SEARCHING FOR SOCIAL CAPITAL IN CHILDREN'S ACCOUNTS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD AND NETWORKS: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Virginia Morrow, Research Fellow, LSE Gender Institute, May 1999

BACKGROUND

This paper draws on preliminary data collected in an on-going school-based research project for the Health Education Authority (the health promotion 'arm' of the UK Government Department of Health). The overall project is exploring Putnam's (1993) concept of 'social capital' in relation to children and young people's well-being and health. Putnam's conceptualisation of social capital consists of the following features: trust, reciprocal support, civic engagement, community identity, and social networks. In some of the public health debates the concept is being used to mean 'social cohesion' (Lomas 1998). The premise is that levels of social capital in a community have an important effect on people's well-being. Theoretically, the concept of social capital in the context of health-related research attempts to link micro-social individual behaviour and macro-social structural factors, it contextualises social relationships, social interactions and social networks within these structural factors, and it enables the incorporation of community and neighbourhood factors. Health behaviours and practices may superficially appear to be a private matter for the individual, but in reality health practices take place in a range of social arenas, which for children, are constrained by everyday contexts, which will vary from school/institution, family, and peer group and neighbourhood (see Morrow (forthcoming) for a critique of the concept of social capital in relation to children and young people). However, we know little about children's and young people's social networks, their views of their neighbourhoods, and levels of trust and community identity (though there is on-going research on children's and young people's use of public space, see Cohen et al, Percy-Smith 1998, O'Brien et al etc).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework informing this research is influenced by the emergent sociology of childhood based upon the work of two British social anthropologists Allison James and Alan Prout (1990, 1997). They argue that we need to move beyond psychologically-based models of childhood as a period of socialisation, and emphasise that children are active social agents who shape the structures and processes around them (at least at the micro-level), and whose social relationships as worthy of study in their own right.

Research questions

The following questions are being used to explore and develop the concept of social capital as it may relate to children and young people:

> social networks: what is the composition, durability, ease of access to and frequency of use of children's and young people's social networks? How are these networks defined and what do these networks provide, and how does this differ according to age & gender? What does friendship 'mean' to this age group?

> local identity: do children and young people have a sense of belonging and identity with their neighbourhoods/communities and do children and young people feel safe in neighbourhoods?

> attitudes to institutions and facilities in the community: what physical spaces, such as parks, streets, leisure centres, clubs used for social interaction, are available to and used by children and young people?

> community and civic engagement: to what extent do children and young people engage in local community activities? To what extent do they feel they have a say in community and institutional decision-making?

Research Setting and Sample

Data collection has been carried out in the first school, and will (hopefully) be conducted in a second school in the town (Springtown) to match Campbell et al's (1999) qualitative study for the HEA on the relationship between health and social capital in adults. Springtown is one of the 'New Towns' about 30 miles from London, and has continued to grow very rapidly. The population was 172,000 in the last Census (1991) and 1996 mid-year estimates were 182,100. Almost a third of the population of the town are under 20 and one-tenth are over 65. There are 16 electoral wards in the town and the town has two parliamentary constituencies, Springtown North and South. A report on levels of deprivation in the county prepared in 1996 showed that Springtown is in the top third of deprived local authority areas in England, (being relatively deprived in terms of unemployment, overcrowding, 17 year olds who have left full time education and children in non-earning households, lacking amenities, households without a car, long term unemployment, Income Support). However, levels of deprivation are not homogenous within wards.

The first school in which research has been carried out (described in this paper) is in a Ward characterised by Campbell et al (1999) as consisting of relatively low socio-economic status and higher than average health status. A number of separate indicators were selected for each of the two variables, SES and health. The indicators used for SES were: professional and managerial workers; skilled, non-manual workers; skilled manual workers;

unskilled; lone parents; unemployed single lone parent families; children 0-15 with lone parents; children 0-4 with lone parents; unemployed parents with children 0-15. The indicators used for health were: standardised mortality ratios, and standardised limiting long-term illness rates (Campbell et al 1999). The school is a comprehensive school with a roll of about 800 children, situated on a main road leading out of Springtown, in a mixed area with factories and a small industrial estate, a group of shops and a pub and a large area of (post-war) suburban council housing (26% of housing is LA or Housing Authority). A major employer is a long-established ball-bearings factory. The Ward has a relatively high ethnic minority population (15.4%; which rises to 23.7%of the child population), mostly African Caribbean and South Asian. Entitlement to Free School Meals rates are 22.5%, higher than the national average of 18.2% (1996 OfSTED report; children whose families receive Income Support/Job Seekers Allowance are entitled to receive free school meals). Unemployment rates in the Ward are 5.8% (town as a whole 6%, UK as a whole 5.5%). The area has a small local parade of shops and a small shopping centre. Public transport to the centre of Springtown is frequent but quite expensive (from the perspective of a 14 year old, at any rate). The Ward has one outdoor sports and park area and three equipped playgrounds. It does not have a community centre or recreational facility, though it has a youth club based at the school. The school has a bid in to the National Lottery to develop as a 'community school', and plans to carry out many improvements to the sports/swimming facilities at the school. There is an interesting story to tell about how the school's PTA is now run by now rather elderly people who have lived in Ward for a long time (whose children have long since left the school), and put on Bingo etc (i.e. good for social capital among elderly people in the area) but doesn't do much for younger people (i.e. not so good for social capital among the younger generation). The Deputy Head commented that if the school tries to organise something for the surrounding community, like a school fete or dance, attendance is very poor, but attendance at parents' evenings and consultations is very high (i.e. parents are interested in their own children's progress but not interested in joining in with shared activities which might benefit the school and the neighbourhood).

The sample to date consists of two age bands of children, a mixed ability 'tutor' group of Year 8s (aged between 12 and 13), and a mixed ability Year 10 Sociology class (aged between 14 and 14). Some of the children were from minority ethnic groups (mostly African Caribbean) and where possible, I enquired about where their family was from. Three are part-African Caribbean, don't fit neatly into categories. Sometimes their background emerged spontaneously (eg one group discussion I said 'where do you feel you belong?', to which one girl replied enthusiastically 'St Lucia!!'). The age and gender composition is as follows:

Age:	12	13	14	15
Girls	8	4	13	1
Boys	10	3	7	-

Methods

A combination of qualitative research methods and structured activities are being utilised to explore children's and young people's subjective experiences of their neighbourhoods, their everyday, lived experiences, their quality of life, and the nature of their social networks.

