to move out. I don't want to do anything... I'm hitting 22 and then never getting any older" (Lisa, participant from mainstream school).

When asked what was good about being younger, the participants from the mainstream school during the small group discussion were able to provide many examples of what they missed from childhood or feared about adulthood:

"No bills."

"You get away with more you get away with a lot more."

"You say mum I need money. What for? Umm something for school."

"[I miss] my singing. I don't have any time. At one stage I was doing soccer, footy, singing, karate and dancing at the same time. I don't do anything now because I have kids, house, dad, work and school."

"[I miss] primary school."

"[I miss] the playgrounds".

"You didn't have to think to learn and now you would just be the dumbest kid in the grade and you would get the highest mark and now even if you concentrate you fail."

"No pressure."

"I think the innocence. I miss being a little kid and singing the YMCA and thinking it's a cool dance (laughter)".

"My dog used to be my little pony I used to ride him but now I'd break his back."

"They [parents] think you're immature. I hate it. Parents tell you to grow up but tell you you're trying to grow up too fast. What the hell do you want?"

"If I dance around the lounge room now like that (laughter) they say hey what are you doing you're crazy get back to studying or something."

Naomi's work experience at a kindergarten, as part of her program at the specialist school, reminded her of what she missed from her childhood and led to confusion about some adult behaviour:

They're [kindergarten children] younger. I wish I was still younger. I miss playing with all the toys. They're fun. Being at kinder and getting to know people. [At TAFE] they're older. A lot of them smoke there and I don't like people who smoke. Why do people smoke?

A similar concern was also raised by Martin, a participant from the mainstream school:

I don't want to leave childhood and go and get a job. It's too much of a big deal for me... Yeah I've still got some years left of being a kid so I want to use em... Most people are keen to get money but I don't really see the point if you're not going to be

happy in the workplace... Yeah because once I leave [school] it's just gonna go nowhere.

Martin also spoke about his childhood activity of roller blading which he reported having only done twice during the last year. He commented about his intention to continue to enjoy childhood pursuits:

Even when I'm older I'm still going to have these things. I can't picture myself ever really leaving [childhood] because it's actually a part of me... Generally my mum says grow up sometimes but no I just like to be and I don't really care...because I'm basically still a kid I'm always gonna be a kid at heart I still watch childish cartoons and I still do kid like things.

For some participants at the mainstream school growing up was related to the care of family members, something that had already been happening for a long time for some of the participants:

… I was always a little mum when I was little I was getting babysat and my mum's friend was reading my sister a book and putting her to bed and came to put my brothers to bed, feed them and put them to bed they were about 1 or 2 I was about 5 or 6 and she came out after seeing [name] and I'd done it all (Lisa, mainstream school).

Yeah when I was a kid I had to look after them [siblings] because either my dad went to bed drunk or I was seriously home alone looking after kids and these kids were very hyperactive (Aleisha, mainstream school).

The perspectives of the participants reflect the arguments of writers such as Elkind who explored the impact of a modern lifestyle and "hurried childhood" on children and adolescents and claimed that: "…[m]any adolescents feel betrayed by a society that tells them to grow up fast but also to remain a child" (Elkind, 2001, p. 12). He argued that hurrying children into adulthood:

> violates the sanctity of life by giving one period priority over another. But if we really value human life, we will value each period equally and give unto each stage of life what is appropriate to that stage" (2001, p. 221).

5.2   Method

Participants were asked at the end of each interview about their experiences of Photovoice. The purpose of this was twofold – to provide participants with the opportunity to discuss any difficulties or concerns they encountered during the photography phase of the project; and to enhance the current researcher's understanding of the process and how it was perceived by the participants. Some of the participants from the mainstream school reported that they had participated in research previously, and contrasted Photovoice positively with completing questionnaires, interviews and online questionnaires.

Some of the participants took considerable effort in planning and photographing, ensuring to follow the guidelines provided during the introductory workshop. Jayne, from the specialist school, commented:

> *Because the closer I did I tried to get the whole sign in but I couldn't but the second*
>
> *sign has got the sign to say the library and what the name is... I took them when I*

waited for people to go so no-one's in that photo. No-one's there... And the gym I

went up the stairs to get the angle.

John, from the specialist school, was supported by his mother in obtaining a photograph that he wanted for the project: "The beach. Mum drove me down for the photo. We drove down and then took the photo."