Structured methods in the form of freely written accounts are being used to elicit personal information: who is important to me and why? This provides social network and social support data; and I also asked how long they had known their friends. I also asked them to 'brainstorm' definitions of friendship by writing 'what is a friend?' and 'what are friends for?' (see Tables 1 and 2 appended for all responses to these questions).

'What I do when I am not at school?' (am pm weekends holidays; who with, and where): provides data on opportunities for independence and taking responsibility, membership of clubs and out of school activities, involvement in work (family, paid, as well as domestic), as well as leisure pursuits; they also noted the general area of where they live and how long they've lived there:

> 18 of the 46 had lived in the same place all their lives, and 23 had moved or had more than one home (5=missing data). Eg: Sonia, age 14, described where she lives in Springtown and how in the 'holiday I go to my dad's ... I live in Moss Hills, ... I also have a home in [outskirts of London]' and described how she has friends in both places. One boy had moved to Springtown 11 days earlier, some had moved several times within Springtown; one boy had moved recently to a nearby town (about a 20-minute drive away) and spends 5 nights of the week there, then stays on Friday and Saturday nights in Springtown with his auntie, so he can go out with his friends. He explained that the reason for this is that he is settled in school with his friends and didn't want to go to a new school.

Where do they live? only about half of the children in the sample live in the ward that is the focus of analysis; others live within the catchment area of the school, with two exceptions. This is not really surprising but interesting from the point of view of ward-level analysis relating to definitions of community, because there is a strong sense of identity with a particular school, a school is a 'community' in itself. I'll return to this point at the end of the paper. In the accounts that follow, the Ward which is the focus of analysis is called 'Ward'; most of the others live in an adjacent ward, called 'Riverside'.

Aspirations for the future: I asked them to write down what they hope to do when they leave school and whether they already know someone who is doing this kind of thing.

> These responses were highly differentiated according to gender (there was very little sign of high-aspiring 'can-do' girls here but on the other hand their ambitions could well be realistic given their backgrounds and reflect job opportunities available in the area). Of the 39 who said what they wanted to do (7 did not know or didn't answer the question) 20 (half of them) did have a kind of role model. Mostly, these were relatives or friends of relatives. For example 'My sister is a nanny and I want to be that as well' (13 year old girl) 'I want to be a builder, my dad is a builder' (12 year old boy); 'When I leave school, I hope to do A levels as this helps get jobs, my brother is at 6th form college, and it is a lot more free than school. After I wish to work with animals, which my cousin

does and is very enjoyable' (Amy, 14). 'When I leave school, I hope to work in the field of law, possibly a barrister. My cousin is not a barrister but is a probation officer'. (Dave, 14) Some (n=8) mentioned neighbours or people they know near where they live: 'When I leave school I want to go to college for a year to study Nursery Nursing. Then get a job in a nursery or playgroup. I know a lady around the corner from where I live who is a qualified Nursery Nurse'. (Sandy, 15) James, 14, Ward: 'I would like to do computer programming or do something to do with computers. I know someone who does work with computers and he lives across the road from us and he is a good friend of ours.'

Visual methods: individuals/groups of Year 10s have photographed places that are important to them, then describe why. This involved giving them disposable cameras. I asked Year 8 children to draw maps in their spare time (n=3) See Appendices 1 and 2 for examples of these.

Group discussions are exploring children's and young people's use of and perceptions about their neighbourhoods and town, and explore perceptions of news media imagery of their local environments and their age group. Do they feel they have a say in decisions that are taken both in their neighbourhoods, and in school?

This paper is divided into two parts. The first explores on the children's perceptions of their town and neighbourhood, and looks at traffic, neighbours, lack of facilities, safety, improvements, perceived lack of participation in school and community decision making. The second part of the paper explores children's accounts of social support from friends and family. As mentioned above, at this stage the analysis is very preliminary, and explores themes that emerge from the children's accounts as important to them. A number of different frameworks of analysis suggests themselves, and the paper concludes by briefly exploring the implications of the data for children's well-being, for concepts of social capital, and in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. At this stage, a systematic analysis based on gender differences has not been undertaken , and there may be important ways in which boys' and girls' social networks and uses of or views of social resources differ. An analysis based on gender differences will be undertaken at the end of the project.

1. PERCEPTIONS OF TOWN AND NEIGHBOURHOOD
This section focuses on responses in groups discussions to how they feel about where they live. This varies right down to the street level - so, if they live in a cul-de-sac in a suburban area, its too quiet and boring, if they live on a busy street, there's too much traffic, and some of the older children were aware of advantages of living in a quiet area because they could get their homework done. There were some general themes, and the children are perceptive and articulate about the places they spend their time. In nearly all group discussions a local 'problem' housing estate (tower blocks, a week of riots about 3 years ago, called Moss Hills) which borders on Ward, was seen as a big problem, though some of the children who lived there tried to defend it. One girl described it as 'trampy'; this was a word other children used too to mean 'not very nice, dirty': a group of Year 10s had the following discussion:

Dave: where me and Marc live [Riverside], its not really dangerous, is it?
Bob: no

Dave: where we live its a big busy main road, and if
somebody was to do something there'd be so many
witnesses about, things like that, I think ...

Amy: that's the bad thing about Moss Hills, its got loads of
little alleys everywhere

There were differences in the accounts according to gender, ethnicity, and age. Girls tended to talk about fear of rapists though some boys mentioned this too, and it is possible that this is a generic term for 'a threat'. On the other hand, in the time I've been doing this project, there were two rapes in some high rise flats in Moss Hills, some sexual assaults in a nearby town, and a rape in Springtown). Children from minority ethnic groups spoke of racism in their neighbourhoods. Younger children were perhaps more preoccupied with practical issues like traffic, and not having decent places to play in their localities, while older children were more likely to describe the need to go into the town for entertainment.

1.1 Traffic:
Traffic was a preoccupation for the Year 8 children and some complained that it was hard to cross the road:

Kellie: nothing to do much, 'cos I live in Riverside, we live on
a main road, its quite busy, its hard to cross the road

and later in the same group:

Rebecca: I don't like the person across the road, because we
have to make sure when we cross the road, there's this man,
that lives across the road, and he zooms round and he nearly
hit my brother

Me: in his car?

Rebecca: yeah

Bart: like, some drivers get impatient, cos like when I get to
school I get a lift, but I have to walk down the road, and the
house is on the other side of the main road, so when I go to
the crossing, I wait for both the cars to stop, and the cars
coming this way like stop, and then the other cars, like 4 or 5
cars, just go past, and when I'm in a rush, its even worse,
cos they just carry on going, they don't stop.

And in another group there was a graphic description of how a little girl had been killed (John and Kick live in Riverside):

John: she went literally under the back wheel

Others complained of pollution 'There's all this traffic, and the fumes come in the window' (Harry age 13) and Bart: 'My mum's curtain's get really dirty as well'. Others complained about motorbikes joyriding or riding on pavements:

Kerry: we have motor bikes that come straight onto the mud
track of the field, they go straight past the houses and down
and you have little kids walking sort of like on the path and
that, and they have motorbikes that go down there... /.../ I'm

> not saying that people in Moss Hills are careless, but some
> mothers, in Moss Hills just let their little kids go everywhere.

A recurrent view expressed by the children was that parents have a moral obligation to be responsible for their children's safety (particularly very young children). This was reinforced in some of the discussions about child curfews: one Year 8 boy commented: 'It's really up to the parents what time they let you stay out till, innit? It's their responsibility'.

1.2. Neighbours and neighbourhood

There were some negative accounts about neighbours from the younger children. This boy complained about his neighbour in the block of flats he lives in and described how his family are trying to move:

> I live on the top floor, right, /.../ and the next door person got
> really drunk, and he's always having fights, with other
> people, and last time, he left blood all over the things and I
> don't really like that, so we're still looking for a house...

Natalie, who lives in Riverside said when I asked if you feel safe where you live, 'no, my next door neighbour's a druggie... /../...we know him, he used to be like really nice and everything, and now he's just a druggie, and he only says 'hullo' [dully]'. Later on in the discussion she said 'well, my house got burgled four times in a row in the week, and on the 5th time, my stepdad caught him, and it was my next door neighbour, next door but one'. One girl, who lives in Moss Hills, said 'I don't feel safe where I live, because we've got flats near us, and because we've heard that people have actually been killed in those flats and stuff, and we have like rapists go round our area/.../it wasn't very long ago, and I don't exactly feel safe round my area'. On the other hand, sometimes neighbours were seen positively (these two also live in Riverside):

> Me: do you feel safe in that neighbourhood,
>
> Bart: yeah, cos there's quite understanding people around,
>
> Me: ok
>
> Harry: yeah, well, I think that it is good, all the neighbourhood
> are like together, so they'll always watch out for you, so you'll
> feel safe walking round the streets and that kind of thing. I
> live just a few doors up from Bart.

And Rebecca who lives in Ward: (map)

> Me: how do you feel about where you live? Is there enough
> for you do to?
>
> Rebecca: not really, because we have to walk about 5
> minutes to get to the shops and that, but there's nothing
> really to do much. So, but I feel sort of safe, because
> whenever we go away, we've got our next door neighbour,
> and the person across the road, but the other day our next
> door neighbour got burgled ...

Explicit racism was described by two Year 8 children. One girl, whose family is from Pakistan, described how her house in Ward had been vandalised before they moved in:

> in Ward area, I don't think its safe, /.../ because before we moved in we were living with my mum's brother, because I don't have a dad, he died, yeah, so because we didn't have a house, my mum wanted to look for a house, so she got it in the Ward area, so its near all of our family, and before we moved in, somebody, it was snowing then, and somebody chucked loads and loads of snowballs at our window, and it smashed. So we couldn't move in there, and then because all the people in our road are quite racist,

[I asked her if that was what the snowballs were about and she said:]

> it was just our house, 'cos our house was a mess as well, smashed glass and everything, everything was alright before we moved, but as soon as we were getting in, then the glass was all smashed. I don't think it was right.

Another boy (family from Bangladesh) described how he did not play outside his flats: 'if I've got nothing to do I play inside with my own computer, [not] outside [because] usually people are quite racist to me, because that's why I don't like my area that much'.

Some of the older children wrote about their neighbourhoods, for example:

> I live in Ward but for 10 years of my life I lived in (housing estate), Riverside. In my old area I had loads of friends, you could just walk outside and there would be 5 or 6 people playing and you could just join in and everyone was welcome. I lived in a close so it was away from cars and so was safe. My old house was about 3 minutes away from my [?school] so it was totally handy. My street now is not as fun because its mostly older people living there but in ways that is good because it is nice and quiet for homework and relaxing etc. It is also good because it is just around the corner from the shops which is brilliant. Amy, 14.

> I used to live down town [...] but I never liked the area because it was noisy and trouble was there. [This school] is a fairer school than [old school]. Now that I go to [this school] I have more friends and we go out on bikes, hang out at the local park, go bowling and play snooker. I never get bored and I can get on with my homework at home now because the atmosphere at home is a lot more better than when I was living with my step mother and brothers and sisters which makes life easier for me. (Tom, 14, lives in Estate in Riverside).

and we discussed how they felt about where they live:

> Brenda (Ward): Mine's private, very private, everyone has themselves to themselves, you know what I mean, they don't... they just sort of stay in, be snobby and...

> Mandy: that's like my area, they don't come and say Hello, how are you
>
> Brenda: there's not really people like my age, there
>
> Chloe (Ward): down my street there's like loads of people my age but we used to like all hang around with people from our schools and they all go to different schools, and there's like quite a lot of old people that live round my area, quite a quiet neighbourhood, I'd prefer it to be loud.

In another group when we discussed a negative newspaper cutting about the town and its problems: one boy commented: 'We realise that it isn't that bad because we actually live there, so, it doesn't really bother us'. In fact some of the Year 10s were positive about Springtown: 'its all right'; 'its safe, but its a bit boring', 'if you go down town and that, its alright' (note the photos of the train station and the bus stop 'to get us into town'). On the other hand there was a lot of discussion about Moss Hills by this age group and three of the boys had been to the riots (they must have been about 11-12 years old at the time). The newscutting I used as a prompt in the group discussions mentioned drugs and in another group the boys said 'no, I don't see it like that, - really every part of the world's, England's got drugs, Springtown's not really that bad'. Some children said they felt quite safe (girls and boys). One boy (Riverside), in illustrating how safe his area was, recounted how his friend's mum 'left her keys in her [front] door, she went to work and they were still there when she came back'. In conclusion, then, there was no clear consensus from these children about their neighbourhoods: some felt quite positive, some felt quite negative, and some were ambivalent.