Reflecting on the content of their photographs enabled the participants to learn about the things that were important to them. Naomi, a participant from the specialist school, after observing that her photographs involved parties, commented "I like to go to birthdays." Participants typically spent time considering the stories behind the photographs as they attempted to make sense of their lives. The process therefore enabled the participants to construct their personal and social identities, as suggested by Strack et al. (2004).

Martin, a participant from the mainstream school, elaborated on the personal agency involved in the decision making about what photographs to take and noted the benefits of that process:

Yeah it was different because I just had to decide what do I do and then I realized

great half the film's been taken so I... Oh some issues wouldn't have been put out

there and it wouldn't have been as good without the photos...

This confirms the benefits associated with Photovoice noted by Booth and Booth (2003) in suggesting that the photographic and voice elements of the methodology allowed for full participation by all participants regardless of cognitive difficulties.

The use of the photographs as a visual medium to prompt discussions was noted by Crystal, from the mainstream school:

Umm having something visual in front of you made you remember back whereas if you asked what was important you can remember maybe two things whereas you can remember everything.

The dynamic nature of the lives of adolescents was evident and captured through the methodology as the participants took the photographs and then reflected on them on two further occasions, at the interview and during the small group discussion. Whilst it appeared that some of the participants' lives had not changed significantly during that time, for most there had been some changes either minor or significant in nature. This served as a powerful reminder to the current researcher (and to the participants during the reflections) about the changing nature of life, particularly during adolescence. For some of the participants health concerns had impacted on participation in activities or there had been changes in relationships as conflicts arose. This highlighted the importance of resilience and the ability of adolescents to use of all the resources available to them – personal, neighbourhood, family, friends and schools. The process enabled the value of the present, with input from the past, to be vividly illustrated and discussed.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

A growing literature emphasizes the importance of investigating the role of communities in the lives of individuals, particularly adolescents (e.g., Pretty et al., 2002; Zeldin & Topitzes, 2002). The present study used PSOC as a framework to understand the role of neighbourhood in the lives of adolescents, as well as other factors related to the wellbeing of adolescents. Adolescents with and without an intellectual disability were included in the research project. Adolescence is considered to be a unique stage of the life span with a range of opportunities and challenges (Arnett, 1999), including uncertainty and claims of increasing social fragmentation (Eckersley et al., 2005). Ways of effectively engaging adolescents in participatory research methods has also been explored in recent times (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2004; Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007). Photovoice has been identified as a respectful approach to engaging those people usually excluded from research projects, such as adolescents (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004). The present study utilized a modified form of Photovoice, allowing the participants to gain power over the research project through their decision making about the photographs to take and discuss

with the researcher. This process enabled the researcher to access the world of the participants, through their day to day interactions and activities.

6.1   PSOC as a framework

PSOC was explored as a framework to understand the role of neighbourhoods in the lives of adolescents. It was shown in the present study that PSOC as a model, whilst relevant at times, did not capture the essence of those things considered important and meaningful to the participants. The elements that make up PSOC: membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs and shared emotional connections, were reported to have varying levels of importance in the lives of the participants. The sense of membership and belonging was found to be important in relation to a number of communities, such as family, sporting groups, school and neighbourhood. The adolescents' sense of wellbeing was related to interactions and relationships within multiple communities rather than one community only, providing support for research undertaken by Evans and Prilleltensky (2007) and Obst et al. (2002b). Shared emotional connections were significant for all participants and often appeared within the context of family relationships. The participants did not appear to have influence within their communities. Importantly, they did not seem to seek to have influence either, preferring to have fun and connections with others rather than responsibilities that they may have considered to be more adult like. School was cited by some participants as a place where they could have a limited influence through participation in community projects and junior school council. For most participants, however, school was referred to as a place for socialising and fun, aspects not well captured by PSOC.

All participants identified aspects of the neighbourhood that held significance for them, but acknowledged that, at their life stage, their participation within the neighbourhood

was less active and played a less important role than when they were younger. The neighbourhood for the participants served as a gateway to the external world, providing access to communities of interest. It was also identified by some participants as a place of surveillance as neighbours monitored their behaviours. Some participants did acknowledge the potential support they provided and received from neighbours. This was related to the number of neighbours they knew and how long they had lived in their neighbourhood, supporting previous research (Chipeur et al. 1999; Pretty et al. 1994).

6.2 Similarities and differences between the two groups

Despite initial indicators of differences between the two groups in relation to their participation in activities, the results revealed that adolescents with and without a disability are similar in the ways they spend their time and those things that are important to them. Both groups stressed the importance of connections and identified a range of meaningful relationships with family members (including extended family), pets and friends. Spending time with family and friends was identified as a crucial part of their lives for both groups of adolescents. This included both formal (such as parties and dinners) as well as informal contact with family and extended families. All participants provided examples of times they enjoy with their family members. The neighbourhood, whilst once being a place for the development and maintenance of friendships and relationships, no longer played an active role for the participants from both groups as their interests and connections developed outside of their direct community.

The main differences between the two groups related to the degree of independence in accessing activities as adolescents with an intellectual disability required more support from family members.Sometimes they accessed programs or groups that were specifically for

people with disabilities. School was crucial in providing opportunities for adolescents with an intellectual disability in accessing work experience and other community experiences. Adolescents without an intellectual disability, although recognizing the opportunities provided by school, tended to apply for work or gain work through contacts within the family or friends. Adolescents without an intellectual disability also accessed technology, such as MSN, more than adolescents with an intellectual disability.

In relation to the topics discussed with the participants, there were also some differences in the depth of discussion that occurred. For example, some complex issues such as spirituality were discussed with participants from the mainstream school, but not with the participants with an intellectual disability. Rather than spirituality not being important to participants with an intellectual disability, it is proposed, however, that language and cognitive barriers restricted this discussion with them.

6.3 Meaningful relationships

The methodology enabled an exploration of the benefits that relationships provide for adolescents. It was evident that relationships with family members in particular played a role in the adolescents' identity formation and sense of well being. It would appear from the results that identity is socially constructed with adolescents reflecting on their relationships in order to make sense of who they are and what meaning their lives have. Values and beliefs were often shared with family members, helping to clarify their ideals and assisting them in setting goals for the future.

Purposeful activities, including work and work experience, were also prominent in the photographs and discussions. These always had a social element, thus reinforcing again the significance of relationships in all aspects of life for the participants. This was even found

to be the case for those activities typically considered to be solitary, such as computer games, where participants spoke of their discussions with friends about games and playing games together. Passive pastimes such as watching sports usually also involved more active components such as discussions about teams and opportunities for participants to assert themselves with family members and friends.

6.4   Not wanting to grow up

An unexpected finding related to the concerns raised by both groups of participants about growing up and letting go of childhood. It was not surprising to the researcher that participants from the specialist school appeared reluctant, or unready, to leave their school and expressed some fears about the world outside of what was considered to be the safe school environment. The participants from the mainstream school similarly expressed a variety of concerns about growing up, including missing childhood, not wanting to work and take on adult responsibilities as well as confusion about being caught between childhood and adulthood and adults' expectations about this. Although the participants from the specialist school were older than those from the mainstream school, all of the participants were considering transition phases – to part time or full time work, further training or continued schooling in the senior section of the school. It may be that the participants, in stating that they did not want to grow up, were responding to a range of pressures and anxieties which appear to be prevalent amongst Australian children and adolescents (Eckersley et al., 2005; Tucci et al., 2007). This has implications for adults supporting adolescents to ensure a balanced lifestyle and wellbeing through steps to enhance adolescents' readiness to face adulthood. It was significant that many of the photographs reflected what may be considered to be small aspects of their day to day life, such as breakfast or travelling to school with

friends. This appeared to confirm the importance of here and now experiences for adolescents. The emphasis on home and family also suggested that the home continues to provide a base for adolescents from which to explore the world, confirming previous research (e.g., Noom et al., 1999).

The dynamic nature of the participants' experiences was evidenced during the project. The methodology provided an opportunity to capture snapshots of this on three occasions during the study: the induction workshop, the individual interviews and the small group discussions. Some aspects of their lives represented long held values and beliefs, based on previous experiences, but other areas appeared to be continuing to develop and subject to change given different circumstances or further personal growth. These changes may have led to uncertainty and insecurity for adolescents as they approach the transition to adulthood.