1.3 Lack of facilities and decent parks and wild places to make dens

Both year groups talked about not having enough to do in terms of facilities. The Youth club is seen as being for younger children though some of the younger children did use it and liked it. Others girls commented: 'its boring, the same things happen all the time'. Some girls felt there was not enough for girls to do at the respective youth clubs 'all they do is play football and basketball'. Or 'there's nothing for girls'. Not having enough things to do outside school was seen as leading to boredom, and sometimes to illegal behaviour and getting caught by the police. One or two of these boys recounted being chased by the police with some bravado. One boy described a game called 'teasing trains' which involved throwing things at the trains. Another said 'Ward is the worst, there's nothing to do'. One girl said 'the only reason people cause trouble is because they are bored'. One group of Year 8 children had the following discussion:

> Natalie: once, me her and my other friend were chased by a black man
>
> John (Interrupting crossly): why does it matter what colour he is? Just say *a man*...
>
> Agnes: I was walking past and I was whistling, I was happy to myself,

> Natalie: he was old, with this big white beard,
>
> Agnes: and we was just walking nicely across the bridge and he was standing there rocking, right, or something,
>
> Natalie: no, we were vandalising the bridge, I'm honest,
>
> Agnes: No, because *everyone* vandalises our bridge....

Older children said things like 'I like town better, there's much more action' but were more preoccupied with how much things cost: for example, each group raised the issue of the bus fare which goes up to an adult fare when they are 13 or 14, but they don't necessarily have much money; the only entertainment is in town, and it is expensive. In terms of local parks, younger ones described how:

> Harry: there's a park where we live, we call it 'Motorway Field' because its right by the motorway, and its just covered in dogs muck, you just don't like to go there, people let their dogs go anywhere, so we like to play football there, but cos you don't know where the dogs muck is, you don't play because you don't want to get covered in it.

Several of the younger ones mentioned the lack of wild places to 'make dens'. One girl mentioned 'we used to have a den, in the woods there, and me and my friend found loads of like drugs and stuff, packets and things, so we took them to the police'.

1.4 Safety

Children in both year groups mentioned not feeling safe in local parks and on the streets:

> Amy: like someone was assaulted down [in the local park], I mean, that makes you scared to go down there, and that was in broad daylight, so God knows what its gonna be like at 10 o'clock at night. /.../ I live in like a secluded road, hardly anyone comes down my road, but there's nothing there, there's like a little park down the road, but someone was assaulted there, you're scared to go there. So if I was, like, 20, and I had two little kids, I'd have nowhere to take them in [this area], that was safe.

Boys also did not seem to feel particularly safe in the parks:

> Gizmo: me and Tom are like hard, man, you live in [Estate in Riverside], don't yer, Tom,
>
> Tom: yeah,
>
> Gizmo: like you've got the shops, and they're right next to the park, and there's all trouble over at the shops, and then they bring it on to the park, so you ain't really got that much places to go, I mean there's two parks in [Estate in Riverside], and both of the parks int so... cos you've got all the gangsters walking through there,/.../

Gangs hanging around the shops at night were also a preoccupation. Drunk people on the streets, and gangs on the streets (they call them 'gangsters') near where they live bothered all age groups.

> Kellie: I think my area's unattractive because there's a pub just up the road, and whenever you go out you just see all these drunk people walking down the road, all the time

However, night time is the time this age group can hang around together; and parents won't let their children out on their own. When we discussed child curfews, Mike said he thought they were 'a cheek, because its **our** childhood, night time is when all of us really hang around together'.

> Simon: we should be going out, like clubs
>
> Mike: we're young adults
>
> Sonia: its the only time we can be ourselves outside of school,
>
> /.../
>
> Mike: when there's no older people around, you can like sit in the park and play, not play [correcting himself]
>
> Simon: socialise,
>
> Mike: without people watching,/.../

And in another group:

> Amy: we have one youth club, and that's here. I mean walking round Ward shops at night, you get a lot of like gangs hanging round there, and you don't fancy walking to like the youth club up here
>
> Gizmo: same at [Estate in Riverside], same at [other part of town], any big [inaudible ?shops] you're gonna have gangs hanging round
>
> Dave: my best place is my house, man [inaudible]/.../
>
> Amy: its hard to explain, but its dangerous like walking round the shops and stuff, like I don't like walking past there at night, all the shops are shut but there are still loads of people hanging around,/.../ even if you're walking in a gang, its like, even if you've got 20 people, you're still scared.

1.5 Improvements: the police?

Suggestions for improvement included: more police on the streets 'they come and go, they just like, if something happens, they come in, have a look, and then they go away again'; 'when it was

the riots, its like the helicopter was just sitting there, it weren't even like near where the things happening'; on child curfews: John: 'sometimes when you're walking near my area [Riverside], at night, 9 o'clock, /.../ and you're about a mile away from the house, then you *want* the police to come and pick you up and take you home/.../ cos you're scared, all these people, you know, who come out at night'. One boy commented who lived next door to the police station commented: 'I feel safe, I don't know how unsafe it is, I haven't lived there very long, and I've got a police station outside'. Many of the groups suggested more facilities, but one girl said: I'd probably put more facilities and that, but then I'd also want peace between everyone in the streets and everything, because at the moment its just horrible'. A group of Year 8s had a range of suggestions:

and more lights would be good/ more street lights/mirrors/ more video cameras/

Mark: all this would cost a lot of money though

Boy: there's a great big wind tunnel by the Parade, and you can't see around it, so you don't know who's in there, there's often quite a lot of people in there that are like... drunk

Maggie: I think there should be more cameras too, cos if you're like walking down the street at night, you get raped or something, or a man could be trying to nick your money or stuff /../

Suggestions for improvement: again the police were suggested by Amy (who is white). Dave is black and Gizmo mixed race.

Amy: we were saying they should have curfews on, they should see where the children's areas are, like [on the Estate in Riverside], and then put a couple of police officers round, because some people do like to walk to their friends in safety

Dave: but then again, are coppers impartial? Cos you know what coppers are, they might just arrest me, cos I come down there, cos look at someone like Gizmo, yeah, look at his skin head, right, if he comes down here with all his mates, they'll just look at him, even if he isn't doing anything,

Gizmo: exactly, I walked to the shop yesterday and the police was there about an assault, I walked past and they gave me dirty looks, and I was like "what"? I thought, man, this in't fair.