6.5   Usefulness of Photovoice

A significant benefit of the methodology was the ability of the approach to provide clear insight into the day to day lives of the participants. This allowed a depth of understanding unlikely to be gained from other methods such as questionnaires or interviews. Many of the participants commented on the ability of the process to engage them and keep them talking about topics that they would not have thought about without the photographs forming such a prominent role within the interview and small group discussions. The method enabled the development of a relationship between the researcher and each participant that enhanced the researcher's ability to develop rapport. This ensured a depth of discussion during the interviews which assisted the participants to share their personal thoughts and experiences. The process also had an element of fun and anticipation as the photographs were developed and returned to the participants for discussion. The researcher's interest and

curiousity in the meanings behind the photographs then promoted a sense of trust and engagement with the participants.

The photographs seemed to provide a visual overview of what was important to the participants at their particular period of life. It not only held their attention, helped them to focus but provided an opportunity for reflection and analysis of what the photographs had revealed about their lives. The photographs were particularly useful to flesh out the stories of the participants with an intellectual disability as it enabled them to express themselves in more than one way and opened doors to their world that allowed the researcher to check meanings and encourage the participants to further explore what was important to them.

6.6   Limitations

A limitation of the study was the small number of participants involved. As participants required consent from parents to be involved in the project, the participants are not representative of all adolescents. The importance of family highlighted within the results is perhaps reflective of the predominantly positive relationships the participants had with family members. This leaves many questions unanswered about the importance of family, or other relationships, for adolescents who may not have parental support or healthy relationships with family members. The adolescents from the specialist school were required to actively participate in the project and accordingly, were relatively high functioning within their communities. Therefore, the results cannot be generalised to other adolescents with an intellectual disability whose adaptive abilities may be more impaired.

Whilst the methodology provided three opportunities, often months apart, to explore any changes which may have occurred, a methodology utilising a more longitudinal

framework, may be useful to gain greater insight into the dynamic nature of relationships and meaningful participation within communities over time.

6.7 Contribution of the research

The findings highlighted the importance of relationships in the lives of adolescents. Although neighbourhoods played a role in the lives of the adolescents the research stressed the valuable contribution that families make to adolescents, in many different ways, including the provision of support, assistance with identity formation, the development of shared histories and connections. The research, therefore, adds to the body of knowledge in relation to adolescents and their wellbeing. The prominence of adolescents with an intellectual disability within the research adds particularly to the knowledge related to this under-researched group of people. In many ways the research findings challenge many of the common assumptions about adolescents rejecting their family in favour of friendship groups and growing up to become independent as quickly as possible. In addition, the methodology which incorporated a modified version of Photovoice, accompanied by more traditional interviews and small discussion groups, enables this method to be recognised as valuable tool in engaging adolescents, building rapport with them and gaining a depth of information not always considered readily available from adolescents.

This knowledge may assist in the development of policies and protocols in relation to the inclusion of family members and other significant adults when considering the needs and wellbeing of adolescents. Schools, local governments and agencies who provide services to adolescents may use the current research to explore ways to educate adults about adolescents' needs and the roles of adults in their lives. This could include education programs, media coverage, programs to enhance relationships between adolescents and

adults within the community and mental health support services which incorporate family members when working with adolescents. A focus on family support, included extended and alternative family support, rather than the individualisation of adolescents at times of stress and crisis, may create new opportunities in improving the wellbeing of adolescents. In an early intervention framework, this could be incorporated into education and support services for families prior to pubertal changes facing their adolescent family members. Recognition of the role of adults in adolescents' lives could lead to initiatives being developed with schools and local councils which aim to build relationships at a community level, across ages and cultural divides. Mentoring programs, including service groups, sporting clubs and businesses, could be developed at the community level, to enhance relationships and wellbeing of adolescents. The Photovoice methodology has promise in relation to the engagement of adolescents and in developing strategies to better understand the experiences of adolescents within various settings. This is of particular relevance, for example given the recent focus within Australian schools on participative and respectful methods to school improvement (Manefield et al., 2007).

As the research included only adolescents with families who provided consent for their participation in the research project, future research which considered the wellbeing and importance of adolescents without family support would be useful. In addition, further research in relation to views about growing up would be of interest in order to gain an understanding of where the pressures to grow up come from and the overall effect this has on adolescent wellbeing. The role of the internet as a useful tool for meaningful connections with others is also worthy of further research, particularly given the ongoing interest from adolescents and concerns often raised in the media and amongst adults about its potential

dangers. Further research exploring the importance of pets would also be of interest given the importance placed on them by the participants. A further exploration of aspects related to spirituality and adolescent wellbeing would also be worthwhile in order to better understand the views of adolescents in this regard.

Overall, the research findings challenge some common assumptions within western culture about the nature of adolescence. It provides an opportunity for new reflections on the role of adults in continuing to support adolescents into adulthood and the place for maintenance of aspects of childhood. The research suggests that adolescents have complex understandings of relationships and strive to maintain connections within their families, extended families and communities for a range of purposes. This is particularly during times of stress and crisis as relationships sustain them. The participants often had sophisticated ideas about the contradictions associated with the transition from childhood to adulthood and rejected the rapid rate with which they felt pressured to make the transition.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS AND PARENTS.

INFORMATION
FOR PARTICIPANTS
INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

PROJECT: "The world of adolescence: Using Photovoice to explore psychological sense of community and wellbeing in adolescents."

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research study. The aim of the study is to explore young people's experiences of their communities. I will be using photographs to assist in understanding the meaning of community to young people. The research forms part of my Doctor of Psychology (Community Psychology) research, and is supervised by Associate Professor Adrian Fisher, School of Psychology, Victoria University, Footscray Park.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to participate in a "Photovoice" project where you will take photographs of your community and then take part in an individual interview as well as a group discussion about the photographs you have taken. This will be held at your School during school time. The discussion will be about what your community means to you, ways that you feel like you belong to your community and how this relates to feeling satisfied with your life. The group discussion would take approximately 90 minutes.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BY PROTECTED?

We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. The interview and group discussion is confidential, which means that no one will be able to find out what you said.

WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research study or should you have any complaints regarding the way the research is conducted please do not hesitate to contact the researchers directly. You can contact me on 0413 876 218 or Associate Professor Adrian Fisher on 9919 5221.

HOW DO I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE?

If you would like to take part in this study please have your parents/guardians complete and sign the enclosed consent form and return it to school as soon as possible. You should also sign the consent form where indicated. If you decide to participate you may stop your participation in the research at any time.

Thank you for considering this request.

Yours sincerely,

LYN O'GRADY

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS AND PARENTS.

CONSENT FORM
FOR PARTICIPANTS
INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study into young people's experiences within their communities. The aim of the research is to explore young people's experiences of their communities. Using photographs that you take, you will be asked to discuss their significance and the stories behind them.

CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT

1.   I certify that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study: The world of adolescence: Using Photovoice to explore psychological sense of community and wellbeing in adolescents with and without an intellectual disability being conducted at Victoria University by Lyn O'Grady as part of her Doctor of Applied Psychology (Community Psychology) research, under supervision of A/P Adrian Fisher.

2.   I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Lyn O'Grady and that I freely consent to participation involving the use on me of these procedures:

- Participation in the Photovoice Project and discussion individually and in a small group.

3.   I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

4.   I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential. I also understand that in participating in a small group discussion I have a responsibility to keep other people's information confidential.

CONSENT OF PARTICIPANT (Student)
I, ……………………………………………………………………… (name) am willing to participate in the Photovoice project, including audio taped interview and audio taped small group discussion.

Signed: …………………………………………   Date: ………………………………

Witness other than the researcher: ………………………………….

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher A/P Adrian Fisher, telephone number 03 9919 5221. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone (03) 9919 4710

CONSENT FORM
FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF PARTICIPANTS
INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS:
We would like to invite your child to be a part of a study into young people's experiences within their communities.   The aim of the research is to explore young people's experiences of their communities. Using photographs that your child takes, he or she will be asked to discuss their significance and the stories behind them.

CERTIFICATION BY PARENT/CARER:
1.	I certify that I am voluntarily giving my consent for my child to participate in the study: The world of adolescence: Using Photovoice to explore psychological sense of community and wellbeing in adolescents with and without an intellectual disability being conducted at Victoria University by Lyn O'Grady as part of her Doctor of Applied Psychology (Community Psychology) research, under supervision of A/P Adrian Fisher.

2.	I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Lyn O'Grady and that I freely consent for my child to participate involving the use on him or her of these procedures:
   • 	Participation in the Photovoice Project and discussion individually and in a small group.

3.	I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that my child can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise him or her in any way.

4.	I have been informed that the information my child provides will be kept confidential. I also understand that if my child participates in a small group discussion my child is required to keep other people's information confidential.