Dave: and its not exactly a nice environment, you know, you go to the park and there's the police there, you're like ...

But later Gizmo says: 'all the gangs who hang around the shops, most of them are like drug addicts, and always on booze, the police should really come round at night time, because they're always there, like people walk over the shops at night, its like loads of different gangs and they all fight'. There is a dilemma here particularly for young black men, who feel under threat not only from other groups of young people but also from the police.

Some of the older children described how they felt mistrusted and not respected by the adults around them (see also Fitzpatrick et al 1998). One 15 year old boy remarked: 'If school ... give us a little bit of respect, we'd give them a little bit of respect'. There was one very lengthy discussion which hinged around the issue of being regarded with suspicion in shops:

> Amy: its horrible, cos you walk into a shop, you've got no bag on you, you're looking quite smart, and you've got all these security guards watching you like a hawk, /.../
>
> Olanda: they stereotype us. /.../
>
> Dave: but then again, then again, even though they do do that to us, how many people do you know that steal things,
>
> /.../
>
> Amy: but its the few, its the little minority of people nicking it that's letting us down, its not nice going into a shop and you've got this big security guard watching you, you feel uncomfortable, you've gotta walk out of the shop, so not only are they losing business, but they're also losing our respect as well, cos I don't wanna go back in the shop
>
> Gizmo: the security guards think, "oh my god here come the 15 year olds. Let's watch them". Then if somebody else comes in steals something and runs out, they're going like "oh we'll leave him, we'll just concentrate on the 15 year olds". You know.

1.6 Participation in decision-making in school and community:
In the community, only one person out of all 46 felt they could go to their residents association and make suggestions about their local area (when he said this in the group discussion, someone whispered that 'ah, but that's a posh area'). One other boy did say that the ex-mayoress, who lived in his street, had asked all of his family including him whether it was a good idea to put dog bins in the neighbourhood. If the council did come and ask about local facilities, they felt that their parents were consulted, not them. Amy said: 'they send like questionnaires to our parents but its not our parents who want to go to the Youth Club, its us. So they should ask us'. One girl said 'I don't think people are really bothered about kids'; in another group a boy said 'They just do things like little tiny parks for little kids... we don't want little parks'. This led to some direct action in the past:

> Mike: cos I remember, I was living in my old house, and it was like the woods, in Riverside, there was the woods like over to the side, and they knocked it down to build more houses, and we didn't [want that] we used to play there and

> have our like tree houses, dens and things, but they didn't
> ask us. We tried slashing their tyres and things like that,
> nicking keys, and stuff but it din't work. *We was young then*,
> so... [laughter]

In school, there is the school council. Schools are not under any statutory obligation to run a 'school council' (a group of teachers and pupils representative of various year groups in the school), but some schools do have such systems in place (see Rowe 1998 for a wider study of school councils). As Lansdown & Newell (1994) note, schools have an important role to play in promoting children's freedom of expression. However, they also note that 'the school system throughout the UK tends to operate in a formal and authoritarian way which does not encourage children to explore and contribute their ideas for the provision and development of education' (p9). Further, the pressures of meeting the demands of the National Curriculum allow little room for child-oriented initiatives or issues of concern to children which are not part of the prescribed work programme' (p9; see also Alderson (1999)). Freeman (1996 p98) draws attention to the irony in this, 'for one of the aims of education is to enhance the capacity for decision-making and yet, in crucial areas, participation in major decisions is removed from those most affected by those decisions' (see also Osler & Starkey 1998). Many of the children were not satisfied the way their school council was run (this is fairly typical of what the very few other studies of schools councils have found). This is a group of Year 8s, 12-13 year olds:

> Harry: we have a class rep, I'm the class rep, on the school
> council, they can pass information on to me, and that gets
> passed onto, we say these things in the year meetings, and
> then that gets passed onto the school meetings, and then it
> goes to the senior teachers, and we have said stuff and it
> has worked.
>
> Me: it has worked? What about the rest of you, do you
> agree?
>
> Kellie no, not really, what I think they should do, is just get all
> the school reps together, and all the classes, and all speak
> about it all together. The teachers don't tell us much, they
> just tell us about a couple of things and then that's it, over for
> about another 4 weeks or something.

A different group of Year 8s:

> Natalie: in every other class, they get to chose their class
> reps, but here, Miss just chose it, and we didn't even get to
> chose it,
>
> Robert: I don't think its fair because I reckon that the
> favourites get picked, instead of the people that are gonna
> do something, they just say who they know best
>
> Someone: the boffins, yeah
>
> Robert: yeah, the favourite ones, like...

In a discussion with a group of Year 10s, even the two representatives did not feel the school council worked well:

Amy: You say it, and nothing happens...

Dave: the thing is, yeah, they'll have a meeting, and they'll say, the toilets, they're in a bad shape, blah blah, that'll be it

Olanda: you can guarantee that at every meeting the toilets will come up

Dave: its a good way for people to voice their opinions, but it doesn't really happen, like, the most say you'll get is what trip you wanna go on

And in another group of Year 10s, Mike commented:

Mike: I think we get played like fools, cos we have council meetings, ok, I'm a council rep, but I say this stuff, but they don't listen to me, they think I'm just a laugh, they don't listen, cos we say stuff, what we want, but they don't listen, they ask us what we want, then they say no, we can't have it, what's the point of asking us?

Recently, Alderson & Arnold (1999) have suggested that having an unsatisfactory schools council does more harm than good in how children perceive their overall experience of school (I have explored the nature of 'participation' for this age group in more details in a separate paper see Morrow 1999).

2. FRIENDS AND FAMILY: TRUST AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

So far this paper has painted a somewhat bleak picture of non-participation and poverty of environment for these young people. What sources of support and positive resources do these children have to draw upon? The social support and social networks research has primarily focused on adults (Belle 1989) and little attention has been paid to children's social networks in the UK, and the implications of these networks for well being (cf. Nestmann & Hurrelmann 1994 for examples from other European countries where such research is well-established). Most existing research on children's friendships and peer groups in the UK has not explored the positive and supportive effects of group membership. Much of it is from the perspective of developmental psychology or socialisation (eg Rubin 1981), or it is small scale/feminist ethnographic interpretive research on girls rather than boys (for an interesting study, see Hey 1997), or it is focused on spectacular gang cultures: peer groups in one key review on youth research appears with delinquency and youth subcultures in the index; friendship is not in the index at all (Griffin 1993)). Research from elsewhere suggests that there may be protective functions of social networks, as a buffer for stress, the argument being that social support improves well-being through prevention of isolation, being understood, being valued, and obtaining help and advice when needed, which in turn have an effect on self-esteem, feelings of worth, and self-control.

As noted, the children were asked to write about who is important to them and why, and the two categories of people described were family and friends (needless to say some of them mentioned pets too; one boy wrote about his dog and took a photo of where he exercised his dog; others mentioned pets in their lists of who is important: see Morrow 1998). All the written comments the children made were positive:

> My mum is very important to me because she is the only one
> I have to talk to and she is loving, caring and very kind, my
> other important person to me is Kellie, my best friend, I have
> known her since the start of Year 7 in High School, she
> cares, she's good to talk to (13 year old girl whose family
> come from Pakistan/Uganda, her father has died).

Mandy, age 14, described how she had moved house several times within the town 'I'm really happy where I live now but I want to move to (Ward) so I can be closer to school, my friends, and my boyfriend'. Olanda, 14, described how

> My friends and family are important to me. Without my family
> I would have no-one to care for me and without my friends I
> would have nothing to do when I'm not at school. They are
> important to me because I care about my friends and family. I
> can talk to my family about some problems, for example
> problems at school or with friends and I can talk to my friends
> about things I can't tell my parents. Most of my friends I have
> known most of my life but school friends I've known for about
> 4 years. ...I'm fairly happy with where I live but would rather
> live in my old house ... this is because a lot of my close
> friends live up there. Usually I walk up there most days after
> school. It would be a lot less hassle if I lived up there near
> them.

2.1 Gender and friendship

There were differences in the way girls and boys described their friendships: girls tended to describe close friends or "best friends", even 'my most best friend', rather than groups of friends This contrasts with Ray Pahl's point about lack of vocabulary in English for 'friendship', this may be true for adults, but is certainly not the case among girls (Pahl & Spencer 1997), who were particularly expansive about their friendships: Rebecca, age 13, described how 'when I'm not at school I either go to my friend's house, and we play out on our bikes'. She described how she doesn't like her neighbourhood:

> its boring, there's not many people of my age living round
> there. Because my best friend moved away she only lives 10
> minutes away, but its too much to walk every day there. I've
> been best friends with her all my life, and I've never broken
> up with her once. We do a lot of things together, she's
> coming on holiday with me this year as well, I can't wait.
> What is a friend? Help them out, never argue, care for, help,
> do favours, share, be friendly, someone you can share
> secrets with, you can trust'.

This theme of uncritical support, trust, and "being there" for you is one that emerged repeatedly in the girls' accounts. Mostly the children described same-gender friendship networks. A small number (3 girls, 1 boy) of the older

children mentioned boyfriends/girlfriend, for example, Sandy, age 15, described how she sees her boyfriend everyday: 'My boyfriend is the most important person to me as he cares, loves, comforts and understands me very well'. There were one or two examples of mixed friendship, this is a 13 year old boy writing:

> My friend Helen is important to me because I don't see any of my friends at the weekends and I can talk to her about things I don't have anyone to talk to about them. I have known Helen for a long time, for about 4 years. I know her because her mum is friends with my mum.

The downside of these close friendships is that when things go wrong and this support is withdrawn, children can be quite badly hurt: despite school being a place for socialising and being with close friends, it is also a place where fights break out, bullying takes place, and people get physically and emotionally hurt. Schools can be violent places: Mary, age 12, whose family are from Bangladesh, said: 'I'm just having problems at the moment with this girl, she's getting all these year 9s to beat us up for something we didn't even do, we didn't even know her until last year, so not all friends are nice'.

2.2 Boys' friendships

The assumption is often made that boys' friendships fulfil a different function to those of girls, that of active contributions, like sticking up for each other, and doing things together, and there were examples of this, in the descriptions of what they do outside school in terms of sport and so on. James, 14, wrote 'if I didn't have friends I wouldn't be able to do exciting things like go out to places with them like swimming etc'. However, in their definitions of friendship (see Tables 1 and 2) and their descriptions of who is important to them some boys described how their friends are important for them because they listened, were loyal and could be trusted: some of them had known their friends a long time. For example, Bob, age 14, wrote: 'My longest known friend is Dave (same class) I have been friends with him since nursery school. He is a good friend and I value his opinion greatly'. Two boys in the sample used the phrase 'a shoulder to cry on' in their written definitions of friendship. Bart, age 13, who had described his relationship to Helen, defined a friend as : 'someone to share your feelings, someone who cares, someone who is there for you, someone who is reliable, someone who can keep your secrets, someone who will help you when you are in need, someone you can trust'.

2.3 Family

Parents, and especially mums, are very important to both age groups. For example: Brenda, age 14, described how 'The most important person in my life is my mum, she has brought me up the way I am. My dad hasn't brought me up because my mum and dad are divorced, my dad left when I was two years of age, I don't see him much. The other important family in my life are my two brothers [aged 23 and 19]. I also have a little sister... she is 3 years old, sometimes she pulls your hair out till your bald, and other times she is a little sweetheart'. Several (n=15) children specifically mentioned wider kin in their accounts of who is important to them, and some described a good deal of regular contact. Shenna, age 12, described how

At weekends I do dancing at [a nearby secondary school, in Moss Hills] for 3 hours. Every other week on a Sunday I go to my dad's because my mum and dad are divorced. I go to my nan's every Saturday... My mum is very important because she cares for everything I do like if I go out the front with my friends. My dad is important because he also cares for me, all my family care about me. My friends are important because I can trust them and talk to them.

And 'My family and friends are important to me, especially my nephew and cousins, because they look up to me and I can look after them' (Sonia, age 14).

DISCUSSION

These are complex data and a number of frameworks of analysis suggest themselves.

Paradoxes

One way of looking at these accounts of children's experiences might be to look at a series of paradoxes and contradictions which have implications for children's well-being (similar arguments have been developed in relation to adults' health behaviours, (Graham 1993)).

Firstly, the institution and experience of school is paradoxical. The importance of school as a place for social interaction could hardly be missed. Children walk to school in pairs or groups and then cluster in the playground (see photo). Kerry, 14, described how: 'In school when I am not in my lessons I hang around with my best friend Katie and my friend .... We normally just walk around having girly chats'. The deputy head of the school mentioned that the school had worked hard to (re)define itself as a place of work rather than a place to come and socialise. However, the non-democratic nature of school, the content of school work, and the relationships between teachers and pupils, clearly does not enhance self-esteem for some children (see Elias 1989 on schools as a source of stress, for USA). Others spoke of how the teachers' 'favourites' were usually 'boffins' or 'brainboxes' and some of them seemed to express a sense that only one form of knowledge - i.e. academic knowledge - was valued (not surprisingly given the recent focus on school league tables, and the school has been successful in raising academic standards). As one 14 year old boy put it: 'None of the teachers really build up our confidence or anything'. Other children complained about how teachers 'put you down'; they 'don't really care'. One boy said 'I hate being told what grade the teachers expect of you, its very high expectations'. Further children may not feel well supported by teachers: Mary and her friend complained that:

Mary: we had someone bullying us, and we told a teacher, and we didn't do anything wrong

Maggie: he just told us off

Mary: he didn't do anything we went to him to help us, he just goes and tells us off.

Maggie [angrily]: he goes and tells assembly that if there's any bullying going on you

should come and tell me, and I'll, we will really sort it out, /.../
[but] they don't do anything.

At the same time (paradoxically?) many of the children realised how important education and schooling are for them:

Dave: people do moan about school, but when they go they know they will learn stuff, they will have a bit of fun and they do meet their friends, so its not all that bad.

Amy: yeah, if they've got all these ambitions in life to get a good career, they can't do it without going to school

Dave: because even the people who say that they don't care about their grades and all that, they always long to get good grades and everyone does know its really important and I think most people do try their best, no matter what they say or how hard they fight back,

Bob: exactly

Dave: even Gizmo does,

Gizmo: I've made a promise to myself, if I don't do well in my GCSEs at the end of the two years, then I'm gonna come back to school for another year and try it, cos I wanna try and pass my GCSEs

Others mentioned homework, and (n=5) photographed their junior schools. Quiet places to live were 'boring' but also good to get homework done . Secondly, there are clear paradoxes in the children's descriptions of their everyday lives outside school which have implications for their well-being. The walk to school for some children is a four-mile round trip, which health educators would presumably see as healthy behaviour. However, for many children, this walk is along a busy main road which is solid traffic, at least in the mornings (see Hillman 1990; Davis & Jones 1996, 1997). Many of them described stopping at MacDonalds for their breakfasts (see photo and map) - this is cheap but unhealthy. However, there is nowhere else available apart from the newsagents, again presumably junk food. Yet they are aware of healthy eating: healthy food might simply not be available. One girl commented in the discussions:

Amy: like I asked the head teacher to have more vegetarian meals, that was about six months ago, and nothing's happened. So he's saying he thinks all the people should stay in school for school dinners so we don't get in trouble down the shops, what are we supposed to eat? They don't even do salads or anything they just do chips.

Thirdly, outside school friends are central to many activities, and are clearly very important as a source of emotional support etc. Yet as other medical sociologists have noted its your friends with whom you share cigarettes, alcochol, drugs, sex, and in the case of these young people, visits to MacDonalds. One 15 year old boy wrote: 'During the night my friends and I go

down [main road] and drink alcohol. Us teenagers don't go into any buildings, just walking on the street'). 'Being part of the group' is crucial, and one discussion with Year 10s focused on peer pressure (one boy used this term and the others clearly related to it) and I asked them what it meant:

> Amy: its blending in with the rest of the group, if the rest of the group are wearing Nike trainers, you feel like you've gotta have Nike trainers, if the rest of the group are smoking, you feel like you've gotta smoke

> Gizmo: even with Nike trainers, as well, its like oh they're the old model, this is the new model, you must have this, you haven't really got any free choice to wear what you want.

Fourthly, there are health paradoxes in the suburban neighbourhood environment: when they do go outside to play football, their experience is very neatly encapsulated by the oxymoron 'Motorway Field'. Even doing something healthy like playing football can be a health hazard, in terms of pollution from traffic and dog mess. For the older children, hanging about outside is often the only activity available that doesn't involve spending money. Even here they are caught in a dilemma: on the one hand their parents won't let them go out on their own (I don't want to overemphasise this point, as some quotes show that they themselves probably wouldn't want to go out on their own), yet the fact that they go out in groups makes them look threatening to other groups such as elderly people (Campbell et al 1999) or younger children.

Social capital?

A second way to analyse these data is to explore the relevance of Putnam's notion of social capital. I don't yet have data with which to compare localities and if social capital is to be seen as a community-level attribute, I need to contrast sites. However, at this stage, it seems that young people are caught in a web of interlinked individual, neighbourhood, and community (community as in school as well as local area)-specific networks which are embedded in material and environmental circumstances such as street, park, and school; and social circumstances such as parents' social networks, family structure in so far as some children have two homes - all of which will be experienced differently as they are mediated by gender, ethnic background and age. Putnam's emphasis on civic participation as a key element of social capital at this stage looks somewhat limited in the case of children and young people, given that they are positioned outside of democratic structures by their very nature as children (i.e. they do not attain the right to full adult citizenship at least in terms of voting rights until the age of 18; indeed the whole issue of their 'participation' is problematic, see Morrow 1999). This point is important, given the finding from Campbell et al's (1999) research on the relationship between social capital and health in adults, that civic engagement (she calls it 'perceived citizen power') appears to be more health enhancing than other dimensions of (Putnam's) social capital. These young people may feel reasonably well-supported by networks of friends and family but the balance seems to go the other way when one considers their sense of self-efficacy and participation in their communities/neighbourhoods or institutions, at this preliminary stage in the research.

The advantages of using a social capital framework to drive the research questions has been that the children's views of their social worlds, in this case, their neighbourhoods and networks, have been highlighted, and these offer a perspective which differs from adult-oriented preoccupations about the needs of this age group. It has also enabled research to focus on social context, but (personally) I would rather conceptualise this in terms of 'social resources', because it would enable us to focus on the material constraints on these young people's lives. Either way it is important to try to understand whether young people have a sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods if we want to try to bring young people's views into the policy debates around public health, and these data show clearly that they have views which they are well able to articulate about their social environments.

The disadvantage of trying to impose a 'social capital' framework upon these data is that children's perspectives simply do not 'fit' a pre-existing model - social life is much too complex and contradictory for such an account. It is also counter-intuitive in qualitative research to try to impose a top-down model on data, when qualitative research is about grounding theory in the data, or at least allowing theoretical insights to emerge from the data. It might be that the data provide evidence which challenges the concept of social capital, given that the concept (according to Putnam) has been developed in relation to communities, and community is so hard to define in relation to these young people. These children are highly mobile, and furthermore, as I have noted, their school is a community, their families are communities (and 'family' may be in more places than one, in the case of parental separation), their neighbourhood is a community, and they may be members of a community of interest (eg dancing at a different school on Saturdays, or being a member of the ATC which takes places outside the neighbourhood). Putnam's notion of social capital hinges upon being able to define 'community', and for children and young people this is more often a 'virtual' community of friends based around school, town centre and street, friends' and relatives' houses, and sometimes two homes, rather than a tightly-bound easily-identifiable geographical location.

Any challenge to the concept of social capital needs to emphasise the interrelationship between the material and the social: existing social capital research tends to ignore the material/economic and reify the social, disembedding it from other forms of 'capital' (Bourdieu 1986). The accounts from these children show the extent to which their lives are constrained by material circumstances and structural factors at the macro-level which are way beyond their reach. Further, arguments/theories about intangible and ill-defined notions like 'trust' 'community engagement' and 'reciprocity' mask more tangible inequalities along the lines of poverty and deprivation. But this is open to discussion.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: A children's rights framework
An analysis of the data from a children's rights framework based upon the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child highlights the need for social policy to pay attention to children's quality of life (Casas 1997), in the broadest sense, in the here and now, rather than be driven by a perspective which prioritises children as future citizens, in terms of human capital (Qvortrup 1994). A number of clauses have some relevance to the issues raised in this paper:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all maters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (Article 12.1).

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds... (Article 13).

Article 24(1) stipulates that: States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health ... and Article 24(2)(c) requires measures 'to takes into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution'.

States Parties recognize: the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development Article 27(1).

The right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and arts Article 31 (1).

These young people themselves seem to be well aware that they are effectively denied a range of participatory rights that adults take for granted. This awareness becomes more problematic as they get older; and is likely to limit their sense of self-efficacy. The young people I have worked with so far in this project do not appear to be as rebellious and disaffected as dominant imagery depicts them to be - they have a strong sense that they need their educational qualifications, and that school is important, and at the same time, they want to have access to safe local streets and neighbourhood spaces, but they are well aware that their needs are neglected. Both the previous and the current UK Governments have shown a profound complacency towards the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, as Freeman suggests, we should see the Convention as a beginning, 'but the lives of children will not change for the better until the obligations it lays down are taken seriously by legislatures, governments and all others concerned with the daily lives of children' (Freeman 1995; 1996; Lansdown & Newell 1994).

Table 1 Definitions of friendship by Year 10 children *(all)*

Year 10s Girls	Year 10s Boys
A friend: cares, shares, funny, friends are for sharing good times and having fun.	A friend is someone who helps you get along and someone who helps you out. Friends are to help you out and keep secrets and to trust.
A friend is someone who is there for you and helps you get through bad times, i.e. family problems, boyfriends. Friends are for to have fun with and to help.	A friend is someone who listens. Someone who cares. Friends are for doing stuff with and talking to.
A friend is someone you can trust, someone who is loyal and is there when you need a friend. Friends are for companionship, support, help, trusting.	A friend is someone you can trust and will always be there for you. Friends are for help and trust.
A friend is a person who listens to you, helps you, you can have a laugh, you have to be able to trust and confide in them. Friends are for chatting to, having a good time, and telling secrets.	A friend is someone who is there for you, when you need them most. They don't abandon you in times of need. Friends are for talking, to, being there for them, giving them your support.
A friend is respectful, there for you, speaks kindly of you, stands by you. Friends are for friendship, advice and to be there for you.	A friend is someone to talk to if you can't go to your family. Friends are for to keep secrets, and to trust.
A friend is: someone to listen to; respect you and themself; someone who helps you out. They should stand by you no matter what. Friends are for company, someone to talk to, advisor, friendship.	A friend is someone who listens, shares and cares with you and has fun with you, someone to trust. Friends are for companionship, association and a shoulder to cry on.
A friend is kind, helpful, honest, loyal, always there when you need them. Friends are for life, and not just to use.	A friend is: nice, funny, friendly, and you trust them. Friends are for having someone to talk to someone to trust and for help.
A friend is: someone who is caring, kind, understanding, reliable, sensible, and are willing to listen. Friend are for talking to, sharing with, caring for.	A friend is nice, trust, good a laugh. Friends are for people who treat each other nice, have respect for each other.
A friend is someone you can talk to, someone	

you can trust, someone you can tell your problems to, to have fun with and do things with.	

continued

Girls Yr 8s	Boys Yr 8s
A best friend to me is someone who we can share secrets and talk about things together and go out together. What is a friend? Help them out; never argue; care for; help, do favours; share; be friendly; someone you can share secrets with; you can trust What is a friend? A friend: hangs around with you; likes you; someone who looks out for you; sticks up for you. A friend is someone you can trust and say secrets and someone who's always there for your. What is a friend? Someone who is there for you when you need them. Someone you can talk to. Someone you can trust. Helping you out when you're in trouble. What is a friend? A person who stands up for you; who cares about you; look after them; do not treat you bad. A friend is a person who you talk to and stick up for you	What is a friend? Someone to have fun with, someone who looks after you, someone who protects you, a dog, person, dad, mum. What is a friend: that plays with you, that liked you, helps you do things, animal, person. What is a friend? Somebody whos there for you when you need them. A shoulder to cry on. A friend is someone who sticks up with you plays with you everyday. Reliable, can be anything alive, i.e. pet, person; someone who cares, looks after you, does exciting things with you, enjoys the same things as you. A friend is a person who you can talk to and listen, and won't laugh or tell anyone about it. A friend is a person you can rely on. A friend helps you, play with each other, sharing, lend you money, you go places together, trust. What is a friend? Someone who likes me. A person who keeps a promise. Backs me up. A friend is someone who stands by you and stands up for you. They cheer you up when you're down and [are] honest. What is a friend? Person, animal, someone who

| | stands by you. Animals can be friends because they can't tell anyone your secrets.

Someone to share your feelings, someone who cares, someone who is there for you, someone who is reliable, someone who can keep your secrets, someone who will help you when you are in need, someone you can trust. |
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