CONSENT OF PARENT/GUARDIAN
I, ……………………………………………………….. (name) hereby consent to ………………………………. (name of Student) participating in the Photovoice project, including audio taped interview and audio taped small group discussion.

Signed: ……………………………………………..	Date: ……………………………….

Witness other than the researcher: ………………………………………...

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher A/P Adrian Fisher, telephone number 03 9919 5221. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone (03) 9919 4710

APPENDIX C

GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED TO
PARTICIPANTS AT INDUCTION WORKSHOP.

GENERAL GUIDELINES ASSOCIATED WITH RISKS INVOLVED IN TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS IN PUBLIC AREAS

(Guidelines will be distributed to and discussed with the research participants at the initial workshop prior to the distribution of cameras.)

When taking photographs during the project participants should:

1. Understand that responsibilities come with having the camera and taking photographs in public and private places. Participants should consider how they would react to another person photographing them in public in order to appreciate other people's concerns.

2. Respect the privacy and rights of other people. Some people may not want their photograph taken and it should not be assumed that they do even when they are in a public place. Taking photographs of a group of people from a distance may be more acceptable than close up images.

3. Ensure their own safety at all times. Ways of keeping safe may include being with someone when taking photographs, allowing plenty of time when taking photographs and remaining alert to keep safe around roads and any other dangers.

4. Provide an explanation and obtain written consent when taking photographs of friends or family members to ensure that they understand why the photograph is being taken and how it will be used. Respect the rights of friends or family members to say no.

5. Always carry the letter explaining the Project and be prepared to provide the letter if requested. Encourage any concerned people to contact the researcher for further information or to discuss the project further.

APPENDIX D

LETTER OF IDENTIFICATION FOR PARTICIPANTS DURING
PHOTOGRAPHY PHASE OF THE PROJECT.

25th May, 2007

<u>TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN</u>

The bearer of this letter is participating in a "Photovoice" project undertaken as part of my Doctor of Applied Psychology (Community Psychology) research, under supervision of A/P Adrian Fisher.

As part of the project the participant has been asked to take photographs of his or her community to explore what community means, ways young people feel about their community and how this relates to feeling satisfied with life.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research study or should you have any complaints regarding the way the research is conducted, do not hesitate to contact the researchers directly. You can contact me on 0430 224 862 or Associate Professor Adrian Fisher on 9919 5221.

Yours faithfully,

<u>LYN O'GRADY</u>

APPENDIX E

PRE-SET QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

How old are you?

Gender: **Male**   **Female**

School:

With reference to individual's photographs:

1. Where was the photo taken? How far from home, school?

2. Why did you take this photograph?

3. Why is this photograph important? What does it tell us about your life, the way you spend your time, the way you feel about your community, other people in the community, activities in the community …

3. What do you see here?

4. What is happening here?

5. Were there some photos you didn't take that you would have liked to? What were they? What stopped you taking them?

With reference to the process:

6. What did you like about the project?

7. Were there any problems?

8. What would you like to happen after the focus groups have finished? What will you do with the photos?

APPENDIX F

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

With reference to individual photographs:

1. What do you see here?

2. What is really happening here?

3. How does this relate to your life?

4. Why is this photograph significant?

5. What photographs were not taken – what is missing?

Identification of common threads amongst photographs:

6. What do the photographs have in common? How are they the same?

7. What do the photographs tell us about young people's experiences in their communities?

8. What things are important to young people in their communities?

9. What helps young people feel safe in their communities?

10. What do the photographs tell us about other people in the community?

Other questions:

11. How would people know that they belong to a community? Or not?

12. If you could change something in your community what would it be?

    How would you go about changing it?

13. Would adults take the same photographs as young people?

14. What would you miss about your neighborhood or community if you had to leave it?

APPENDIX G

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FORM.

Copyright Release Form

I consent and agree that Lyn O'Grady and Associate Professor Adrian Fisher, Victoria University, as part of the research project entitled "The world of adolescence: using Photovoice to explore psychological sense of community and wellbeing in adolescents with and without an intellectual disability", can use the photographs taken by me and use them for the purposes of publication of a thesis and related academic publications.

I do hereby release to Lyn O'Grady and Associate Professor Adrian Fisher all rights to use these photographs in print and electronic form and agree that any uses described herein may be made without compensation.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Name of parent/guardian:

Signature:

Date: