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Young women’s (im)mobilities: A qualitative study in Inverness, Scotland

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Lay Summary

By physically moving in and through their communities everyday (be it on foot, by car, or on public transportation) young women often build and maintain social connections and develop bonds to the place they live. Yet, young women’s movements are not based on their personal preferences alone. Instead, their movements are shaped by their families, by culture, as well as by more abstract factors like laws and policies. Although the factors affecting young women’s movements are wide-ranging, many are influenced by gender and gender inequalities, often in hidden and unexpected ways. More research is needed exploring how gender affects young women’s physical movements and experiences in the public realm at different levels of analysis, particularly in the context of a small city. My research does this, and sheds light on how gender and gender inequality influence young women’s everyday movements. The aim of my research is to explore the everyday movements and journeys of young women in Inverness, Scotland and the implications these have for their access to, and involvement in, the public realm.

Historically, adult males have dominated social science research (both as researchers and participants). My research seeks to add a different perspective to the record by including and involving young women in the research process. To do this, I conducted qualitative research, including participatory techniques and semi-structured interviews, over an eight-month period (October 2018 to May 2019) in three neighbourhoods in Inverness, Scotland. These neighbourhoods are characterised by high rates of poverty, unemployment and crime. The neighbourhoods were selected because, due to their locations, young women used a variety of different forms of transportation to move around, including walking, cars, and public transportation. In total, 41 participants took part in the research. This included 12 young women between the ages of 13-17, five parents/carer, 17 key adults, and seven policy professionals. The age range for the young women was chosen because teenagers often have more freedom of movement without an accompanying adult than younger children. Moreover, other
research shows concern for young women’s movements compared to young men’s increases after puberty. Ethical best practices were carefully considered throughout the research process.

In the three findings chapters, I critically discuss the factors affecting young women’s physical movements and journeys in the public realm. These factors include their social identities, socio-cultural context, self-imposed and parental regulations, transportation policy and infrastructure and other inequalities, all of which have gender dimensions. Moreover, young women’s movements are related to their social connections, and spending time with friends while moving around the public realm often strengthens the relationship and allows them to travel farther. Young women are all different and have varying degrees of access to the public realm and use it for different social reasons. Sharing space with others of different ages and genders, at times, is challenging as they may have different ideas about what is and is not acceptable behaviour. Additionally, young women’s movements and their use of the public realm are shaped by where they live, including the specific characteristics of their neighbourhoods. In this research, the negative reputation attached to the neighbourhoods where young women lived influenced where they wanted to go, and were allowed to go, their feelings of belonging there and their aspirations.

By exploring young women’s physical movements in the public realm, as well as the meanings they and others gave to them, this research draws attention to the all too often hidden influence of gender. The findings contribute to academic literature by highlighting how gender influences young women’s physical movement in the public realm at multiple levels of analysis. The findings also provide insight into the lives of young women in Inverness, a city which is not often researched. This research has implications for transportation policy, urban planning/design and youth work. Young women are overlooked in transportation design, services, and policies in Scotland. The transportation sector would benefit from imbedding gender sensitive policies and programmes into their activities. Those responsible for urban
planning and design should also consider generational differences in how people use and move through space, and young women’s needs should be intentionally considered. The youth work sector would also benefit from paying attention to young women’s desire to have spaces to call their own. By focusing on the experiences and needs of young women, we can work to create more inclusive and effective local services and policies to support and value young women in Scotland and beyond.
Abstract

Through their everyday mobilities, young women forge and maintain social connections and often develop a sense of place belonging where they reside. Yet, young women’s mobilities are not solely a product of personal preference. Instead, they are influenced, and often curtailed, by familial, cultural and structural factors. These factors are wide-ranging and have complex gender dimensions. There is, however, a paucity of research examining how gender affects young women’s (im)mobilities and experiences of the public realm at different levels of analysis (i.e., individual, interactional and macro), particularly in the context of a small urban area. This research addresses this gap, and sheds light on the pervasive effects of gender and gender inequality on young women’s (im)mobilities. The aim of my research is thus to explore the everyday (im)mobilities of young women in Inverness, Scotland and the implications these have for their access to, and involvement in, the public realm.

My research seeks to disrupt the historically adult male versions and narratives of social life in social science literature by meaningfully focusing on and including young women in the research process. To do this, I utilised a combination of qualitative methods, including participatory techniques and semi-structured interviews with 41 participants. The data were collected over an eight-month period (October 2018 to May 2019) in a cluster of three residential neighbourhoods in Inverness, Scotland. These neighbourhoods have a mixed demographic profile and experience several challenges including high rates of poverty, unemployment and crime. The neighbourhoods were selected because, due to their location, young women used a variety of different forms of transportation to move around including walking, cars and public transportation. The research was conducted with four participant groups including 12 young women between the ages of 13-17, five parents/carers, 17 key adults and seven policy professionals. The age range for the young women is justifiable because adolescents often have
more freedom of movement without an accompanying adult than younger children. Moreover, existing empirical evidence shows concern for young women’s mobilities compared to young men’s increases during adolescence. Ethical best practices were carefully considered throughout the research process.

The three findings chapters explore several key themes. These themes include gender, (im)mobilities, space and place, place belonging and place-based stigma (territorial stigmatisation). In the findings chapters, I critically discuss the complex factors that constrain and enable young women’s mobilities. I argue that young women’s (im)mobilities are not simply a product of personal preference, but are influenced by intersecting social identities, environmental variables, self-imposed and parental regulations, transportation policy and infrastructure, and systemic inequalities, all of which have gender dimensions. Moreover, young women’s mobilities are interrelated with their social connections, and spending time with friends ‘on the move’ can both strengthen relationships, and at the same time, extend their mobilities. However, young women have varying degrees of access to the public realm and use it for different social purposes. The politics of sharing space with others also, at times, creates tensions as different generations and genders may have alternative understandings of acceptable spatial practices. Lastly, young women’s mobilities and subsequently their access to, and involvement in, the public realm are highly contextual, and shaped by where they live. In this research, the negative reputation attached to the neighbourhoods in the field site had implications for where young women wanted to go, where they were allowed to go, their sense of place belonging and their aspirations.

By exploring young women’s movements in the public realm, as well as the meanings they and others give to their mobilities, this research lays bare the all too often hidden influence of gender. The findings conceptually contribute to literature on young people’s mobilities by highlighting how gender influences (im)mobilities at multiple levels of analysis. The findings
also provide insight into the lives of young women in Inverness, a city which receives little research attention. This research moreover has implications for transportation policy, urban planning/design and youth work. Young women are overlooked in transportation design, services and policies in Scotland. The transportation sector would benefit from imbedding gender sensitive policies and programmes into their current and future activities. Those responsible for urban planning and design should also consider generational differences in social and spatial practices and take young women’s needs into account. The youth work sector would also benefit from considering young women’s desire to have a space to call their own. By focusing on the experiences and needs of young women new knowledge will emerge to inform more inclusive and effective local services and policies to support and value young women in Scotland and beyond.
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Abbreviations
EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulations

HIE – Highlands and Islands Enterprise

HITRANS – Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership

KAI – Key adult interview

NHS – National Health Service


PC – Politically correct

PCI – Parent/carer interview

PPI – Policy professional interview

STEM – Science, technology, engineering and maths

UNCRC – The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child

W – Workshop

YWI – Young woman interview
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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

The aim of this research is to explore the everyday (im)mobilities of young women in Inverness and the implications these have for their access to, and involvement in, the public realm. Mobilities research is concerned with the movement of people (also, things, values and ideas) at different scales, people’s various experiences, and the meanings they and others attribute to these movements (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2006; Adey, 2010). Where young women physically go in the public realm, how they get there, and the meanings that they and others ascribe to their movements are all profoundly influenced by their age, gender and other social identities (Christensen and Cortes-Morales, 2017; Uteng and Cresswell, 2008; Barker et al., 2009). In fact, empirical research gives evidence to gender differences in children and young people’s (im)mobilities and spatial practices in the public realm (Brown et al., 2008; Prezza et al., 2001; Tucker and Matthews, 2001). However, when young women’s day-to-day physical mobilities in the public realm are researched, gender is rarely conceptualised as a force affecting their mobilities at the individual, interpersonal and macro levels of analysis.

My research will add to a small but growing body of work on young women’s (im)mobilities in the public realm and beyond (see, Skelton, 2000; Christensen and Mikkelsen, 2013; Rodó-de-Zárate, 2013; van Blerk, 2016). Young women’s mobilities matter because by moving through the public realm, young women may grow and strengthen their social connections and develop a sense of place belonging where they live (Skelton and Gough, 2013b; Fallov, Jørgensen and Knudsen, 2013). My research therefore seeks to uncover the complex, and often gendered factors influencing young women’s (im)mobilities at different scales.

I came to this research topic through personal experience. For nearly a decade, I have worked with youth organisations in different parts of the
world, and it has been my privilege to get to know many incredible young women through their involvement in youth work activities. During this time, I witnessed the way that gender and its corresponding inequalities, stereotypes, and norms often disadvantaged young women by curtailing their physical movements and limiting their spatial practices in the public realm. I saw this first-hand in Armenia, where I worked for two years in the community and youth development sector. The strict gender norms governing daily life in the small post-Soviet town where I lived meant young women were not supposed to walk alone after dark, drive cars, or sit in the front of taxis, all of which affected when and where they went, the modes of transportation they used, and their reputations. As a young, female, foreign youth worker, I too contended with these constraints on my movements.

The pervasive influence of gender on young women’s mobilities and spatial practices is also present in the UK. Young women in the UK face “gender stereotyping, gender-based violence, violations of their rights as girls, pernicious sexualisation and often amorphous discrimination” (Alsop and Clispy, 2019, p.855). In 2016, I moved to Scotland and began volunteering at a local youth club. On the surface, the gendered barriers to young women’s mobilities were less overt in the Scottish context; however, I still witnessed their effects. The youth club drew young people from across Edinburgh and many travelled in groups, by bus, or on their bikes to get there. One young woman travelled on the bus every week with an adult youth worker. When the youth worker moved away, this young woman stopped attending the club regularly because she did not want to take the bus on her own after 9pm when the club finished due to safety concerns.

Young women’s access and ability to move through their communities varies “according to cultural, socio-economic and environmental conditions” (Porter et al., 2017, p.43). Although these examples each played out in different socio-cultural contexts, both illustrate the pervasive influence that gender has on young women’s (im)mobilities and their access to, and involvement in, the public realm. Unfortunately, they were not isolated
incidents, and in combination with my own personal experiences of self-regulating my movements and carefully planning journeys based on concern for my personal safety, or in deference to local gender norms, I was motivated to expose the way in which gender shapes young women’s (im)mobilities and spatial practices by making this the central topic of my PhD thesis.

1.2 The scope of the study

The aim of my research was to explore the everyday (im)mobilities of young women in Inverness and the implications these have for their involvement in, and access to the public realm. In the pursuit of this research aim, I thus sought to address the following questions:

1. What factors limit young women’s mobilities, and what factors encourage young women’s mobilities?
2. If and how are young women’s social connections related to their (im)mobilities?
3. Where do young women meet [everyday and exceptionally] and how do they get there?
4. What are young women’s perceptions of these spaces and journeys, and their access to them?

To answer the research questions, I undertook qualitative research in Inverness, Scotland for eight months from October 2018 – May 2019 (see Chapter 3). The decision of where to conduct research was particularly important given the centrality of place, space and mobilities to the research. There is evidence to suggest that “the physical characteristics of a ‘place’ can influence children’s [and young people’s] interactions in and access to the public realm” (O’Brien et al., 2000, p.274). I conducted research in Inverness because, while research exists exploring young people’s (im)mobilities and spatial practices within large British cities (see, Leonard, 2010; Adekunle, 2017; O’Brien et al., 2000; Clark, 2015; Elsley, 2004; Travlou et al., 2008) and rural areas (see, Skelton, 2000; Tucker and Matthews, 2001), there is little academic research with young people in Inverness, a small city in the Highlands, which is a large rural area. There is
some grey literature focusing on the aspirations and opportunities of young people in the Scottish Highlands and Islands (see, HIE, 2015; HIE, 2018); however, there is a little academic social science research focusing on Inverness (with some exceptions, see Lloyd and Peel, 2007; Salnikova and D’Arcus, 2019). My research addresses this gap and spotlights social life in Inverness. Within Inverness I narrowed down the field site to focus on three residential neighbourhoods. The area was selected because, due to its proximity to the city centre, young women who lived in, attended secondary school and/or extracurricular activities in these neighbourhoods used a variety of different modes of transportation, including walking, cars and public transportation to get around. This allowed for the analysis of a variety of mobility experiences to address the research aim and questions.

I used a combination of semi-structured interviews and participatory techniques to collect data with 41 participants from four different participant groups, including 12 young women, five parents/carers, 17 key adults and seven policy professionals. Including different participant groups was beneficial as it provided various perspectives on the research questions, which together, revealed the complex and often interwoven individual, interpersonal and macro level factors influencing young women’s (im)mobilities. Participants were selected using a non-probability purposive sampling approach with additional snowball sampling (Robinson, 2014). I invited young women to participate in the research with the help of five gatekeepers from educational, youth and community organisations. Young women’s wellbeing was of the utmost concern throughout the research process and ethical requirements and best practices were followed throughout. I moreover sought to take a reflexive approach throughout the research by considering how my own positioning as the researcher influenced the research process and outcomes.

It should be noted that my research has evolved significantly since its inception, as so many PhD projects do. At the beginning of my PhD journey, I intended to include young women migrants and refugees as participants in
my research. However, I changed my research direction due to ethical and practical constraints surrounding the cost of translation and advice from key gatekeepers surrounding the vulnerability of this group. As I made connections with possible gatekeepers, I found that in many parts of Scotland refugees and the agencies supporting them were dealing with ‘research fatigue’. One gatekeeper explained that the refugee clients they work with had taken part in 15 separate research projects in just one year. It was ethically important to me to avoid perpetuating this problem. I thus pivoted the research to focus on a diverse group of young women’s (im)mobilities and their experiences in the public realm.

In response to this, it was theoretically prudent to adjust my research aim accordingly. The research aim approved following my first-year board paper was to explore the everyday (im)mobilities of young women in Inverness and the implications these have for social integration. Social integration is a concept fitting for research including migrants and refugees as research participants but was far less conceptually relevant after the research focus shifted. In fact, by not focusing on social integration I was able to look in-depth at other more salient and applicable concepts which arose empirically.

The following section specifies the definitions of key terms that I will use throughout this thesis.

1.3 Definitions of terms

This section defines several key terms frequently used in this thesis. More in-depth conceptual discussions of some of these terms are carried through into the literature review (see Chapter 2).

In this thesis, ‘children’ refers to anyone under the age of 18 (UN General Assembly, 1989) and ‘childhood’ refers to the stage of life prior to 18. I use ‘young people’ to specifically refer to the older end of this age range (namely, those 13 and older). Additionally, the 13 to 17-year-old participants in the research preferred the descriptor ‘young people’ over ‘children’ when
referring to themselves and their peers. I also occasionally use the term adolescents when it arose in the literature to refer specifically to children who have entered puberty. ‘Young people’ is not gender specific, so I use the term ‘young women’ to refer specifically to young people who identified as female, ‘young men’ to refer to young people who identified as male, and ‘non-binary young people’ to refer to young people who identified outside of the gender binary. The term ‘young women’ is used in preference to the term ‘girls’ to indicate the older end of childhood. The exception to this was when ‘girls’ was used in the literature or by participants.

‘Everyday’ in this research refers to “the routine, repetitive taken-for-granted experiences, beliefs and practices” (Featherstone, 2000, p.55) that happen day-to-day. However, the ‘everyday’ is more than simply “a site where individuals are socialised and social practices are reproduced” (Davidson, 2014, para.3). It is also “a space where norms and values are interpreted, navigated and potentially challenged” (Davidson, 2014, para.3). Like most concepts in the social sciences, the definition of ‘everyday’ is contested, debated and problematised (for an overview of debates see, Jacobsen, 2009). It is important to note the variation in lived experiences the term ‘everyday’ obscures, as what constitutes the ‘everyday’ for one individual may differ vastly according to factors such as social identities and socio-cultural context. Additionally, the ‘everyday’ connotes “life in homes, neighbourhoods and communities” (Dyck, 2005, p.234) and this research focuses on the latter two. An ‘everyday’ focus does not confine the research to the ‘local’, but according to Dyck (2005), our everyday lives shape and are shaped by wider social-cultural and economic forces and contribute to “opening up understanding of processes operating at regional, national and global scales” (p.243). Starting with the mundane and the ordinary, the ‘everyday’ focus of this research acts as a launching off point for considering how daily life intersects and interacts with larger scale factors (Jacobsen, 2009).
This research focused on three neighbourhoods: Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood (these are pseudonyms, see Chapter 3). The term neighbourhood may “refer to the few streets that border your house” or, alternatively, to “a particular locality such as an estate, that side of town, or that part of the city” (Henderson, 2007, p.126). In this research, neighbourhood is used to refer to “an urban area dominated by residential uses” (Gregory and Herod, 2010, p.494). Research participants often referred to the geographical area that they lived (Thistlevale, Bellford or Myrtlewood) as ‘communities’. The use of the word communities was not a comment on the social nature of the area but referred to a geographical area. Conversely, in academia, between the terms ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘community’, the term “neighbourhood is the more explicitly territorial concept of the two” (Gregory and Herod, 2010, p.494). I use both terms in deference to local vernacular to refer to Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood. When referring to more than one of these neighbourhoods which are located next to each other, I use the term ‘area’ as a broader descriptor.

Whereas the terms ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘community’ are used to connote specific residential areas, ‘public realm’ is used in this research more expansively. The term ‘public realm’ in this thesis refers to “all aspects of society and the social world that are not exclusively private (e.g., private property, private life)” (Neal, 2010, p.624). Alternatively, Sennett (2017) defines the public realm as “a place where strangers meet” (p.585); this definition is compatible with Neal’s (2010) as interactions with strangers are far more likely in non-domestic spaces. Yet, Sennett’s (2017) definition goes beyond Neal’s (2010) definition by introducing a social component. Loftland (1998) similarly defines the public realm as “the unique social and psychological environment provided by urban settlements” (p.xiii). Within both Loftland’s (1998) and Sennett’s (2017) definitions of the public realm the social aspect of the environment is key. The term ‘public realm’ thus contains spatial and social elements.
I arrived at this research topic through a research interest in young women’s physical mobilities and I chose the term ‘public realm’ to encompass the spaces and places in and through which they move when they are not at home or attending school. Although the public realm is often broadly defined to include both physical and virtual spaces which young people may simultaneously occupy, for the purposes of this research, I predominantly focus on the physical spaces that young women interact. However, I also acknowledge that young people’s virtual and physical worlds cannot be entirely separated as they often participate in both simultaneously (Arends and Hordijk, 2016). Focusing specifically on young women’s physical presence in physical space allowed for a more in-depth exploration and analysis therein. However, some reference is made to virtual communication, spaces and places where relevant.

In this thesis, I do not use ‘public realm’ as a synonym for ‘public space’. ‘Public space’ (a distinctly spatial concept) includes anywhere “public life […] play[s] out” (Neal, 2010, p.624) whereas ‘public realm’ additionally includes a social element and is concerned with non-private spaces as “location[s] of everyday interactions where identities and shared meanings are constructed” (Neal, 2010, p.624). Moreover, in other academic disciplines the public realm is operationalised to include political and economic processes. In my research, however, I focus on the social and spatial facets of the public realm (Neal, 2010).

It also should be noted that the ‘public realm’ is increasingly recognised as not purely public, but semi-private, and commercial, but nonetheless accessible (Kato, 2009; Loftland, 1998). What is or is not included in the public realm is debatable, but for the purposes of this research, public realm is defined as including traditional ‘public’ spaces outside of the private sphere of home such as green spaces, the city centre and semi-private and commercial spaces the public has free, albeit varying degrees of access to, such as community centres, fast-food restaurants and shopping centres. It is also necessary to keep in mind implicit exclusions,
such as a lack of disposable income and structural constraints, like limited opening hours, for example, as is the case with shopping malls and community centres (Navickas, 2019). Schools, however, are not included in my conceptualisation of the public realm as they are not accessible to the ‘public’ in the same way that the aforementioned spaces are. In the UK, access to schools is predicated on being a young person or employee of the school, having an appointment or event to attend, or being a parent/carer with reason to be there (UK Government, 2018).

This section defined several key terms central to my research. In the remainder of this chapter, I provide a roadmap for my thesis.

1.4 Thesis outline

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature surrounding several key concepts. These concepts include gender, mobilities, space, place, place belonging and territorial stigmatisation. Throughout the chapter, I identify gaps in the literature and the way in which my research seeks to fill these gaps. In Chapter 3, I outline and justify how and why I designed, adapted and conducted the research the way I did. In Chapter 3, I firstly situate the research with an explanation of the epistemological approach I took. I then provide an overview of the research context and then justify and explain my sampling strategy. Next, I present and justify the qualitative methods I used before detailing the data management and analysis strategies I employed. I then present an explanation of how I considered ethics and reflexivity throughout the research process.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6 I present and discuss my research findings. Chapter 4 considers the ways in which gender, in combination with other intersecting social identities, influences young women’s (im)mobilities. This chapter addresses all four of the research questions and includes critical consideration of how and by whom young women’s mobilities are regulated, and how these regulations are negotiated by young women. The chapter
furthermore identifies the modes of transportation young women use, and if and how gender influences their decisions and experiences of travel. The final section identifies how gendered personal, environmental and structural factors affect young women’s (im)mobilities.

Chapter 5 addresses research questions two, three and four, and identifies where young women spend time together in the public realm, and for what purposes. Central to this chapter is a critical analysis of why young women chose to frequent certain spaces more than others. This chapter moreover includes a discussion of the intergenerational politics of sharing space including adult responses to young people in the public realm. The chapter also identifies the visible and invisible spatial constraints which influence young women’s access to and use of the public realm.

Chapter 6 centres on how young women’s (im)mobilities and their use of the public realm are highly contextual. Their (im)mobilities are influenced not only by the socio-cultural context of their city, but also at a smaller scale, by the distinct socio-spatial characteristics of their neighbourhoods. This chapter focuses on the concept of territorial stigmatisation, that is, stigma experienced by people because of the place where they live, which arose empirically from the data. This chapter addresses research questions one, two and four, and critically explores how territorial stigmatisation interacts with other forms of stigma such as stigma based on class and ethnicity to influence young women’s (im)mobilities. The chapter also includes young women’s and their parents’/carers’ perceptions of the place they live and the implications these perceptions have on young women’s (im)mobilities, spatial practices and sense of place belonging. The chapter then chronicles how, in this context, social connections, especially with family, facilitates strong ties to place which may further affect mobilities in young women’s day-to-day lives, and in the future. This chapter furthermore considers how place-based stigma is (re)produced, at times, through (im)mobilities.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis and provides a succinct overview of how the research findings answered each research question. It then outlines
the implications that my PhD thesis has for academic literature, policy and practice and future research.
Chapter 2 Literature review

There is a paucity of research considering how gender affects young women’s (im)mobilities and experiences of the public realm at different levels of analysis (individual, interactional and macro). In this chapter, I review literature pertaining to young women’s access to, and involvement in, the public realm. Gender, and the inequalities, meanings, expectations and norms associated with it, is an ongoing theme throughout this chapter, and across my thesis more broadly. Therefore, I firstly present Risman’s theory of gender as a social structure which both builds on, and helps frame, a plethora of disparate gender theories (Risman, 2018a, 2018b). This framing is useful as it clarifies how gender affects the lives of young women at different levels of analysis, and how gender, conceptualised as a social construct, relates to, and is influenced by, the female body.

In the remainder of the chapter, I provide a review of the literature surrounding the following key concepts: gender, mobilities, space and place, place belonging and territorial stigmatisation. These concepts are inextricably linked as young women experience the public realm by moving through it (mobilities) and finding niches within it to call their own (space/place). Spending time in and moving around their communities furthermore contributes to fostering a sense of place belonging, even in neighbourhoods with negative reputations. All of the above are affected by the ever-present influence of gender.

In the section on mobilities, I consider several key conceptualisations and review literature located in two subsets of mobilities research, that is, young people’s mobilities, and gendered mobilities. In the next section, I consider the distinction between definitions of space and place and review the literature which focuses on young people’s access to, and use of, the public realm. I end the section by pivoting to consider how young people
forge a sense of place belonging. Lastly, I consider the conceptual
development of territorial stigmatisation.

Throughout the chapter, I take concepts that sit like silos across
disciplines and bring them together to construct a more holistic picture of
young women’s lived experiences, with specific attention paid to their access
to and involvement in the public realm. This chapter is grounded in children’s
geographies, feminist geographies, with considerable overlap from sociology
and social policy. The literature reviewed was chosen on the basis of its
thematic applicability and priority was given to studies geographically based
in the UK. Studies from other parts of the Minority World such as Australia,
Scandinavia and the United States were also included as they added useful
empirical insights with occasional reference to research in the Majority World
where applicable. Minority World here refers to what has previously been
called the ‘First World’ or ‘Global North’, while Majority World refers to what is
sometimes called the ‘Third World’ or ‘Global South’. Majority/Minority World
are used instead because, though they “unduly homogenize both world
regions, their use at least invites reflection on the unequal relations between
them”, recognising that “Third World children are the majority of the world’s
child population” (Punch, 2003, p.278). Consideration was also given to the
age and gender of participants in reviewed literature, with particular attention
paid to research including young women between the ages of 13-17 (the
same age range as my research participants), although, some studies with a
broader range of age and genders were included where pertinent.

What this literature review does, and what my research does
generally, is bring young people to the forefront of academic research to
counteract the “long-standing tendency within the social sciences to
marginalize children and young people within urban study scholarship”
(Skelton and Gough, 2013; Nairn and Kraftl, 2015, p.14) and social policy
design (Kosher, Ben-Arie and Hendelsman, 2017). Specifically, I do this
through foregrounding the diverse experiences of young women, who are not
often the focus of social policy research. By researching the implications
young women’s (im)mobilities have on their access to, and involvement in the public realm, new knowledge will emerge to inform more inclusive and effective local services and policies to support them.

2.1 Gender

The vast literature and debate on the subject of gender, both within and outside of academia, are indicative of its prevailing influence in the lives of people around the world. This section presents gender as a “multidimensional structure of inequality, with forces co/operating at the individual, interactional, and macro levels” (Scarborough, 2018, p.4; also see, Connell, 1987; Lorber, 1994 for similar early feminist framings). This framing is a helpful way of mapping the influence of gender in the lives of young women.

In this section, I first consider one of the core tenants of gender theories, that is, gender as a social construct. Next, I consider another key debate within gender studies, the importance of bodies. Following this, I justify my research focus on young women. I then present gender as a multidimensional social structure (Risman, 2018a) and argue that it is a helpful way of conceptualising the pervasive and multi-scalar influence of gender on the lives of young women.

2.1.1 Conceptualising gender

Modern understandings of gender in the social sciences assert that gender is “actively under construction” (Connell and Pearse, 2015, p.15) by individuals and their familial, social and cultural contexts, as well as structural influences (Risman, 2018a). The idea that gender is a social construct rather than a biological state (for a biological argument see, Udry, 2000) was notably written about by West and Zimmerman (1987) in their seminal piece Doing Gender (though they were not the first, or the only theorists to do so – see, for example Beauvoir, 2015). West and Zimmerman (1987) refer to a “situated doing” (p.126) of gender, that is “fundamentally interactional and institutional in character” (p.137). However, Risman (2018a) asserts that the
now classic work by West and Zimmerman would, if written today, be more accurately titled “Doing Genders” because contemporary understandings of gender have evolved to suggest that “gender cannot be understood with one version of masculinity and femininity” (p.26). Instead, multiple, contradictory, and rebellious ways of doing gender[s] have emerged into the mainstream, particularly amongst young people (Risman, 2018a; Nayak and Kehily, 2013).

West and Zimmerman’s (1987) central thesis, apart from recognising the individual’s role in constructing gender asserts that gender is a product of social interaction (for more on the effects of gender at the individual level see: England, 2010; Castañeda and Pfeffer, 2018). Through interactions with others, culturally specific standards of appropriate behaviour for men and women are normalised and upheld (for more on how social interactions shape gender inequalities see, Ridgeway, 2011). Scarborough and Risman, (2020) assert that one of the main strengths of conceptualising gender as ‘doing gender’, is that it reveals the “nuanced and subtle ways that gender is reproduced in interactional exchanges” (p.54); however, it falls short in that it “is limited in its ability to conceptualize change” (p.54) and chart how gender is ‘undone’ by individuals who express femininities and masculinities differently.

In recent years, research on gender has quickly evolved (Scarborough, 2018). In the past, scholars within the social sciences writing about gender made a clear distinction between sex and gender with ‘sex’ used to refer to the body and ‘gender’ used to refer to the culturally informed outworking of ‘sex’ (Risman, 2017). There was a general consensus that fundamental reproductive and physiological differences exist between male and female human beings as the majority are born with either female or male sexual organs (although there are exceptions, for example, those born with both male and female genitalia) (Connell and Pearse, 2015). The significance, extent, or indeed the relevance of these differences are all now
hotly debated in academic scholarship (Roberts, 2000; Connell and Pearse, 2015; Castañeda and Pfeffer, 2018).

Bodies, and the way in which societies and cultures handle their potential for reproduction, pleasure and pain, is an important field of theoretical inquiry (Connell and Pearse, 2015), and a key area of research within childhood and youth studies (see, Coffey and Watson, 2014; Kehily, 2014). To discount biological differences entirely is to ignore the socially significant meaning of bodies (Connell and Pearse, 2015). It is not possible to disentangle the body and social practice, for “bodies are both objects of social practice and agents in social practice” (Connell and Pearse, 2015, p.48), and separating the two would only paint a partial picture. For example, some research shows that young women’s “bodies are sexualized by the male gaze in public spaces” (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2013, p.414) which impacts their experiences there (see, Hyams, 2003). This example illustrates that the female body cannot be ignored in research considering young women’s experiences in the public realm.

Queer theorists present an alternative approach to gender, namely, by challenging the use of binary gender categories altogether and problematising heteronormativity (Warner, 1991; Butler, 2006, 2014). Feminist Judith Butler’s (1988, 2006, 2014) philosophical work on gender was instrumental in the development of queer theory and introduced gender performativity. Butler argues that gender is created through a series of acts and gender identity is fundamentally unstable (Butler, 2006). Gender, accordingly, “is real only to the extent that it is performed” (Butler, 1988, p.527). This is a controversial claim as it implies that being a sex or a gender is impossible as it is only while it is performed that gender exists (Butler, 2006). Many take issue with Butler’s work, notably, Martha Nussbaum (2012) who argues it is divorced from real world social issues such as domestic violence.

Yet, queer theorists’ challenge to the binary construction of gender does not negate the need for research exploring the diverse lived
experiences of cisgender (gender identity matches assigned sex at birth) young women. In fact, interest in understanding the lived experiences of cisgender young women is evidenced by the continued publication of research spotlighting their lives in the UK and beyond (see, for example, Beddoe and Brotherton, 2016; Russell et al., 2016; Formark, Mulari and Voipio, 2017b; Alsop and Clispy, 2019; Marcus, 2019; Girlguiding Scotland, 2020). The prevailing interest in young women’s lives is unsurprising because for many, their gender identity as ‘girl/woman’ is important to them. Moreover, there is a continued need for research with young women because the activities and attributes associated with girlhood historically, and still are, devalued and discredited in society today (England, 2010). Furthermore, women of all ages continue to face discrimination and exclusion on the basis of gender and other intersecting social identities (England, 2010; Ridgeway, 2011), as well as sexualisation, objectification and control (Mason, 2018).

There is still much that is unknown “about the gendered processes and politics of being and becoming a […] girl” (Formark, Mulari and Voipio, 2017a, p.2). Rather than dismantling gender, the utopian goal of some gender scholars (Risman, 2018b), I argue there is still a need to consider its influence and importance in the lives of young women. This research therefore asserts that, while gender is socially constructed, often subverted, and reinvented, it is not obsolete. Moreover, while contentious and much debated, “binary thinking about gender continues to shape all facets of our social life” (Scarborough, 2018, p.20) and therefore more research is needed to understand why this is. This research recognises that some young people do identify with genders outside of the binary, and the experiences of gender non-conforming individuals are an important research area. However, in this research participants self-identified as female and referred to themselves as “she/her”, “girls” and “young women”. I therefore did not explore alternative genders in-depth as they did not arise empirically.

The recognition that there is a distinction between sex and gender does not negate the influence of one on the other, nor does the
acknowledgment of gender identities beyond the binary nullify the importance of research with cisgender young women. Research investigating gender must consider the biological, sociological and psychological factors impacting how gender is outworked. It is therefore necessary to look holistically at the concept of gender and consider its complex and dynamic influence on creating and sustaining difference and inequalities. To do this, I will now turn to sociologist Barbara Risman, whose conceptualisation of gender as a multidimensional social structure seeks to organise, and make sense of, how existing gender theories fit together. In so doing, she creates a meta-framework which informs the way I conceptualise gender in this research.

2.1.2 Gender as a social structure

Risman (2004, 2018a, 2018b) provides a meta-framework which conceptualises existing theories of gender not as mutually exclusive, but as parts of a larger whole. Through recognising the contributions of structuralist approaches (Kanter, 1977); a ‘doing gender’ approach (West and Zimmerman, 1987); intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2011); cultural logics (Acker, 2006); status expectations/gender stereotypes (Ridgeway, 2011); and queer theory (Butler, 2006), among others, Risman treats the multiplicity of gender theories as small pieces in a larger puzzle. By organising the pieces, the picture of how gender influences young women’s daily lives is revealed.

Risman (2018a, 2018b) asserts that gender is a structure of inequality operating at the individual, interactional and macro levels of analysis, which are not static, but influence and inform one another (Scarborough, 2018). This way of theorising gender is not original to Risman, as feminist authors have long considered the effects of gender inequalities at different levels of analysis (see, Connell, 1987; Lorber, 1994). Risman borrowed from, and built on, these ideas and rearticulated them. Risman’s framing of gender has grown in popularity and is the backbone of the latest edition of the Handbook of the Sociology of Gender, which features sections organised on the basis of the ‘individual’, ‘interactional’ and ‘macro’ levels at which gender inequalities play out (Risman, Froyum and Scarborough, 2018). Breaking down complex
concepts by level, or scale, is not novel within the social sciences and is widespread in human geography (Hopkins, 2015). It is, moreover, a particularly useful tool for conceptualising the complex ways that gender inequalities influence young women’s lives.

The aim of this section is to theoretically orient the reader in the vast sea of gender theories (see, for example: Kanter, 1977 and Epstein, 1988 for structuralist perspectives; West and Zimmerman, 1987 for a seminal symbolic interactionist perspective; Martineau, 1837 for early work on gender-conflict theory; Beauvoir, 2015 and hooks, 1983 for key feminist texts; Crenshaw, 1989 on intersectionality; and Sedgwick, 2008 and Butler, 2006 for a queer theory perspective) through the presentation of a unifying framework (Risman, 2018a). Gender as a social structure is useful because it synthesises “a diverse array of gender theories rather than rejecting some explanations in favor of others” (Scarborough, 2018, p.5). The focus is, therefore, not on the one explanatory gender theory, but in redirecting researchers to, instead, look at the “relationship between social forces taking place at various levels of society” (Scarborough, 2018, p.5). This approach to gender, however, risks being overly ambitious in its attempt to be ‘all things to all people’ – glossing over historic and current incompatibilities and clashes between key gender theories.

Prefacing this critique, Risman (2018b), borrowing language from Collins (2000), argues for a ‘both/and’ approach to gender theories rather than an either/or decision between them. The cumulative work over the years within sociology and other disciplines on gender theory is, according to Risman, a case study illustrating the scientific method. Risman (2018b) writes:

When empirical research did not support theoretical explanations, those explanations were revised, contextualized, and sometimes discarded. New theories emerged (p.7).
Risman (2018b) traces the theoretical development of gender in her book *Where the Millennials Will Take Us: A New Generation Wrestles with the Gender Structure*. However, while thorough, her review is confined to one chapter and is understandably limited in its ability to engage with every debate. Therefore, she does not consider in-depth critiques and theoretical schisms between each gender theory (for a more expansive overview of gender theories and debates see, Beasley, 2005).

For example, Risman (2018b) highlights that West and Zimmerman’s (1987) ‘doing gender’ approach is similar to Butler’s theory of gender performativity. She then points out a difference between the two, namely, Butler conceptualises the ‘self’ as imaginary while West and Zimmerman see the ‘self’ as socially constructed. However, Risman does not problematise or interrogate this ontological difference, but instead, simply states that Butler’s work builds on West and Zimmerman’s (Risman, 2018b). Although this may be true, what constitutes ‘self’ and, in turn, ‘gender’ is hotly debated by transgender, queer and feminist theorists, among others, who variously attribute “gender and sexual embodiment to nature and to psychosocial factors” (Elliot, 2010, p.3). Therefore, while Risman’s work helps us conceptualise how different gender theories relate to each other at different levels of analysis, it does not seek to solve the nuanced debates within and between them. That said, the strengths of utilising Risman’s framework as a tool to conceptualise gender in this thesis far outweigh its limitations as it is only through an integrative theory of gender that takes into account the individual, interactional and macro levels of analysis that a more complete picture of how gender inequality influences young women’s lives will emerge.

At each level of society, Risman differentiates between cultural and material processes. She defines cultural processes as “ideological processes, meanings given to bodies and the norms for social interaction and widely shared ideologies” (Risman, 2018a, p.31) whereas material processes “include our bodies and the legal rules that distribute physical rewards and constraints in any given historical moment” (Risman, 2018a, p.31). Risman
defines the individual level of gender analysis as including "socialization, the internalization of gendered identities, and the role of physical bodies in sustaining gender difference and inequality" (Scarborough, 2018, p.5). Across disciplines, researchers have paid particular attention to how children and young people learn, express, and construct their gender identities (see: Thorne, 1993; Castañeda and Pfeffer, 2018; Perry, Pauletti and Cooper, 2019). The extent to which gender is biologically determined and/or socially constructed, and the role of children in these processes are much debated (for an overview of several theories see, Wood, 2013).

The interactional level considers the effects of gendered expectations and biases on social interactions (Risman, 2018a). These expectations and biases come from multiple sources, including parents, peers and wider social networks. Research exploring young people and gender at the interactional level of analysis is wide-ranging, including studies focused on how peer relationships reproduce and, at times, transform gender (Hollingworth, 2015). For example, there is a growing body of literature considering young people’s gender practices, including their masculinities and femininities (see, for example, Nayak, 2006; Nayak and Kehily, 2013; Francombe-Webb and Silk, 2016). These studies focus mainly on how young people ‘do’ and, in fact, ‘undo’ gender in various socio-cultural contexts and evidence the “importance of gender as a conceptual category for understanding the organization and interpretation of human relationships” (Nayak and Kehily, 2013, p.4). My own research considers gender on the interaction level through an exploration of how parental rules and expectations, peers, others in the public realm, professionals and transport staff affect young women’s gendered (im)mobilities and use of the public realm. However, I go further than this, and also acknowledge the role of structural factors.

In fact, one of the strengths of Risman’s framework is the inclusion of a macro, or structural level. Risman is, however, not the first to do so, as gender-conflict theorists and feminist theorists have long conceptualised gender as a structural system which gives power and privilege to some,
disadvantages others (see, Connell, 1987; Lorber, 1994). Yet, in contemporary Western societies, academic and popular media conversations and debates about gender have shifted to become highly individualised, focusing on gender identities, and Risman’s framework is helpful as it takes a more holistic approach to gender through the inclusion of the macro level of analysis (Jauk, 2018). Structural level factors may influence who gets an education and how much education they receive, the makeup of the workforce including divisions of labour, as well as social and political participation, and resource distribution, all of which are gendered (Scarborough, 2018; John et al., 2017). For example, gender inequality has implications for women’s access to opportunities (Engender, 2020). Women make up over half of Scotland’s population but are underrepresented in key positions of power and influence in politics, the media, public service, and the corporate world which, in turn, affects society (Engender, 2020).

Research exists in policy, advocacy and academic spheres spotlighting the inequalities that women face in Scotland (Engender, 2017, 2020), but there is little research which considers the effects of gender on young women in Scotland. Moreover, empirical research with young people focusing on gender often does not show how gender inequalities at the macro level of analysis relate to and interact with gender at the individual and interactional levels of analysis. This is particularly true of research exploring the seemingly ordinary mobilities and spatial practices of young women in the public realm.

Another key aspect of Risman’s framework is the recognition that human beings are complex and hold many different social identities. These social identities interact to inform who that person is, and the way that they are treated in society. Yuval-Davis (2006) sums this up well; she writes:

To be a woman is different if you are middle-class or working-class, a member of the hegemonic majority or a racialized minority, living in the city or in the country, young or old, straight or gay (p.200).
It is thus necessary to consider gender, and gender inequalities within the broader setting of the social world. Risman (2018a) asserts that, “no longer can we think about gender inequality as if it operates in isolation from race, ethnicity, sexuality, and nation-state” (p.27). It is essential to recognise the way in which gender inequality relates, interacts and enforces other systems of inequality (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013). In this thesis, I recognise that gender is “fundamentally intertwined and mutually constituted with other systems of inequality” (Scarborough, 2018, p.4). Conceptualising gender as a dynamic social structure is therefore fitting as it helps chart the breadth and depth of how gender, in combination with other social identities, affects young women as they take part in their day-to-day lives.

2.1.3 Section conclusion

The field of gender research is expanding and contains within it a plethora of different ideas about what constitutes gender and how gender is formed. Yet, it is widely agreed within the social sciences that gender, to some extent, is socially constructed. Furthermore, the role of bodies cannot be ignored in research concerning young women’s experiences. Gender structure theory is a useful meta-framework for conceptualising gender as it recognises the ways in which gender, and gender inequalities, operate through cultural and material processes on the individual, interactional and the macro levels of society. Too often research with young people that focuses on gender prioritises the individual, or interpersonal effects of gender without recognising the macro level, where gender inequalities profoundly affect individuals’ daily lives in, at times, invisible and nuanced ways. My research seeks to fill this gap and considers how gender, and gender inequalities, impacts young women’s involvement in, and access to the public realm at different levels of analysis, and how these levels inform each other.

In the next section, I introduce the concept of ‘mobilities’, and provide an overview of how both age and gender shape young women’s (im)mobilities in the public realm. The literature on young women’s mobilities highlights the fact that they are often contentious and contested, and there is
a need for more research to understand the challenges of moving in and through the world as a young woman in the twenty-first century.

2.2 Mobilities

In this section I define mobilities and justify the usefulness of this concept within my research. I then present two subsections of mobilities research – young people’s mobilities and gendered mobilities, the cross section of which I will position my own research.

2.2.1 Conceptualising mobilities

Mobility is a concept that has grown in prominence in the social sciences over the last several decades, a conceptual turn which Sheller and Urry (2006) dubbed the ‘new mobilities paradigm’. This paradigm problematises sedentarist approaches to social science, asserting mobility is a key part of social life, “imbued with meaning and power” (Cresswell, 2006, p.4) which takes place in, and produces, time and space. Mobility, in short, is the act of “getting from point A to point B” (Cresswell 2006, p.2), although oversimplification strips it of its conceptual usefulness. Another definition of mobility is the real or virtual “personal travel that is part of people’s participating in the daily round of activities” (Hanson 2010, p.7). Although journeys from one location to another are a form of mobility, mobility encompasses much more. Christensen and Cortés-Morales (2017) define mobility as:

A continuum of interconnected scales of movement that are (partly) given by the past but nevertheless shaped by the present. […] mobility is local, immediate, bodily, social, and material interwoven in policy, political, cultural, and economic networks across all scales (p.14).

Mobilities do not occur in isolation, but are socially situated and influenced by macro, interactional and individual level factors. For example, on the macro level, mobilities permeate and are influenced by history, politics, society, economics and culture, all of which contribute to the meanings we give
mobilities (Buscher and Urry 2009). Hanson (2010) reminds us that, when researching mobilities, it is necessary to consider “social, cultural and geographical context”, including “the specifics of place, time and people” (p.8). With this in mind, in this thesis, I explore what Sheller and Urry (2006) call the “complex relationality of places and persons” (p.214). In this research, I specifically consider young women’s micro-mobilities in the public realm in Inverness. On the individual level, mobilities are experienced differently by people with different social identities, such as age, gender, race and ethnicity, which, in combination with personal experiences of movement, shape the meanings we ascribe to our own mobilities and the mobilities of others. Moreover, crucial to investigations of mobility is its relationship to stasis, that is, “blocked movement, as well as voluntary/ temporary immobilities” (Buscher and Urry, 2009, p.100). Where and why people and things do not go is just as revealing as where they do go.

To summarise, research into mobility is an investigation into how people and things, materially, electronically or potentially (Canzler, Kaufmann and Kesselring 2008; Adey 2017) ‘get there’ (or not), and the meanings ascribed to these mobilities, by themselves and others (Cresswell 2006). While the concept itself is referred to singularly (i.e., mobility studies), it is useful to discuss mobilities (plural) as they are rarely singular in practice (Adey, 2017). In the remainder of this section, I situate my research at the cross-section of two areas of mobility studies, firstly, young people’s mobilities, and secondly, gendered mobilities.

2.2.2 Young people’s mobilities

Children’s mobilities is an area of research located “at the intersection between the social study of childhood and children’s geographies” (Christensen and Cortes-Morales, 2017, p.15). ‘Children’s mobilities’ refers to children and young people under the age of 18; however, ‘young people’s mobilities’ is sometimes used to specify the older end of this age group. I will use the term ‘young people’s mobilities’ as my research was with older children. Young people’s mobilities research explores a wide range of
movements, both physical and virtual, at different scales (Christensen and Cortes-Morales, 2017); topics range from, for example, young people’s experiences undertaking international internships, to the transport and leisure experiences of teenage wheelchair users (Cuzzocrea and Cairns, 2020; Pyer and Tucker, 2014).

Young people’s mobilities research is concerned with movements and journeys, but also with “mobility meanings” (Porter et al., 2017, p.5) ascribed to those movements. This area of research evolved as a response to the ‘new sociology of childhood’, which inspired researchers “to work more closely with children, to include their voices and experiences in research on mobility” (Mikkelsen and Christensen, 2009; Shaw et al., 2013; Nansen et al., 2014, p.468). Young people’s mobilities research was also a response to an increased interest in researching the movement of people, things and ideas in the social sciences at different scales. This area of research “focused on unveiling the mobility of people and things and identifying the particulars of the mobile subject as social, gendered, aged, and ethnic” (Christensen and Cortes-Morales, 2017, p.16). Research specifically studying young people’s (im)mobilities is necessary because “young people are subject to manifold micro politics of mobility and immobility that differentiate their experiences of urban spaces from the experiences of adults” (McAuliffe, 2013, p.518). My research adds to this canon of work by illuminating how young women’s (im)mobilities within the public realm in Inverness are influenced by age, gender and other co-constituting inequalities at different levels of analysis.

Young people’s independent mobility, or their mobilities without an accompanying adult, is a popular research area within young people’s mobilities research (Holdsworth, 2013). However, recently scholarship takes issue with this dependent (with an accompanying adult) versus independent (without an adult) dichotomy for two reasons. Firstly, young people may experience mobilities by themselves (independently) but more commonly, as my research will show, their mobilities are not strictly independent as they undertake mobilities with trusted adults, peers, mobile phones, pets, etcetera.
(Mikkelsen and Christensen, 2009). Secondly, the independent/dependent framing of young people’s mobilities is based on young people’s experiences as it relates to adults, and this has been criticised by some childhood studies scholars who advocate for research that views children and young people’s experiences as important “in their own right” (Christensen and Cortes-Morales, 2017, p.14). The debate surrounding the independent/dependent dichotomy led to the alternative framing of children and young people’s mobilities as interdependent, which recognises how their mobilities are “enabled and configured through a diversity of relations and materials” (Nansen et al., 2014, p.469). My research acknowledges these critiques, and reviews some of the ‘independent/dependent mobility’ literature. However, where possible, when discussing my own findings, I move away from using the independent/dependent framing as it lacks specificity, and instead I refer to young women’s mobilities with or without an adult.

Although it is true that adults (especially parents) have a key role to play in shaping young women’s mobilities, the view that they are solely responsible for shaping them, or are the most influential force on their mobilities, is outdated (Valentine and Mckendrickt, 1997; Nansen et al., 2014). The reality is more complex as young people’s mobilities are not determined by one source; rather, their mobilities are negotiated “through more fluid and reciprocal negotiations over time” (Nansen et al., 2014, p.476). Not only that, but young people’s mobilities are comprised of “a range of people, objects and environments working in concert with [them]” (Nansen et al., 2014, p.475). Moreover, mobilities are greatly influenced by socio-cultural context, for example, by social norms, cultural expectations, geography and peers (Mitra et al., 2014), as well as real and imaginary risks (Porter et al., 2010).

Ansell (2009) argues that within children’s geographies (which includes research on young people’s mobilities) there is also often a focus on micro-geographies, that is, “their interactions with and within their immediate environments” (p.191). This focus on ‘everyday mobilities’ include “the whole
spectrum of bodily motion that children [and young people] engage in during their daily lives” (Christensen and Cortes-Morales, 2017, p.14). However, van Blerk (2019) makes a distinction between children’s geographies and youth geographies, arguing that academic contributions to the latter have already shown the way in which young people “create their own global geographies, sometimes in very local places and through sites of resistance” (p.33). In the more than ten years since Ansell (2009) problematised the local focus and asserted that micro-scale research “leaves unchallenged the processes that affect children across national settings or even worldwide” (p.191), many have contributed to this research endeavour (see, Ní Laoire, White and Skelton, 2017). Investigations into young people’s micro-geographies are valid in and of themselves, but for a more holistic picture to emerge, there is a need to further the body of academic work which connects young people’s micro-geographies to macro-geographies, and macro-level processes.

Young people are “connected to wider socioeconomic and political processes” (Christensen and Cortes-Morales, 2017, p.35), and by making connections between micro and macro levels of analysis, this research may have more relevant, and broader policy implications. Limiting young people to a ‘local’ context “diminishes their capacity to act in relation to policies and practices that impinge on their lives” (Ansell, 2009, p.203). As such, my research seeks to make connections between micro and macro-geographies, policies and processes, further illustrating the importance of considering not only mobilities, but also scale when researching social life.

Young people’s mobilities is a growing area of research, and yet gaps persist. While gender is a variable considered within this field, there is still not enough research specifically focused on the experiences of young women and the impact of gender on their access to, and involvement in, the public realm. In the next section, I will address research which highlights the differential, and often inequitable, mobility experiences of young women.
2.2.3 Gendered mobilities

Feminist scholarship on mobility begins with the premise that bodies, social spaces, objects, technology and communications are "profoundly gendered" (Clarsen, 2014, p.97), and mobility “has been more available to men than to women” (Clarsen, 2014, p.96). The same is true for young people, and there is a growing and diverse body of literature on children and young people’s gendered mobilities at different scales (Skelton, 2000; Brown et al., 2008; Guliani et al., 2015; Porter, Spark and de Kleyn, 2020; Rodó-de-Zárate, 2013; Hertrich and Lesclingand, 2013; Lesclingand and Hertrich, 2017; Porter, 2011). Globally, some studies have shown that boys have more "spatial terrain […] and fewer parental restrictions than girls of a similar age" (Brown et al. 2008, p.388). This corresponds with feminist research findings, which suggest “women have been less able and less likely to move with the same degree of ease as men,” (Clarsen, 2014, p.97) and, importantly, even when there are no perceptible differences between young men and young women’s mobilities, the same mobilities are often ascribed different meanings according to gender, and other intersecting social identities (Clarsen, 2014). Given these findings, more research is needed to explore how specific socio-cultural understandings of gender “have come to structure the meanings of mobility” (Clarsen, 2014, p.100). This, according to Clarsen (2014), is an ongoing and “unfinished project” (p.100), which my own research seeks to contribute to.

Mobilities are, in part, reflections and reproductions of “social norms, values and ideas about being a woman or a man” (Adey, 2010, p.141). In some socio-cultural contexts, limiting women’s mobilities “in terms both of identity and space, have been […] a crucial means of subordination” (Massey, 1994, p.179). However, research exploring gendered (im)mobilities must be careful not to impose unproblematised Western ideals equating increased mobility with liberation, or positioning mobility as “intrinsically transgressive” (Clarsen, 2014, p.96). In addition, Ong (1999) questions the assumption that mobility is always ‘liberatory’ spatially and politically for everyone. Somewhat paradoxically,
Mobility is not essentially resistance of domination; it can be potentially both, or either. Mobility is able to exert power that may well dominate, convert, contest and liberate (Adey, 2010, p.118).

What is clear, is that mobility and immobility, and the power of each, are significant influential forces in the lives of women of all ages.

While I agree that mobility is not a liberating or transgressive force as a rule, for many women over time, it has been. Women throughout history have chronicled their experiences of “transgressing such gendered [mobility] norms, naming them as acts of defiance and personal growth” (Clarsen, 2014, p.96). These include their “aspirations to mobilize personal and political freedoms for themselves and others” (Clarsen, 2014, p.96). Since young people are both social actors and gendered beings, there is, therefore, a need for research investigating young women’s mobilities.

Some empirical evidence suggests young women’s mobilities are more limited, regulated and restricted compared to young men. In part, this is due to heightened concern for young women’s safety among different “socialisation agents” (John et al., 2017, p.15), including parents and caregivers, communities and young women themselves. The contentious nature of young women’s mobilities varies based on socio-cultural context, but persistent cross-cultural commonalities exist. Real and perceived concern for young people’s safety, sexuality and social standing are greater for young women than they are for young men of a similar age in a similar context, particularly among adolescents (Blum, Mmari and Moreau, 2017; Marcus, 2019; Mmari et al., 2017a).

There is some evidence to suggests young women have less home range, or spatial terrain, than young men, although, within the UK this finding is contested (Brown et al., 2008; Barker et al., 2009). Thomson and Philo (2010), in their study on children’s play in Livingston, Scotland found “an increase in girls’ visibility on and use of the street” (p.122) compared to previous empirical studies of children’s spatial practices in the UK (for
example, see Matthews, 1987). However, Thomas and Philo’s (2010) study was with younger girls and not adolescents. Research by O’Brien and colleagues (2000) on children’s independent spatial mobility in the public realm in England revealed that “girls and minority ethnic children were more restricted in their use of urban space” (p.257). Another study conducted in England found that this mobility gap was closed by girls (aged 8-12 years old) when they travelled in groups; girls who travelled together were allowed the same freedom as boys on their own (Brown et al., 2008). There is no clear consensus amongst researchers as to whether young women have less home range than young men, or not in the UK. The studies mentioned thus far point to some gender differences in travel patterns in younger children and furthermore highlight the need for more nuanced research (Brown et al., 2008).

Recent research in Australia with 10 to 11-year-olds found that “the boys described a greater sense of freedom to travel independently beyond the journey to school” (Porter, Spark and de Kleyn, 2020, p.6) than the girls in the study. Porter and colleagues’ (2020) observation that boys “described a greater sense of freedom to travel” (p.6), whereas the girls in the study were responsive to gendered spatial expectations they picked up from their parents and others is telling. How boys perceived and experienced travel freedom stands in contrast to the girls, who did not express a sense of freedom when moving in their communities. In fact, the girls were more attuned to perceived risks. This study begins to unpack and draw attention to the complex ways in which gender affects mobilities. The question of if and how far young people are allowed to travel from home on the basis of gender varies depending on the socio-cultural context. Beyond questions of how far young people travel from home, there is a need for more research into young women’s gendered experiences of movement and the gendered meanings given to their movements by themselves and others.

Cross-national studies of adolescents’ mobility have found mobility restrictions for young women are evident after puberty, while young men’s
“freedom and mobility greatly increased in comparison to girls” (Mmari et al., 2017b, p.7). Hallman and colleagues’ (2014) research on gender, violence and access to the public realm in South Africa found that, “with puberty, girls’ worlds shrink, while boys’ expand” (p.279), based on fears related to girls’ safety. Moreover, the Global Early Adolescent Study, a multi-country study of adolescent health across 15 countries, including Scotland, found that worldwide there are “hegemonic myths that girls are vulnerable” (Blum, Mmari and Moreau, 2017, p.S3) suggesting young women require more protection and should not take the same risks young men take (Guliani et al., 2015). Fears, safety concerns and young women’s perceived vulnerability contribute to explaining the gendered nature of young people’s mobilities.

While parental concerns may limit young women’s mobilities without an adult, the regulation of their mobilities is not only enforced by parents, but by young women’s own self-held beliefs about their personal safety within their communities (Denner and Dunbar, 2004). As one young woman commented, “I look at myself in the mirror. I say to myself, yeah, I’ve grown. I can’t go out anymore” (Mmari et al., 2017b, p.6). There is considerable empirical evidence which shows adult women’s concerns over their personal safety (especially related to their sexuality) impacts their travel patterns and, in some cases, limits their mobility (Wekerle, 2005; Goddard et al., 2007; Loukaitou-Sideris and Fink, 2009). There is less research on if young women have similar concerns over safety, and, if so, the impacts this has (or not) on their daily mobilities. Notably, Mmari and colleagues (2017b) research revealed that there is a heightened concern among young women and their parents regarding “perceptions of [girls’] vulnerability and related mobility” (p.1) across multiple urban locations worldwide.

The onset of puberty is a significant moment in the lives of young people, but there are often different social repercussions for young women and young men, and these vary widely based on factors such as geographical location, social norms and social identities (Porter et al., 2017). Young women’s perceived vulnerability is often tied to specific concerns over
their sexuality: “around the world pubertal boys are viewed as predators and girls as potential targets and victims” (Blum, Mmari and Moreau, 2017, p.S3) of sexual advances, or assault. The perceived heightened vulnerability of young women and fears over their sexuality are contributing factors to the differential experiences they have in the public realm, particularly regarding their mobilities. Furthermore, young women’s mobilities are also contentious because of the “particularly widespread association of mobility with female sexual misdemeanours” (Porter 2011, p.67), that is, perceptions of promiscuity.

Community and familial beliefs about young women’s bodies, and their potential ‘vulnerability’, have consequences. For example, in some cultures, young women are told not to spend time with young men and, if they do, they may face “punishment, social isolation, sexual rumour, and innuendo” (Blum et al. 2017, p.SM; Mmari et al., 2017a; Marcus, 2019). In Scotland, for example, Traveller young women’s reputations are linked to their perceived chastity, which have implications for where, when and with whom they move around their communities (Marcus, 2019). Young women’s sexual chastity is, in many cultures, connected to their perceived worth, family honour, reputations, marriage and further mobility prospects (Blum et al. 2017). There are thus significant social risks associated with young women’s mobilities with regard to how they are perceived in their families and communities, a result simply not found for young men (Mmari et al. 2017b).

While the regulation of young women’s mobilities may curtail some perpetrators, it is problematic as a protective mechanism because the perpetrators of violence against young women are not limited to those actors they could meet on the streets, but can include family, community members, intimate partners or peers (Pinheiro, 2006). Young women’s limited mobility is often intended to enhance their safety, but private space does not always equate to safe space, and regulated mobility can also negatively impact their wellbeing and opportunities (McAuliffe, 2013; Kronlid, 2008). Some evidence suggests that limiting young women’s access to the public realm may result
in limiting their “opportunities for human development” (Hallman et al., 2014, p.279). However, more research is necessary to make this claim definitively.

It is unsurprising that many young women experience mobilities differently than young men, as gender norms and expectations about their vulnerability and sexuality lead to greater mobility regulations imposed and/or enforced by communities, families and young women themselves. Despite the wide variety of social and cultural contexts globally, these perceptions are common in diverse locations to varying extents worldwide. As a result, my research is informed by these issues and will explore how young women understand their own gendered mobilities in Inverness.

2.2.4 Section conclusion
In this section, I considered the way in which mobilities are conceptualised. I then looked at how young people’s mobilities research often prioritises the with whom and how far questions with regards to their mobilities. Next, I explored the intersection of gender and young people’s mobilities research before looking at global empirical research which gives evidence to gender differences in young people’s (im)mobilities. My research will therefore contribute to, and go beyond, existing literature by exploring how young women experience mobilities, the meanings attributed to young women’s mobilities by themselves and others, and the connections between their micro-geographies and the macro-level forces influencing them.

Mobilities are influenced by where they take place, but also contribute to constituting space and place (Cresswell, 2006). The next section considers space and place, how these terms are defined and conceptualised, and the importance of researching them with reference to young people.

2.3 Space and place
This section begins with an overview of some of the ways in which space and place are conceptualised by key theorists (Tuan, 1977; Cresswell, 2004; Massey, 1991). I then review the literature on young people, space and
place, specifically focusing on studies exploring young women’s use of the public realm. Lastly, I consider the related concept of place belonging.

2.3.1 Conceptualising space and place

The definitions of space and place are contested and have evolved significantly over the years (Hoelscher, 2011). Withers (2009) refers to space and place as “epistemic dancing partner[s]” (p.638) signalling the close relationship, but distinctiveness, of the two terms. The dancing partner metaphor is apt because it is helpful to think about space and place in tandem and define them in relation to each other. Tuan (1977) does this effectively. He writes:

> What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value ... the ideas ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom and threat of space, and vice versa (Tuan, 1977, p.6).

Central to Tuan’s understanding of space and place is a “concern for meaning, belonging and experience” (Cresswell, 2008, p.58). For Tuan, one key distinction between space and place is that of meaning. Similarly, Cresswell (2014b) argues that place is “a meaningful location” (p.12), that is, that people socially construct place through giving meanings to space. For Tuan and Cresswell, space is imbued with meaning by individuals and/or groups of people, and thus transformed into place.

People give space meaning in a number of ways. Cresswell (2008, 2011) cites personal experiences and time spent in a given place as ways in which the “abstract notion of space” is transformed into a “meaningful notion of place” (p.56). For example, mobile practices may contribute to creating meaningful places. In Christensen and Mikkelsen’s (2013) research in Denmark, they found that girls created places for socialising and subverting adult supervision by moving around their communities together making meaningful social space for themselves on the move. That being said, it is not necessary to live in a place, or even to have visited it, for it to have
meaning (Nairn and Kraftl, 2015). People may give meaning to places based on how they have seen them represented “by poets, photographers, politicians and others” (Cresswell, 2014b, p.14).

Another way that people create place and give it meaning is through naming it, and storytelling; however, stories and names are not static and their meanings may change over time and in different contexts (Cresswell, 2014b). Furthermore, ideologies, memories and emotional attachments are yet more ways in which place-meanings are built (Cresswell, 2014b; Nairn and Kraftl, 2015). These examples illustrate several of the innumerable ways that people give meaning to place. The process of meaning making is thus part of the social construction of place (Horton and Kraftl, 2014).

Yet, meanings alone are but one aspect of a holistic understanding of place. Cresswell (2014b) asserts that it is necessary to recognise the physical, and tangible aspects of both space and place. He advocates recognising the materialities of spaces and places which are part of wider landscapes and are often full of things, some of which hold their own meanings, or are themselves mobile (Cresswell, 2014b). Intangible meanings and physical materialities mingle to inform understandings of place, but still fail to capture the dynamism of place as place also includes practices (Cresswell, 2014b).

Practices encompass what people do in a given space or place and often involve movement. For example, Wijntuin and Koster’s (2018) research with Dutch-Moroccan young women spotlights their experiences of ‘wandering’ in their neighbourhoods and that the act of wandering contributes to constituting the neighbourhood (Cresswell, 2014b). Meanings, practices and materialities taken together help to create a more complex understanding of place. Through breaking down place into these three components, not only is the social construction of place laid bare, but the necessary coupling of place research with mobilities research is apparent.
Massey (1991) takes issue with the failure of scholars such as Tuan to take into account “power relations and forces of exclusion” (Cresswell, 2008, p.58) when conceptualising space and place. The power to “invest one’s living space with meaning”, that is, “to literally occupy, define and decorate one’s surroundings” (Breitbart 1998, p.306) is not equally shared by all demographic groups. Women, young people, minorities and the working class, among others, have traditionally not had the same degree of power to shape dominant place meanings (for places inevitably have multiple and contested meanings). These demographic groups are also underrepresented in arenas of power where decisions are made about the purpose, design and function of spaces in the public realm (Engender, 2020; Skelton and Gough, 2013b; Zelenev, 2009).

Power relations are necessary to consider where space and place are concerned because once established, place can be used as a “social structure” by which others make determinations on “who and what belongs where and when” (Cresswell, 2011, p.237). In this way, defining place can be used as an exclusionary force, with ‘us’ and ‘them’ defined based on if one is accepted as from ‘here’ or from one of the innumerable other ‘elsewheres’. Cresswell (2011) explains:

Certain kinds of people (with particular genders, ethnicities, sexualities, ages, levels of [dis]ability and so on) are said to ‘belong’ in different places and this notion of belonging is often defined by people with the power to define people according to place (p.237).

The building of border walls, the arrangement of buildings in a city, the determination of school catchment areas – all of these acts of place making are imbued with power and have repercussions. In fact, how (and by whom) places are designed may influence who is implicitly or explicitly invited or excluded (Horton and Kraftl, 2014). Horton and Kraftl (2014) note “spaces are created, designed, controlled and maintained, often to serve the interests of the dominant group(s) in society” (p.285). The dominant group in the UK is, historically speaking, more often than not, adult, male and white. This has
implications for other demographic groups’ access to and use of the public realm.

Massey (1991) therefore called for an “outward looking” and progressive “global sense of place” (p.24) which unlike Tuan, proposes that place is globally connected and unbounded (Cresswell, 2008). Massey (1991, 1994, 2005) was influential in developing theoretical understandings of place that encompassed the dynamism of mobilities and social relations within them. One of Massey’s central arguments is that place is “the product of multiple mobilities intersecting” (Cresswell, 2008, p.58) and as such, has no distinct boundaries. The lack of boundaries and emphasis on mobilities was meant to foster a more inclusive understanding of place. Massey thus criticises Tuan’s understanding of place “for insisting on a bounded sense of identity attached to place that is rooted in history” (Cresswell, 2008, p.58).

In short, Massey (1991) asserted places are never fixed but constantly changing. Accordingly, a place is not a ‘container’ with clearly demarcated borders, but rather, comprised of a dynamic web of mobilities (Massey, 1991). In this way, Massey (1991) argues the local and the global are linked by people’s movements and social connections over time. Due in part to the influence of Massey, modern conceptualisations of place now widely embrace the importance of mobilities to understanding place (Cresswell, 2008). Cresswell (2014b) goes so far as to assert that “place needs mobility” because “mobile practices constitute the choreographies that make places particular” (p.18). Massey’s conceptualisation of place provides a convincing rationale for research exploring social connections, place and mobilities.

This brief consideration of the ways in which Tuan, Cresswell and Massey conceptualise space and place highlight the multifaceted, relational and dynamic aspects of these concepts. This section has explored understandings of space and place which define them as different, but related concepts, with particular attention to how space becomes place when it is endowed with meanings. A further investigation into place revealed the ways in which meanings, materialities and practices come together to form a
more holistic conceptualisation of the social construction of place (Cresswell, 2014b).

The next section considers the ways in which the “spatial turn” (Withers, 2009, p.638) in the social sciences is applied to research with young people, particularly in the public realm.

2.3.2 Young people in the public realm

Nairn and Kraftl (2015) suggest that not only is childhood socially constructed, but it is also spatially constructed. There is a burgeoning body of empirical work on young people’s experiences of space and place outside of their home environments (see, Skelton and Valentine, 1998). Where young people live, how they interact with their environments and the meanings they give to places matters. Moreover, a conceptual focus on young people, space and place sheds light on the complexity of their lives (Farrugia, 2015). As outlined in Chapter 1, the term ‘public realm’ in this thesis refers to “all aspects of society and the social world that are not exclusively private (e.g., private property, private life)” (Neal, 2010, p.624). For the purposes of this thesis, this includes commercial spaces such as shopping malls and other semi-private spaces such as community centres, but not schools where access is more strictly regulated (UK Government, 2018). The term ‘third space’ was adopted in the context of children’s geographies research to refer to the spaces that young people carve out for themselves in the adult-centric public realm outside of the domestic sphere of home or the formal sphere of school (see, Matthews, Limb and Taylor, 2000; Carroll et al., 2015; Nairn and Kraftl, 2015). ‘Third space’ affords young people opportunities, often away from parents, for in-person social encounters, for navigating risks and trying out new identities (Skelton and Gough, 2013b; Beunderman et al., 2007).

Researchers over the last several decades have provided convincing rationales for research exploring young people’s use of the public realm, and for greater inclusion and acceptance of young people in urban spaces (Massey, 2007). Beunderman and colleagues (2007) argue that, through
their use of the public realm, young people “learn to live with others through seeing different norms and ways of behaving” (p.32). Moreover, using the public realm provides young people with opportunities to enrich their social lives, explore new identities, and try out alternative ways of behaving that are useful in the process of growing up and central to young people’s health, wellbeing and development (Skelton and Gough, 2013b).

Adults play a significant role in facilitating (or hindering) young people’s access to and use of the public realm (Nairn and Kraftl, 2015). Adults’ rules, views and reactions to young people in the public realm are based largely on how young people are conceptualised in a particular socio-cultural context. Adult conceptualisations of young people are informed by social norms dictating what is and is not appropriate behaviour according to age, gender and other social identity factors. For example, there is a widely held view that young people are “out of place” (Nairn and Kraftl, 2015, p.4), or a disruptive presence, in the public realm in the UK (Pain, 2006; Skelton and Gough, 2013). Through my research, I seek to explore if this is the case in Inverness, and the role adults play in influencing young women’s access to and use of the public realm.

The marginal position of young people in the public realm is well established in the literature (Thomas, 2005). Skelton and Gough (2013) assert that while young people make up a significant proportion of urban space users, they are often neglected in policy and research concerning its use. Young people are often excluded, or forgotten, in the design, planning and decision making processes and, as a result, there are often not enough spaces for them (Skelton and Gough, 2013b). The Committee on the Rights of the Child concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland points this out, noting there are “insufficient […] public space for adolescents to socialize” (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016, p.19).

In response to the challenges of including and involving young people in the public realm, Christensen and O’Brien (2003) propose “a city for all” is
needed which is “sensitive to children both as a social group, with all its complexities, and to children as individuals” (p.1). In fact, young people have a right to access and use space in the public realm, even though they often lack involvement or say over its use (Massey, 2007; Porter et al., 2020). My research thus investigates young women’s use of the public realm in Inverness and seeks to consider if they do, in fact, have sufficient access to it.

Like age, gender matters in young people’s negotiation of the public realm. Valentine (1989) called for “more research into issues surrounding gender and public space” (p.389), firstly, in terms of understanding women’s differential experiences of fear in the public realm, and secondly, with regards to understanding if and how gender influences the appropriation and control of shared spaces. Valentine (1989) also called for attention to be paid to the influences of other social identities, such as age, race and ethnicity on people’s experiences of public space. My research thus adds to the work that grew in response to her call, with a specific focus on young women.

Rodó-de-Zárate (2013) asserts that “acknowledging gender differences between young people [is] crucial to understand their negotiations in public space” (p.415). Over the last three decades, a body of scholarship has developed which includes research exploring young people, gender and the public realm. Some of this work focuses specifically on the experiences of young women, exploring their spatial practices such as consumption and recreation, the meanings they give various spaces, as well as issues surrounding accessing and sharing space (Christensen and Mikkelsen, 2013; Clark, 2015; Mohammad, 2013; Thomas, 2005; Wijntuin and Koster, 2018; Tucker, 2003). Others studies of young people and the public realm include both young women and young men’s experiences, and draw out similarities and differences based on gender (Katz, 1998; Johansson, Laflamme and Eliasson, 2012; Ortiz, Ferret and Baylina, 2016). Both spheres of research add to our understanding of the effects of gender on experiences of the public realm.
As is the case with young women's mobilities, it is unsurprising that “girls and minority ethnic children have been shown to experience significantly greater restrictions and limitations on their use of urban space” (Porter et al., 2020, p.4). My own research spotlights young women’s experiences, recognising that they are not a monolith, and their experiences of the public realm differ based on intersecting social identities and various socio-cultural contexts (Mohammad, 2013). In fact, young women themselves may experience the public realm differently over time, and “the city may increasingly be a site of risk-taking and adventure as well as of fear” (Pain, 2001, p.905).

The recognition that gender, in combination with other social identities, impacts experiences of place is not a new one (Massey, 1991). Thomson (2005) asserts that “girls encounter unique burdens as they use and produce public space for youthful socializing” such as “gendered ideals of femininity that further restrict their public behaviour” (p.588). Katz (1998) similarly asserts:

The restricted access to the public environment, and with it many opportunities for forging and negotiating peer culture and acquiring the various social skills associated with these negotiations, is generally worse for girls than boys (p.136).

Thomas and Katz highlight the challenges and restrictions that young women face while accessing and navigating the public realm. These challenges are based, in part, on gender norms and fears concerning young women’s safety, and in expectations regarding what constitutes appropriate behaviour for young women. Given the significant shifts in conceptualisations of gender over the last decade, it is worth considering the impact of gender on young women’s access to and experiences of the public realm today.

2.3.3 Young people and place belonging

This section considers a related concept – place belonging. For young people, “physical experience of neighbourhood places” (Spicer 2008, p.492)
and the public realm more broadly may foster feelings of belonging. Some argue that a sense of belonging is fundamental to young people’s wellbeing (Correa-Velez, Gifford and Barnett, 2010). This raises several questions, if belonging is a positive force in the lives of young people (a point which is contested – see Warr, 2015 and Adekunle, 2017), what is belonging? And what are the practices that make up belonging in young people’s lives? Lastly, how is belonging “connected to specific places” (Wyn, Cuervo and Cook, 2020, p.13)? In this section, I briefly consider these questions.

According to the edited volume exploring young people and belonging, Habib and Ward (2020b) succinctly summarise belonging as “about connection, membership, attachment and a sense of security” (p.1). However, belonging is “not a straightforward concept, but instead often complex and contradictory” (Stahl and Habib, 2017, p.274). Developing a sense of belonging is a “constant process” (Cuervo and Wyn, 2014, p.912) achieved through a set of practices (Noble, 2020) and not a destination that one simply reaches. Belonging is highly relational (Habib and Ward, 2019b) and research into belonging often considers both individual and collective experiences of “emotional attachment […] feeling ‘at home’ and […] feeling ‘safe’” (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.197). Moreover, while belonging often has positive connotations, taken to the extreme, belonging can act as an exclusionary force leading to territoriality, which is perceived negatively (Adekunle, 2017).

Belonging is comprised of both spatial and relational elements and can be conceptualised in terms of one’s connection to a group of people (social belonging) or as a connection to a place (place belongingness) (Antonsich, 2010); this section focuses on the latter while also recognising the two cannot be entirely separated. Noble (2020) illustrates this point, observing, “we cannot simply belong to a space unless others acknowledge our position within it” (p.xvii). As a result, belonging may be “as oppressive as it is enabling” and “something to be contested rather than simply inhabited” (Noble, 2020, p.xviii). A sense of belonging is not either experienced socially
or spatially, but rather, often both simultaneously as social connection in a specific place may facilitate a stronger sense of belonging there (Wyn, Cuervo and Cook, 2020). The spatial aspects of belonging are further highlighted by Habib and Ward (2020a) who emphasise the centrality of “place, space and territories” (p.173) in theorising belonging, and Stahl and Habib (2017) who spotlight the importance of place to belonging.

Young people develop a sense of place belonging at different scales; for example, one might feel a sense of belonging to a country or the street one grew up on (Antonsich, 2010). The neighbourhood is a particularly important site for considering place-based belonging as “children have been found to form strong attachments to the neighbourhoods in which they live” (Porter et al., 2020, p.3). In this study, Porter and colleagues (2020) conceptualised ‘neighbourhood’ as comprised of “‘third’ spaces and places” that “do not fit into categories of a private home or the formal school environment” (p.2). Pickering and colleagues (2012) found that in six British cities, young people expressed strong attachments to their neighbourhoods which in some cases “offered a sense of ‘belonging’” (p.952).

One way young people form a sense of place belonging where they live is through “non-spectacular routine practices” (Wyn, Cuervo and Cook, 2020, p.13). Wyn and colleagues (2020) found that in their longitudinal study in Australia, when asked about belonging, participants responded by speaking about their everyday experiences, for example, “‘dealing with’ proximity to others and the sense of familiarity with physical surroundings” (p.17). Other practices which help forge a sense of belonging to place include ‘hanging out’ (Marchbank and Muller Myrdahl, 2020), volunteering (Wyn, Cuervo and Cook, 2020) and participating in local institutions and clubs. Warr (2015) argues that increased mobilities have led to the erosion of place-based feelings of belonging; however, this is not always the case. According to Fallov and colleagues (2013):

Mobility, immobility and the potential for movement form an important dimension of belonging. Our everyday
performance of mobility practices shapes the meanings and qualities attached to place and how we experience our localities (p.472).

Routine practices, such as walking, can help, rather than hinder, a sense of belonging in place.

Place belonging is born out of attachment to place which young people often form through experiences of being in, and moving through, their neighbourhoods and the public realm.

2.3.4 Section conclusion

In this section, I considered space and place and the various ways they are conceptualised and contested by key theories, including Tuan, Cresswell and Massey. I then looked at research exploring young people’s use of, and access to, the public realm. The public realm is largely made for and by adults and while young people are frequent users of the public realm they are often overlooked in the planning and design of these spaces. I then considered the significant role of gender in shaping young women’s experiences of the public realm. Lastly, I looked at how young people form a sense of place belonging.

In the next section, I consider the concept of territorial stigmatisation, and research exploring young people’s experiences living in stigmatised neighbourhoods.

2.4 Territorial stigmatisation

In this section I unpack “the stigma of place” (Tyler and Slater, 2018, p.735), a concept referred to in the literature as territorial stigmatisation. I then highlight the relevant debates therein, pointing out the contribution my own research makes.

2.4.1 Conceptualising territorial stigmatisation

Territorial stigmatisation is a term coined by sociologist Loïc Wacquant (2008), who used it to refer to the “taint of place” (p.238) which affects people
who live in certain areas. The concept gained popularity following the publication of Wacquant’s (2008) book *Urban Outcasts*: a comparative study of urban marginality and territorial stigma in Chicago and Paris (also see, Wacquant, 1993). Wacquant’s conceptualisation of territorial stigmatisation draws heavily from the works of two influential sociologists, Ervine Goffman and Pierre Bourdieu.

Goffman’s (1990) seminal work, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, first published in 1963, defines stigma as “an undesired differentness from what had been anticipated” (p.10) on the basis of which an individual is “disqualified from full social acceptance” (p.5) in society.

Goffman (1990) asserts that there are three main categories of stigma: these include “abominations of the body” (i.e., physical deformities); “character defects” (i.e., being an addict); and “tribal stigma” (i.e., religion) (p.10). Goffman’s definition and typology of stigma were and are contentious, yet his influence has endured. However, Goffman’s conceptualisation of stigma should not be seen as authoritative; rather, it functions as a launching off point for further debate about the nature and definition of stigma (Tyler and Slater, 2018). Tyler (2020), for example, takes issue with Goffman’s failure to recognise the role of power in his conceptualisation of stigma. Tyler and Slater (2018) instead propose an alternative understanding of stigma which acknowledge the role of structural forces “such as history (time), geography (place), politics and economic conditions” (p.731) in shaping understandings of stigma. Goffman’s definition of stigma is one of many, and certainly not the most comprehensive, modern or inclusive. However, in spite of his conceptual shortfalls, it was Goffman who influenced Wacquant’s development of territorial stigmatisation, and for that reason, his work is central to this discussion.

Goffman (1990) suggests stigma exists in contrast to people who do not deviate from what is expected, or *normals*. Goffman’s “assumption of a normative order” (Geiselhard, 2017, p.219) is hotly contested in literature on stigma, though this is not a debate Wacquant himself engaged with (see Link
and Phelan, 2001 for a critique of Goffman's conceptualisation of stigma). Goffman explains that stigma does not reside in the person who is experiencing the effects of the stigma, or the *normals*, but instead exists in the relationship between the attribute and the audience. Stigma, according to Goffman, is revealed in interactions between people.

Wacquant points out a missing category in Goffman's typology, suggesting that where a person lives is a central category of stigmatisation. Research on stigma associated with place has long existed within academic spheres under different guises. In the 1960s, for example, policing research suggested the idea of “*ecological contamination*, whereby all persons encountered in a ‘bad’ neighbourhood are viewed as possessing the moral liability of the neighbourhood itself” (Sampson, 2011, p.133, 2014). Wacquant’s concept has grown in popular use over the last decade, in part, because he gave the phenomenon a name and eloquently brought it into modern conceptual debates, but also because he paired two influential scholars, Goffman and Bourdieu, drawing from each to explain how territorial stigmatisation grows and spreads (Slater, 2018).

Wacquant applies Goffman's thesis that stigma arises through daily interactions. Wacquant (2007) writes, “discourses of vilification proliferate and agglomerate about them [stigmatised territories], ‘from below’, in the ordinary interactions of daily life” (p.67). How people discuss a place matters. He also suggests that stigmatisation is further propagated “‘from above’, in the journalistic, political and bureaucratic (and even scientific) fields” (Wacquant, 2007, p.67). Wacquant’s assertion that territorial stigmatisation can grow and spread ‘from above’ draws heavily on Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic power (Slater, 2018). Symbolic power is:

> A power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether
physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization (Bourdieu, 1991, p.170).

According to Bourdieu, people with amplified voices (politicians), those who contribute to telling other people’s stories (journalists), and people who help create knowledge (academics), among others, have “the power of making representations stick and come true” (Slater, 2018, p.116), and are culpable in adding to, maintaining and creating territorial stigmatisation (Wacquant, Slater and Pereira, 2014).

Territorial stigmatisation is a concept used to discuss and problematise the impact of negative place reputation, particularly in marginalised localities. Wacquant, who developed the concept, draws on the seminal (and contested) works of Goffman and Bourdieu, and uses it as scaffolding for defining and explaining how stigmatisation can and does develop in relation to place. The next section turns from the conceptual development of territorial stigmatisation to several salient critiques.

2.4.2 The internalisation thesis – critiques and alternatives

Several key criticisms of research utilising Wacquant’s concept have surfaced over the past decade. These criticisms include a lack of conceptual clarity within the multidisciplinary body of research and a propensity to victimise or blame research participants who either experience or perceive territorial stigma, to name a few (Schultz Larsen and Delica, 2019).

These criticisms exist alongside debates surrounding Wacquant’s original conceptualisation of territorial stigmatisation, including his early internalisation thesis, which is particularly relevant to my research. According to Wacquant’s internalisation thesis, “the residents of the stigmatised areas internalise the ‘outside’ world’s degrading view of them and in turn degrade their own area” (Schultz Larsen and Delica, 2019, p.551). Wacquant (1993) writes that residents of stigmatised areas:

Deploy strategies of distancing and ‘exit’ that tend to validate negative outside perceptions and feed a deadly
self-fulfilling prophecy through which public taint and collective disgrace eventually produce that which they claim merely to record: namely, social atomism, community ‘disorganization’ and cultural anomie (p.375).

The internalisation of territorial stigma thus inhibits residents from developing a positive sense of belonging in their area (Schultz Larsen, 2014). Wacquant (2010) also argues that internalising stigma triggers “demoralization” and causes residents to “disassociate themselves from their neighbours, shrinking their networks and restricting their joint activities” (p.218). Jensen and Christensen (2012) assert that internalising stigma “leads inhabitants to deny belonging, to distance themselves from the area and their neighbours, and to emphasize their own moral worth in contrast to other residents” (p.74).

There is some evidence to support Wacquant’s internalisation thesis among residents of stigmatised places; however, the widespread applicability of these findings remains unclear. For example, Warr (2015) asserts that when young people experience place-based stigma it “contributes[s] to the ambivalence in young people’s experiences of local belonging because it derides and devalues the identities in which a sense of belonging is grounded” (p.671; also see, Purdy, 2003). Warr’s (2015) example shows that place-based stigma does not necessarily cause young residents to deny belonging altogether, indicating that the relationship between place-based stigma and young people’s sense of belonging is far more nuanced than the internalisation thesis suggests.

In fact, several scholars disagree with Wacquant’s internalisation thesis, at least as a universally applicable phenomenon. Instead, they give evidence to suggest residents of stigmatised areas experience “a sense of belonging and local pride, even resistance” (Schultz Larsen and Delica, 2019, p.551). Jørgensen (2010) refers to this type of belonging as a “subcultural way of belonging […] characterised by establishing an intentional distance from the surrounding society” (p.9). This, she suggests, is distinctive from other forms of belonging because it is “defined in opposition to the surrounding society” (Jørgensen, 2010, p.10) which looks down on them.
This is a finding that appears in research exploring young people’s sense of place belonging, particularly in deprived areas. Stahl and Habib (2017) found that young people’s sense of place belonging is not simply based on positive feelings of attachment but can be a product of social exclusion and place-based deficit discourses. In fact, in deprived neighbourhoods residents often have a strong sense of place belonging because of a sense of physical or social isolation caused by, for example, “specific location and transport deficits and by the stigmatising attitudes of outsiders” (Pickering, Kintrea and Bannister, 2012, p.947). Similarly, in Adekunle’s (2017) study exploring young people’s sense of safety, belonging and territoriality in London, he found that young people do not always “absorb the stigmatising imagery about the place in which they reside” (p.194). Instead, they wear it as a badge of honour.

Resistance to stigmatisation may also make itself known in more extreme ways. Sernhede’s (2011) research with young people living in stigmatised urban areas in Sweden evidences their resistance to stigmatisation, in this case, through more active and potentially dangerous expressions such as occasional “scuffles with the police or acts of arson against schools or other establishments” (p.167). These examples illustrate very different types of resistance and show that the internalisation of stigma is not a given for everyone, in all locations, but rather, that experiences of stigmatisation may provoke resistance, which is expressed in innumerable ways.

There is also a third option identified by Schulz Larsen and Delica’s (2019) literature review of the production of territorial stigmatisation. They assert some scholars take issue with the dichotomisation of internalised stigma and a sense of place belonging and suggest the two are not mutually exclusive, but rather, in some cases, “internalisation coexists with meaningful belonging and resistance” (Schultz Larsen and Delica, 2019, p.552; see also, Castro and Lindbladh, 2004). In fact, Wacquant’s own position has changed over the years, and in his later work he developed a more nuanced position,
suggesting that residents of stigmatised areas develop a plethora of socio-symbolic strategies, “ranging from submission to defiance” (Wacquant, Slater and Pereira, 2014, p.1270). Davidson’s (2013b) research exploring young people’s experiences living in a ‘disadvantaged’ part of a Scottish city revealed that the reputation and stigma attached to the place they lived impacted their “worlds of belonging” (p.170); however, young people responded to the negative image of the place they lived, and the negative corresponding labels attached to them, differently with some internalising the stigma and others resisting it. This highlights the fact that young people are not a homogenous social group (Davidson, 2013b) and even in a small community young people experience and react to their physical and social worlds in innumerable ways. Given the contested nature of Wacquant’s internalisation thesis, it is clear that residents’ responses to territorial stigmatisation are wide ranging, complex and contradictory, and as such, is an area that requires further investigation.

Thus far this section has considered the conceptual development of territorial stigmatisation and zeroed in on the debates surrounding resident responses to place-based stigma. The next section moves on to identify several gaps in the literature.

2.4.3 Identifying the gaps

Territorial stigmatisation is a relatively new concept, and as such there are several gaps in the existing canon of research. This section identifies these gaps and considers the way in which my research will contribute to filling them.

There is a body of research which explores territorial stigmatisation in Scotland’s largest cities including Glasgow (Gray and Mooney, 2011; Gray and Porter, 2015; Paton, 2018; Hastings and Dean, 2003), Dundee (Gourlay, 2006) and Edinburgh (Kallin and Slater, 2014; Kallin, 2017). These cover a broad array of topics, ranging from studies exploring the way that territorial stigmatisation negatively affects the lives of residents in housing estates to
the role of law and policy in perpetuating place-based stigma (Gourlay, 2006; Gray and Porter, 2015).

As of 2014, most Scottish-based research on territorial stigmatisation focused on Glasgow (Kallin and Slater, 2014). Thanks to contributions by Kallin and Slater, there is now more research considering territorial stigmatisation in Edinburgh, but still very little outside of Scotland’s ‘central belt’. This is understandable given Scotland’s most populated cities are located there. That being said, Hastings and Dean (2003) assert, “every city and town in the UK has neighbourhoods which have reputations for problems such as poverty, crime, drug abuse and physical decay” (p.172); yet, there is little research exploring territorial stigmatisation in smaller cities and towns within Scotland where place-based stigma and inequalities and prejudice around gender, age, class, race and ethnicity persist (Cacho, 2016; de Lima, Arshad and Bell, 2011; Scottish Government, 2021).

Moreover, there is limited existing research which addresses how territorial stigmatisation affects young people (see, for example Sernhede, 2011), especially in Scotland. Not only that, but research exploring the concept of territorial stigmatisation rarely takes a gender lens (with some expectations - see Adekunle, 2017 who found empirical gender differences). My research seeks to address these gaps and specifically looks at young women’s role in the production of territorial stigmatisation by considering their experiences and responses to it. The Scottish literature, and the concept more broadly, would be enriched if the views and experiences of young women residents were taken into account to better understand if and how gender inequalities interact with territorial stigma and affect young women’s access to, and involvement in the public realm.

Additionally, women appear to be underrepresented in publications in this field. Of the 119 peer-reviewed articles included in Schulz Larsen and Delicia’s 2019 literature review on the production of territorial stigmatisation, in personal correspondence, after a quick count, Schultz Larsen estimated that only 37 out of 119 of the first authors of the reviewed literature are
women (Schultz Larsen, 2020). This means that women’s perspectives and insights are largely absent from this body of work, and in combination with the fact that so little research in this area takes a gender lens, gender differences in how territorial stigmatisation is produced and experienced are yet unknown. My research seeks to highlight this gap and contributes to the literature on territorial stigmatisation by exploring the intersection of young women’s experiences of territorial stigmatisation and their sense of place belonging in their neighbourhoods in Inverness.

2.4.4 Section conclusion

Wacquant’s conceptualisation of territorial stigmatisation inspired a wide array of scholarship exploring place-based stigma around the world. His work draws on both Goffman and Bourdieu and looks critically at not only the existence of place-based stigma, but its production and reproduction at different scales. While Wacquant’s work sparked new research in this area, the canon of literature would benefit from further conceptual clarity and a sharper focus on how territorial stigmatisation is (re)produced in different settings. Contributions to the field would do well to recognise the way in which place-based stigma variously effects the lives of residents of stigmatised areas with reference to age, gender and other aspects of social identity.

With this in mind, my research considers both the reproduction and the impact of territorial stigmatisation in Inverness, specifically highlighting the ways in which young women perceive, experience, navigate, and propagate territorial stigma on a daily basis, and the implications this has for their (im)mobilities, use of the public realm and sense of belonging.

2.5 Conclusion

This literature review gives evidence to the large body of research exploring young people’s experiences but highlights the need for more research specifically considering the complex influence of gender on young women’s daily lives, including how gender affects their mobilities, use of the
public realm, and sense of place belonging. While considerable research exists exploring each of these concepts individually, there is currently not enough research which looks at the overlap between these areas, particularly with reference to young women living in a small Scottish city.

2.5.1 Integrating disparate concepts

In this chapter I introduced several key concepts including gender, mobilities, space/place, place belonging and territorial stigmatisation. According to Risman (2018a) gender operates on different levels of analysis. I assert that by mapping young women’s (im)mobilities onto a multi-scalar conceptualisation of gender, a more complete understanding of the factors influencing young women’s (im)mobilities will emerge. To enhance the nuance of this analysis and ensure young women are viewed, not in isolation, but in their social and spatial contexts, it is fruitful to bring together the literature on place belonging and territorial stigmatisation with gender, (im)mobilities, and space and place. These concepts do not frequently appear together in literature exploring young women’s gendered mobilities, yet integrating them is invaluable for understanding the multiple influences on young women’s gendered (im)mobilities in their social and spatial worlds. I assert that place belonging and territorial stigmatisation relate to each other, and in this section, I theorise some of the ways both concepts influence young women’s (im)mobilities at different scales.

The central feature of the concept of place belonging is one’s attachment or connection to a particular locality (Habib and Ward, 2020b). Place belonging at different scales may be strong, weak or somewhere in between (Antonsich, 2010). The intensity and scale at which young women feel an attachment to place has implications for their (im)mobilities in the short and long term. The literature recognises that mobile practices may contribute to, or erode, a sense of place belonging in the public realm (Wyn, Cuervo and Cook, 2020; Warr, 2015). For example, young women who have low levels of mobility at the micro-level – who do not want to or who are not allowed to move around their neighbourhoods – may have a corresponding
weak sense of place belonging in their neighbourhoods. However, they may have a strong attachment to place at a different scale; for example, to their home or country. Beyond this, very little research considers the multitude of other ways in which mobilities and place belonging shape each other.

In fact, young women’s mobilities alone do not shape their sense of place belonging. Young women's movements and journeys happen in time and space, and are they are not isolated, but interconnected with the movements of others (Massey, 1991). A sense of place belonging may grow in relation to others and is affected by the extent that young women, and the important people in their lives (i.e., peers, family and important adults), feel a sense of place belonging at different scales (i.e., home, street, neighbourhood or country) (Wyn, Cuervo and Cook, 2020). This has implications for young women’s (im)mobilities in the short and long term. For example, those with strong local social networks may have a strong sense of belonging where they live.

Not only do (im)mobilities influence young women’s sense of place belong, but place belonging may influence their (im)mobilities. At the micro scale, for example, a strong sense of place belonging may increase mobilities as young women visit friends and family who live near them. In the long term though, a strong sense of place belonging reinforced by strong local social connection could encourage immobility by inspiring young women to remain in their neighbourhoods when they reach young adulthood. Alternatively, a strong sense of place belonging to family or friends further afield could encourage less frequent, but more extensive, journeys. Conversely, a weak sense of place belonging may mean young women desire to move away from the place they grew up, leading to future macro mobilities. From these examples, the complex and nuanced relationship between place belonging and (im)mobilities reveals the need for more empirical research examining how these concepts interact.

The literature on territorial stigmatisation also helps clarify, explain and contextualise young women’s (im)mobilities at different scales. As this
chapter outlined, territorial stigmatisation is a concept that helps account for how place meanings grow and spread and their consequences. At the individual level, widely held place meanings have a bearing on young women’s own feelings about a place and their desire to move in and through it. Therefore, place meanings matter and influence if, when, and how young women’s mobilities take place therein. In addition, young women’s mobilities in a place and their visible presence on streets and in neighbourhoods could also change how that place is perceived.

At the interpersonal level, territorial stigmatisation, and the degree to which it is felt by people in young women’s lives (family, friends, peers), influences where they do and do not go. Negative place reputation may influence if, when, how and with whom young women are allowed or discouraged to go by parents/carers. For example, if a place were represented as ‘dangerous’ it may mean some people will avoid those places, or it may create a sense of danger that some individuals seek out. Moreover, the stigma that residents of defamed areas face when they are outside of their neighbourhoods could cause them to limit their mobilities to avoid encountering stigmatisation from others. Alternatively, residents of stigmatised places may seek to spend as much time outside of their neighbourhoods as possible, disassociating themselves from it. At the macro level, territorial stigmatisation reveals, frames, and seeks to explain the consequences of social and economic inequalities. The narratives propagated about place may keep non-residents out – with implications for the long-term economic health of the area.

The relationship between (im)mobilities and place-based stigma are rarely considered in the literature, especially in relation to young women. This is a gap that my research seeks to fill as territorial stigmatisation helps contextualise young women’s experiences of movement by drawing attention to collective place meanings that are too often ignored in mobilities research.

Place belonging and territorial stigmatisation help account for how personal and collective place meanings shape young women’s physical
micro and macro (im)mobilities over time. Exploring the relationship between place belonging and territorial stigmatisation with reference to mobilities provides a richer and more contextualised multi-scalar view of the gendered factors shaping young women’s lives.

2.5.2 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I outlined several key concepts including gender, mobilities, space, place, place belonging and territorial stigmatisation. These concepts are themselves contested and difficult to define, yet interrelated. Moreover, they are central to understanding young women’s access to and involvement in the public realm. In the first section, I presented Risman’s meta-framework for understanding gender. Of particular importance is the recognition that gender differences and inequalities play out on all levels of analysis, from the individual, to the interpersonal to the macro. This recognition, in combination with the acknowledgement that there are both material and cultural ways in which gender is (re)produced at every level, helps illustrate the various ways gender affects young women’s day-to-day lives and provides a justification for the use of a gender lens in this research. The enduring salience of gender in the lives of young women on multiple levels, in varying contexts, and in different forms, justifies research which seeks to identify how and in what ways young women’s lives are shaped by it.

In the second section on mobilities, I identify a gap in the literature. While there is a considerable body of work exploring young people’s mobilities, and more considering gendered mobilities, the overlap of the two is a small, but growing field of research that often focuses on the individual and interpersonal effects of gender on young people’s mobilities with less emphasis on the way in which gender inequalities on the macro level impact young women’s day-to-day (im)mobilities in the public realm. Moreover, there is a need for greater emphasis on young women’s experiences and perceptions of their own mobilities, as well as the meaning given to mobilities by themselves and others.
In section three, I consider space and place. These two interrelated but separate concepts are often paired with research exploring mobilities as mobile practices contribute to constituting and giving meaning to place. This section reviewed the literature on young people in connection to space and place. From this it is clear that more research is needed which recognises the way in which gender, in combination with other social identities, impacts young women’s access to and experiences in the public realm. This includes the role of adults in facilitating or impinging their access, and if and what parts of the public realm meets young women’s needs. I also briefly considered research exploring place belonging, and how this is developed by young people through their mobilities and other spatial practices.

In the last section, I reviewed the conceptual development of territorial stigmatisation. I then considered Wacquant’s internalisation thesis and pointed out the ways in which my research will add to our understanding of how young people respond to stigmatisation in their communities. Lastly, I identified several gaps in the research. Namely, there is little research that considers this concept in Scotland’s small cities, which my research seeks to address. Moreover, the field would benefit from more research which takes a gender lens, more research highlighting young people’s experiences, and more empirical and theoretical contributions from women.

2.5.3 Research aim and questions

From the reviewed literature, I identified several gaps and areas for further research. To address these lacunae and add to the research in these areas, the aim of my research is to explore the everyday (im)mobilities of young women in Inverness and the implications these have for their involvement in, and access to, the public realm.

To do this, I address the following questions:

1. What factors limit young women’s mobilities, and what factors encourage young women’s mobilities?
2. If and how are young women’s social connections related to their (im)mobilities?
3. Where do young women meet [everyday and exceptionally] and how do they get there?
4. What are young women’s perceptions of these spaces and journeys, and their access to them?

In the next chapter, I present my methodological approach to this research exploring young women’s (im)mobilities and use of the public realm in Inverness.
Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter introduces the methodological approach I used to undertake this research. I first situate the research by justifying why social constructionism is a suitable epistemological approach for addressing the research aim and questions. I then introduce the field site and gatekeepers and justify the sampling frame. Next, I present the qualitative methods I used and explain why they are the most appropriate methods for addressing the research questions. I then outline my approach to data management and data analysis. The next section is dedicated to a detailed consideration of ethics. The final section considers reflexivity, particularly the positioning of the researcher, and the influence of power in constituting the research.

3.1 Situating the research

In this section I orient the reader by introducing the epistemological approach I used. I then present and justify the field site, gatekeepers and sampling frame with reference to the research questions.

3.1.1 Epistemological approach

Social constructionism is an epistemological approach which asserts that knowledge is not singular and static but "actively 'constructed' by human beings, rather than being passively received by them" (Ritchie et al., 2014, p.13). It is a fitting epistemological approach for research, like my own, which recognises that childhood is shaped and defined not only by young people’s physical growth and development, but by multiple and complex socio-cultural factors. This conceptualisation of childhood aligns with the ‘new sociology of childhood’, a paradigm popularised by James and Prout in the late 1990s (James and Prout, 1997; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998). The intellectual shift within the social sciences away from a strictly developmental view of childhood towards an understanding of childhood as socially constructed and children and young people as social actors is now well established in childhood and youth studies (Ansell, 2009; Holloway and Valentine, 2000; James and Prout, 1997). The new sociology of childhood emerged as a
reaction against long-held idealised and homogenous notions of childhood widely held in some academic disciplines, including developmental psychology (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt, 2014). This reconceptualization of childhood made way for new research to emerge which problematised these widespread ‘ideal’ notions of childhood located “in fixed and bounded spaces” (Ní Laoire et al., 2010, p.157), that is, childhood defined and explained as “a time of stability and rootedness” (Holdsworth, 2013, p.421). Instead, it invited the critical examination of diverse and contextual childhoods and methodological approaches which include and involve young people. My research builds on this foundational body of work.

Social constructionism is, moreover, an ideal epistemological approach for qualitative research which does not strive for generalisability, but rather seeks to highlight the way life is for people in a particular setting, in the case of my research, young women in Inverness. Qualitative research seeks to “provide illumination and understanding to complex psychosocial issues” (Marshall, 1996, p.522). It thus pairs well with social constructionism which claims knowledge is not universal, but socially and culturally specific, influenced by factors such as time and place (Burr, 2015; Lock and Strong, 2010). Furthermore, social constructionism recognises the way in which human experiences with others contribute to knowledge construction (Burr, 2015). In this way, it is ideal for research, such as mine, which is centrally concerned with exploring young women’s day-to-day social interactions and questioning “taken-for-granted knowledge” (Burr, 2015, p.4). Lastly, social constructionism is “concerned with meaning and understanding as the central feature of human activities” (Lock and Strong, 2010, p.6) and it is thus compatible with my research which seeks to explore young women’s own meanings and perspectives.

For these reasons, social constructionism is a justifiable epistemological approach for my qualitative research exploring the experiences of young women in Inverness.
3.1.2 Research context

I conducted fieldwork from October 2018 – May 2019 in Inverness, Scotland. Inverness gained city status in 2000 and is the only city in the Highlands; it is thus “the economic, social, education and transport hub for a huge region” (HiTRANS, 2011, p.7). As of 2011, the population of Inverness was 48,201 (Scotland’s Towns Partnership, 2018). However, according to the Scottish Cities Alliance, “Inverness is the fastest growing city in Scotland with 15% growth in population since 2001” (Hardie, 2016, para.5). Inverness has a mixed demographic profile in terms of class and country of origin, with nearly 8 per cent of the population born outside of the UK (Smith, Sobey and Ross, 2014, p.11). In terms of race, however, Inverness is, to use Nayak’s (2017) phrase, a “mainly white localit[y]” (p.289). According to the latest census, nearly 98 per cent of the population of Inverness is white (National Records of Scotland, 2011).

To uncover detailed insights into the spaces and places that young women frequented, after moving to Inverness, I narrowed the research field site to focus on a smaller geographical area. This area was comprised of residential neighbourhoods which I call Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood (these are pseudonyms – see Section 3.4.3 Anonymity and confidentiality). These neighbourhoods have a mixed demographic profile, and experience a host of socio-economic challenges including high rates of poverty, unemployment and crime (Scottish Government, 2020b). The three neighbourhoods all fall within one secondary school’s catchment area, meaning young people from the area, for the most part, attended the same secondary school. Given the research focus on mobilities, I was interested in conducting research where young women used multiple forms of transportation (including walking). This area fit this criterion and was within walking distance of the city centre, meaning young women were less likely to depend exclusively on parents picking them up and dropping them off or public transport to attend school, see friends, or attend extracurricular activities. This cluster of neighbourhoods was also selected because it had responsive gatekeepers.
In the next section I outline my sampling criteria based on the research questions and explain the importance of gatekeepers to the research. I then justify why some adjustments were made to the sampling strategy once I was in the field.

### 3.1.3 Sampling strategy and gatekeepers

I used a non-probability purposive sampling approach which I supplemented with additional snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is the “intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon” (Robinson, 2014, p.227). In short, using a purposive sampling approach, participants are selected who have knowledge, insight or experience that will help answer the research questions. I thus chose participants using certain eligibility criteria derived using the research questions and my own judgement. A purposive sampling approach is appropriate for qualitative research because it “places the investigator’s research questions at the heart of the sampling considerations” (Bryman, 2015, p.407). One of the drawbacks of non-probability sampling of any kind is that it is not generalisable (Wilson, 2014). This, however, is typical of many small-scale qualitative studies and is therefore justifiable. Although purposive sampling was primary, additional snowball sampling was also used. Snowball sampling involves research participants recommending others in their networks to take part in the research, and is useful for reaching groups that are difficult to access such as high level professionals (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2017). Following each data collection activity, participants were asked if they knew someone who would be interested in taking part in the research. Researcher discretion based on the research aim and questions was used, and participants’ recommendations were weighed up against the sampling criteria.

Qualitative research ideally should “generate rich, contextually laden, explanatory data” (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2017, p.48), and including multiple perspectives assists in achieving this aim (Harden et al., 2010). Therefore, I sought to include four groups of participants in the research: 1)
young women, 2) parents/carers, 3) key adults and 4) policy professionals (see Appendix 1). The four groups were determined based on their expertise and/or experiences which allowed them to answer the research questions. The specific sampling criteria for participant groups varied, but each was based on the research questions and literature from similar studies. Including different viewpoints in small-scale qualitative research adds depth to the data and assists in capturing a range of perspectives to answer the research questions (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2017; Rapley, 2004; Harden et al., 2010). Additionally, including a variety of participant groups is beneficial in social research as it “allows for the identification of fundamental similarities and differences” (Valtonen 2004, p.74) within and between groups. Moreover, collecting data from different sources generates a more robust dataset as it allows for triangulation (Gallagher, 2010). Triangulation here refers to “considering an issue of research from (at least) two points or perspectives” (Flick, 2019, p.2), to add strength to the findings, in this case, from the perspectives of young women, parents/carers, key adults and policy professionals. Triangulation is also achieved by combining several different methods (Flick, 2019).

I sought to include 20 young women between the ages of 14 and 17 in my research. I estimated this number of participants would allow for a wide range of views and experiences to be gathered within the boundaries of my study timeframe (Baker and Edwards, 2012). My proposed sampling criteria for this group included age, gender and geography. In other similar studies, age and gender are both “factors identified as key to understanding children’s mobility patterns” (Christensen and Mikkelsen, 2013, p.205). I specifically sought to include 14 to 17-year-olds because some existing research on young women’s gendered mobilities suggests that mobility regulations (their own and others for them) may shift following physical changes to young women’s bodies that occur after the onset of puberty (Hallman et al., 2014; Mmari et al., 2017b; Porter et al., 2017) which, on average, young women start between the ages of eight and 14 (NHS, 2021). Additionally, some research indicates that concern over young women’s mobilities compared to
young men’s of a similar age increases during adolescence (Blum et al., 2017; Mmari et al., 2017a). A sample including 13 to 17-year-old young women thus did not guarantee but increased the likelihood that if similar factors existed in Inverness, they may emerge from the data.

The prioritisation and meaningful inclusion of young women in the research was intentional and stems from a feminist research approach which asserts that the lived experiences of young women are historically underrepresented in processes of knowledge construction (Harding, 1987). I thus intentionally sought to include young women’s perspectives to make up for their past underrepresentation in research. Young women are experts in their own lives and are best positioned to provide insights about their personal experiences and perceptions (Gallagher, 2010). Specifically, they are uniquely qualified to identify the individual level factors shaping their (im)mobilities. Additionally, geography was also part of the sampling criteria because the research questions sought to illuminate young women’s knowledge and experiences of their local area. By including young women who all had experiences of a particular locality, I hoped to build a detailed picture of the spaces and places that they went which would be lost if geography were not considered.

Additionally, I intended to include 20 parents/carers in the research. When young women took part in a research activity, I planned to ask them to provide a phone number for one of their parents/carers so I could invite them to take part in the research. Parents/carers often have considerable knowledge about their daughters lives and play a central role in regulating young women’s mobilities – determining where, when and with whom their daughters travel outside of the private domain of the home. However, I also recognised that asking young women to provide the contact details for a parent/carer might discourage some young women from participating in the research. I sought to counteract this by reassuring young women from the onset that I would not discuss what they told me during research activities
with their parent/carer (a further discussion on ethics will follow in Section 3.4).

The third participant group include what I call 'key adults', that is, important adults in the lives of young women who have expert insight into their experiences in the public realm where most of their interactions with young people occurred (i.e., youth clubs, community activities and/or schools). Key adults facilitate or support young women’s building social connections and positive experiences in their communities and have nuanced understandings of their social interactions and mobilities in the public realm which would contribute to answering the research questions. I planned to select key adults to interview by identifying and contacting organisations and institutions that worked with young people in Thistlevale, Belford, and Myrtlewood and through snowball sampling. Lastly, I planned on including policy professionals based on their ability to provide detailed insight into the macro-level factors affecting young women’s (im)mobilities, for example, the inner workings of the public transportation system in Inverness. I sought to select policy professionals by identifying and contacting organisations (governmental and nongovernmental) specialising in transportation and urban planning, and through snowball sampling.

In total, 41 people took part in at least one research activity including 12 young women between the ages of 13-17, five parents/carers, 17 key adults and seven policy professionals. For a detailed overview of the participants, the research activities they took part in, and the location where the research activities were carried out, see Appendix 1. To select participants, I first sought out gatekeepers who could connect me with young women. Gatekeepers are usually trusted persons in the lives of young people and their families, and often have control over the spaces most suited for safe and ethical data collection (Mason, 2004b).

Finding gatekeepers is a crucial step in research with young people, yet it is often “one of the hardest stages of research” (Alderson, 2004, p.101; Heath et al., 2012). I sought to include diversity in the sample by going
through several different gatekeepers; however, I was dependent on the
gatekeepers, young women and parents/carers agreeing to participate. In
total, individuals at five different educational, youth and community
organisations acted as gatekeepers. The gatekeepers at these organisations
had varied levels of involvement throughout the research; for example, one
gatekeeper introduced me to just one young woman, whereas two other
gatekeepers took a particular interest in the research and helped me
navigate both practical and ethical challenges as they arose throughout the
data collection phase of my research.

Schools are often considered ideal gatekeepers as they provide
access to the majority of young people in a given area regardless of gender,
class, ethnicity or other social identities (Kustatscher, 2015). I approached
several secondary schools, and one responded and allowed me to include a
brief note about my research in the school announcements and to hold an
information session for interested young women during the lunch hour.
However, although the school was helpful, it was not a good time for them to
host me as a researcher (i.e., allow me open access to students during or
after school in their premises). I therefore also attended various youth clubs
and after-school activities held in the school and the wider area, where I
began the research with a period of getting to know the young people. In
these contexts, adult gatekeepers left me to approach young people and
invite them to take part in the research. I thus introduced myself and
explained my research through informal conversations, and in more
structured information sessions where young women were invited to come
and learn about the research. When describing the research, I explained the
research was open to anyone who identified as a young woman. I also made
sure the young women were aware that their relationship with gatekeepers
and service organisations would not be affected by their decision to
participate in the research, or not.

In total, 12 young women took part in the research who were between
the ages of 13 and 17 at the time the research was conducted who lived in,
and/or attended school or a weekly club in Thistlevale, Belford and/or Myrtlewood. The sample included a certain amount of diversity, but it was limited. The majority of the young women participants were white and from working class backgrounds. Most were born and grew up in the area in and around Inverness. However, several had moved from other parts of the UK, or in one case, from abroad. The research also included young women who identified as Scottish Travellers, bisexual, and/or as having additional support needs. None of the young women identified as trans, or any other gender outside of the binary. Furthermore, some young women came from single parent homes, and/or were young carers. An exact breakdown of the young women’s particular social identities will not be given to maintain anonymity. The above is provided to illustrate the diversity within the sample.

The participation of 12 young women in the research was sufficient firstly because several young women took part in multiple research activities which yielded rich and in-depth data and secondly, because the research also included three additional participant groups who provided varying perspective on young women’s lives. Although I personally met and had conversations with over 30 young women about the research, the majority of whom expressed interest in taking part, far fewer responded when I reached out to make concrete plans regarding research activities. To address this challenge, I widened the age criteria to include 13-year-olds as several 13-year-olds were keen to take part in the research. This change was justifiable based on the literature because, while concern for young women’s mobility compared to young men’s increases during adolescence, some research evidences gender differences in the mobility patterns and regulations of children as young as 10 years old (Christensen and Mikkelsen, 2013; O’Brien et al., 2000). On reflection, I did not think adjusting the age range by one year would have any significant influence on the data collected.

All 12 of the young women provided the contact details for their mothers, and in total, there were 11 possible mothers to interview (there was one set of sisters in the young women’s group and no same-sex couples
among the parents/carers). However, in total five mothers took part in the research. The reason for this is because some mothers were not interested in participating, others were too busy and two I could not get in touch with despite several attempts. My experience during fieldwork highlighted that this participant group, more than the others, had limited availability, as many had both paid and unpaid work commitments. They were also the group most likely to cancel or rearrange interviews due to competing priorities.

Although I did not make a gender distinction about parents/carers when recruiting participants, no fathers took part in the research. The absence of fathers in the research is in part explainable because I only asked the young women to provide one parent/carer mobile number in order to be sensitive to one-parent families. In the end, all of the young women provided their mothers’ contact details. The absence of fathers in the research is also explainable because at least half of the young women participants did not have a father living at home at the time the research was conducted due to divorce, bereavement or other circumstances. The absence of fathers' perspectives has implications for the research as both gender and generation have a bearing on individuals’ perspectives (Harden et al., 2010). It would, for example, be interesting to investigate what, if any, differences exist between mothers’ and fathers’ mobility regulations for their daughters within families and furthermore, if any commonalities exist across all fathers in the research. Future research could investigate these questions and could also consider the influence and potential differences of diverse parenting arrangements.

In total, I interviewed 17 key adults who worked with, or had specific knowledge of, young women’s lives. Key adults included educational professionals, young workers, social workers, NGO staff and community volunteers and their expertise were based on what they had observed working with young women and what young women told them about their experiences. Most key adults knew of or worked with the specific young women included in the research, but others worked with young women in the area, or were interviewed in order to provide contextual insight into local
youth culture and young people's involvement in various activities in the area. Two key adults were quite young themselves, 19-20 years old, and well positioned to lend insight into young women’s worlds because of their age. Four of the 16 key adults identified as men. The remaining 12 identified as women. One key adult was also the mother of a young woman involved in the research. She was included in the ‘key adult’ group because I met her in her professional capacity, and interviewed her first, after which her daughter agreed to take part in an interview. The total number of key adults that could have been included in this sample was large, and the exact number was not possible to identify. Instead of interviewing all possible key adults, which was not feasible given the study’s timeframe, I interviewed key adults until theoretical saturation was achieved, that is, no new themes emerged from the data (Baker and Edwards, 2012).

The fourth group in the sample are policy professionals. I interviewed seven policy professionals (four men and three women) whose expertise ranged from transportation to urban planning to connect young women’s personal experiences of mobility with larger, structural factors such as policy and infrastructure development in Inverness. These interviews were challenging as many policy professionals had not previously considered the impact of their work on young people, or specifically young women. I found that the participants, though interested in the research, did not feel they were in the best position to answer the interview questions. Interviews often had a sense of mutual discovery as the questions I asked sparked deeper consideration of how the policies/practices in their remit might affect young women. I interviewed fewer policy professionals than key adults because I reached theoretical saturation more quickly with this group as they did not have as much nuanced knowledge about young women’s lives. However, the contributions they did make were invaluable to the research findings.

3.1.4 Section conclusion
In this section, I first introduced social constructionism, and justified why it is a fitting epistemological approach for my research. In short, social
constructionism is an appropriate approach because it fits with the idea that childhood is socially constructed and culturally specific. Next, I provided an introduction and justification for the research setting. I then provided a justification and explanation of the sampling criteria and outlined the important role of gatekeepers in facilitating an introduction to young people. In the next section, I will provide a detailed account of the research methods I used.

3.2 Methods

I used a combination of qualitative methods including participatory techniques and semi-structured interviews. I did not use quantitative methods or mixed methods because my aim was not to test a hypothesis (usually achieved using quantitative methods), but rather to dive deeper into the perceptions, meanings and experiences of young women in a particular socio-cultural context (Bryman, 2015). Qualitative methods are a fitting way of addressing the research questions because they produce “in-depth understanding[s] of children’s relationships, contexts, and movements from the perspective of children themselves” (Christensen and Cortes-Morales, 2017, p.34). Moreover, previous research suggests that “combining different methods provides young people with the space and time they require to communicate the complexities of their lives” (Langevang, 2009, p.267).

In this section, I introduce the qualitative methods I used, and justify why they are appropriate for addressing the research questions. I also consider the limitations of the methods I used, and planned to use, in the context of the research setting.

3.2.1 Participatory techniques

Grant (2017) points out a distinction between the use of the term ‘participatory methods’ as a “meta-method approach, which requires a political commitment toward enacting and inspiring social change and challenging unequal power relations” (p.262) through the meaningful inclusion of young people in all, or part, of the research process, and
“participatory techniques, which provide alternative methodological tools” (p.262) for collecting data. My research was participatory in the sense that I utilised a series of participatory techniques to generate nuanced and contextual data to answer the research questions. I do not go so far as to claim a participatory approach, which “aim[s] to effect change for and with research participants” (Pain and Francis, 2003, p.46).

Participatory techniques are interactive and usually include activities which generate visual data that then serves as the basis for question-based discussion and reflection; for example, drawing, diagramming, mapping, photography, or creating video content (Davidson, 2017; Gifford et al., 2007; Grant, 2017; Gallagher, 2008). From February – March 2019, over the course of four pilot workshops, I carried out eight different participatory techniques with four young women (see Appendix 2 for an overview of how each workshop activity addresses the research questions). Inspired by the ‘mosaic approach’ introduced by Clark and Moss (2001), I combined mapping, diagramming and photo-based activities into a series of workshops outlined in Table 1. This variety allowed “the strengths of individual methods to compensate for limitations in others” (Young and Barrett, 2001, p.142). Each activity ran approximately 30-40 minutes to maximize young women’s “attention and concentration” (Hill, Gallagher and Whiting, 2009, p.130). The following table (Table 1) provides a summary of the participatory techniques I used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop 1: Place Maps</th>
<th>Workshop 2: Social Connections</th>
<th>Workshop 3: Journeys</th>
<th>Workshop 4: Celebration &amp; Wrapping up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood map</td>
<td>Vignette</td>
<td>Weekly activity</td>
<td>Photo diary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City map</td>
<td>Relationship chart</td>
<td>calendar/brainstorm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>River of life</td>
<td>Listing and ranking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Workshops and participatory techniques
Participatory mapping is an ideal way of addressing research questions surrounding experiences of space and place because mapping illuminates young people’s socio-spatial environments, and “specific features of a place using local knowledge” (Emmel, 2008, p.1; Gallagher, 2008). Through the processes of mapping, comparison and discussion participants move beyond merely describing spaces and places, to elaborating their experiences, and finally, to contributing to theorisation (Emmel, 2008).

Moreover, mapping activities need not only record features of the real, visible, built environment. It is also possible to map daily routines, life histories, or even imaginary futures, each of which lends different insights into the lives of participants (Chambers, 2002).

I planned on using three mapping activities in this research – neighbourhood mapping, city mapping and an activity called River of Life. In the neighbourhood mapping activity, the young women each drew a map of their neighbourhood (see Figure 1). They then compared similarities and differences between their maps, and I led a further discussion based on several prompt questions (adapted from the neighbourhood mapping activity in Davidson, 2013b). One challenge I encountered while facilitating neighbourhood map making was the fact that the process of doing the activity (drawing) became the focus of conversation between the young women instead of the research topic. Doing something visual or tactile introduces another element into the research process. Although I had hoped conversation would naturally flow around where young women did and did not spend time in their neighbourhoods, it much more centred around the process of map making. This did change later during the group discussion but is worth bearing in mind for future research endeavours.

Moreover, although I had planned a group city mapping activity, the young women expressed a desire to simply talk about Inverness, rather than draw a map of it. By its very nature, “participatory research can [and I argue, should] innovate and adapt to the needs and self-expression of the communities taking part” (Grant, 2017, p.274). Therefore, we discussed the
spaces and places in Inverness they went, without drawing these out in a map. This confirms what Gallagher (2010) wrote: not all young people enjoy participatory, visual, and creative methods, or in this case, maps. The neighbourhood mapping activity and the question-led discussion about Inverness addressed research questions three and four as they focused specifically on space and place.

![Neighbourhood map with place names redacted](image)

*Figure 1: Neighbourhood map with place names redacted*

The final mapping activity, River of Life, was more abstract and imaginative (adapted from Chambers, 2002). In this activity, the young women drew a river on a piece of flipchart paper to represent their lives. It started with their birth and ended with the present. The young women marked key moments in their lives; for example, the birth of siblings or moving house, on the paper. They then shared their maps with the group. The activity addressed research questions one and two, with particular focus on highlighting young women’s *macro-mobilities* (such as moving country). Beyond that, the activity was useful as it situated young women’s lives “within a biography of past experiences” (Kesby, 2007, p.196), thereby contextualising their accounts of daily life within the broader framework of their lives.
Apart from mapping, I used a range of other participatory techniques under the umbrella of ‘diagramming’ (Grant, 2017). Examples of diagramming techniques include brainstorming, tree diagrams and listing and ranking. Diagramming is useful because, like mapping, it can be tailored to the research context, before and during data collection, in response to the participants (Pain and Francis, 2003). Diagramming techniques “can reveal new information about how [young people] perceive a particular problem or issue affecting their lives” (Gwanzura-ottemöller and Kesby, 2005; Grant, 2017, p.271). However, diagramming techniques also have limitations, and the data generated from these activities “may be brief and superficial” (Pain and Francis, 2003, p.51) and the group setting in which these activities are conducted may affect what individuals choose to share. In this research, I used three diagramming techniques – 1) relationship charts, 2) weekly activity calendar/brainstorm, and 3) a listing and ranking activity. These techniques helped address all four of the research questions.

In the first diagramming activity, the relationship chart, the young women brainstormed important people in their lives, where they might meet-up with them, and the barriers and strategies for growing these relationships. This activity was designed to address research question two and shed light on if and how young women’s social connections related to their (im)mobilities. This activity provided general information about where young women spent time with those they were close to.

For the weekly activity calendar/brainstorm, the young women were given a blank seven-day calendar and asked to fill the calendar in during the week before the workshop. This was then the basis for a brainstorming session. The brainstorm was designed to identify a wide range of factors that may encourage and/or limit young women’s mobilities at different scales, thereby addressing research question one. With reference to their weekly calendars, the participants individually brainstormed the factors affecting where they went that week. They then worked together to group factors that were similar, and then place them on flipchart paper at different scales.
In the final diagramming activity, listing and ranking, the young women identify the types of transportation they used, and their preferences (see Figure 2). Listing and ranking activities generate discussion and necessitate cooperation between group members (Paz and Fry, 2008). Participants were instructed to write the different ways in which they move through their communities on sticky notes. They then shared their answers with each other and grouped similar answers. They then ranked their top three modes of transport based on their preferences and discussed the challenges and benefits for each type, which was followed by further discussion questions. This activity helped address research questions one and three.

![Image of listing and ranking activity]

Figure 2: Listing and ranking activity

One participatory technique I used does not fall under the umbrella of a creative or visual method. Vignettes in social research are typically “short stories about a fictional character or fictional scenario appropriate to the particular study” (O’Dell et al., 2012, p.703). These scenarios act as a stimulus for in-depth discussions based on a series of prompt questions. In this research, the young women were given a short scenario about a young woman who moved to their neighbourhood and were asked to discuss how
she might make friends, and the reception she would have in the community. This activity was originally intended to consider aspects of ‘social integration’, a theme that was subsequently revised in response to the emerging themes and available participants in the research. The activity was, however, still meaningful as it shed light on research question two, through a consideration of how (im)mobilities, including macro-mobilities such as moving house, affect young women’s social connections.

The final participatory technique used was a photo-based activity called Photo Diaries. The use of young person-led photography is a popular participatory technique with young people because it gives them “the ability to direct the research, gain new skills, and […] express themselves by nonverbal means” (Grant, 2017, p.267). Photo-based research activities can take different forms, but usually the young person is given the task of taking photos with broadly defined direction without the researcher present (Gregorius, 2017). After the photos are printed, they are used as visual prompts for further discussion. This method is lauded for its ability to transfer ownership over the data collection process to young people, which in turn, may “destabilize power imbalances between the researcher and the participant” (Gregorius, 2017, p.296). While the process did give ownership to the young women, it was unclear if this affected power imbalances between me and the participants.

The young women were given disposable cameras, as well as a brief overview of how to use the camera and a broadly defined ‘task sheet’ of what they should take photos of. The young women were asked to record what they took a photo of, along with the date and time the photo was taken in a handout log provided. Photo diaries are often used in research “to understand young people’s use of movement and travel between places” (see, Kullman, 2012; Pyyry, 2015; Grant, 2017, p.268). Moreover, photo diaries are ideal for research exploring mobilities as it is a method which allows young people to show, from their perspective, their “relationships to their environments and the places which are important to them” (Grant, 2017,
That being said, images can be interpreted in innumerable ways. Therefore, an important part of the process of this research activity was the young women’s own explanations (Thomson, 2008). To allow for this, in the final workshop, the young women chose several photos to discuss.

It is necessary to reflect on how the choice of methods impacts the data collected. Participatory techniques attract a certain type of young person, those that enjoy structured activities and can commit to being somewhere at a certain time in a certain place. From feedback provided, it was clear from the evaluations that the young women involved in the pilot workshops enjoyed the experience of using participatory techniques. However, research which relies on young women to ‘show up’ to take part in a planned activity, particularly over a series of weeks, may exclude those who lack the time, means, confidence or ability to take part. Therefore, one of the drawbacks of combining participatory techniques into a workshop series was that it excluded some young women. To account for this, following the pilot workshop series, when I continued to invite young women to take part in the research, I asked if they would be interested in a series of workshops or an interview, and almost all expressed a preference for taking part in a one-off interview. Given the young women’s preferences, I did not run the workshops again.

The next section considers the use of qualitative interviews which, because of participants’ interest and availability, was the primary data collection method I used in this research.

3.2.2 Interviews

Interviews are, simply put, “conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p.4). Rapley (2004) defines interviews as:

Social encounters where speakers collaborate in producing retrospective (and prospective) accounts or versions of their past (or future) actions, experiences, feelings and thoughts (p.16).
While the first definition has merit, Rapley’s definition provides useful detail as it recognises the influence of the researcher on the data generated. Interviews are inherently social encounters, and interview data is a product of the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Mason, 2004a; Rapley, 2004). Interviews are an appropriate method for addressing research questions such as my own, which seek to uncover “people’s personal and cultural meanings” (Magnusson and Marecek, 2015, p.6) about their lives and the world around them.

There are several kinds of interviews, including structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The variation coincides with “how narrow or broad the interviewer’s questions are” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p.4) and the degree to which flexibility around a topic is built into the interview design. For example, unstructured interviews may include only one or two broad questions based around a research topic, whereas highly structured interviews, frequently used in quantitative survey research, include specific questions asked in a certain way, in a predetermined order (Bryman, 2015). Semi-structured interviews fall in the middle of this continuum and are typically based on an interview guide which lays out a general framework of research themes, but allows for participants to shape the direction of the conversation (Mason, 2004a). Semi-structured interviews were suitable for this research because they provided some conceptual direction without being overly rigid which allowed participants’ experiences and meanings to emerge.

In short, semi-structured interviews were preferable to unstructured or structured interviews because, while participants were asked some specific questions to ensure the research topics were covered during the allotted time, “conversational flexibility” (Risman, 2017, p.8) was also built in to allow participants “to focus on matters central to them” (Risman, 2017, p.8). Moreover, semi-structured interviews were used as detailed accounts of participants’ experiences are more difficult to ascertain if highly structured interviews are used (Waterton and Wynne, 1999).
I conducted 38 in-depth semi-structured interviews with 40 participants from all four participant groups, including young women, mothers, policy professionals and key adults. As previously discussed, collecting data from a number of different participant groups using different methods adds robustness (Gallagher, 2010) and allows for comparison within and between groups and across different data sources. Interviews lasted between 25 minutes and one hour and 30 minutes depending on participants’ responses. The average interview was one hour long and took place at a time convenient for them. Interviews with young women took place at a youth centre or community centre, usually after school (more on this in Section 3.4.1 Risk of harm). Interviews with adults took place at a convenient location for the interviewees, ranging from people’s homes, to cafes, to workplaces. The interview locations may impact the data collected, and I tried to choose seating in public places that was as separate from others as possible so that interviews would not be interrupted, or overheard (Rapley, 2004). When interviewing in workplaces, I requested meeting in a quiet room away from other staff. In the one interview that took place in a home (this was with a parent/carer), we met in the living room.

I used interview guides tailored for the different participant groups, and I changed questions slightly for different key adults and policy professionals depending on their roles and experiences with young people. However, every interview guide focused on several key research themes corresponding with the research questions. I included both open-response questions about personal experiences and also questions focusing on more complex, abstract concepts (Kissoon, 2006).

Furthermore, interviews are a justifiable method because they are commonly used in research exploring children and young people’s mobilities and experiences in the public realm (see, Lagerqvist, 2019; Porter et al., 2020; Visser, 2020). For example, Porter and colleagues (2020) used semi-structured interviews to understand the way in which children experience their journey to school, neighbourhoods and public space. Semi-structured
interviews allow participants to provide in-depth and personal accounts of their experiences. This was the case in my research and compared to the data generated using participatory techniques in workshops, semi-structured interviews yielded more detailed accounts of young women’s lives. That being said, according to Mason (2004a):

Semistructured interviewing alone can produce only partial interpretive understandings and can be usefully supplemented by other methods […] including participant observation and visual methods (p.1023).

During interviews with the young women, I gave them the option of using some participatory techniques. For example, the young women were given the choice to either discuss the important people in their lives or represent them through a brainstorming activity. When offered the option of using diagramming techniques during interviews, the majority of young women preferred to discuss.

Interviews can be carried out with more than one interviewee. Of the 38 total interviews I carried out, 36 were conducted one-to-one, and two were conducted with two participants interviewed together. Individual interviews are beneficial because they “encourage interviewees to talk at length and in detail about their own understanding of issues without interruptions” (Punch and Graham, 2017, p.206). Interviewing more than one person at a time has implications for the data collected, namely, group interviews allow “for individual viewpoints to be validated, questioned, or challenged” (Punch and Graham, 2017, p.206). In group interviews, or when others are present during an interview, interviewee accounts may vary considerably; for example, individuals may hold back personal experiences or views that they do not want others to hear, or they may share answers they feel will give them credibility or status in a group context (Kesby, 2007).

I interviewed two participants together in two different instances – once with policy professionals, and once with young women. In the case of policy professionals, this was because I had arranged to interview one
person, but the organisation felt the second employee might have valuable insight to contribute. The choice was moreover justifiable because one individual was new to the role and would have struggled to answer all the interview questions alone. In the case of the young women, they expressed a preference to be interviewed together, making it an ethically sound decision. The combination of group and individual interviews was, though not a planned aspect of the research design, beneficial as it allowed me to reap the benefits of both kinds of interviews (Punch and Graham, 2017).

3.2.3 Limitations

I encountered several limitations which are important to acknowledge in the pursuit of ethical and transparent research. In addition to semi-structured interviews and participatory techniques, I initially intended to use participant observation and walking tours. However, due to ethical and practical considerations, I did not use these methods. This was mainly because the primary gatekeeper in the research did not want young people at the youth club to feel like they were being watched. Instead, I was encouraged to attend weekly activities, introduce myself, the research, and then invite young people to take part in discrete research activities such as interviews and workshops. Question-asking (i.e. interviewing) is a recognisable format for information-gathering frequently used with children and young people in the Western world (Hill, 2006), and workshops are commonly used in youth work throughout Scotland. It may, therefore, be that both were perceived as more “culturally appropriate” (Hockey, 2002, p.210) ways of collecting data.

Hockey (2002) writes about the difficulties of conducting participant observation in the UK as “research sites are heterogeneous and scattered, the weather is dire and everything interesting seems to be going on behind closed doors” (p.209). ‘Closed doors’ in the case of this research were not only physical, but, in the case of the youth club, comprised of gatekeeper’s concern that observation-based methods of data collection would make the young people feel uncomfortable and under surveillance. This was a feeling echoed by one young woman who, upon seeing the recording device I had
brought in to show the young women when I explained my research said, “Wait, are you recording us right now?” I assured her I was not. Whereas some studies have justified a covert approach to data collection, with young people, this is not ethical (Amstel, 2013). Given the difficulty of conducting participant observation in a way that satisfied ethics guidelines, as well as gatekeeper and young peoples’ concerns, I omitted participant observation as a method and instead conducted interviews and workshops which took place at specified times and places, having gaining consent ahead of time which provided more than enough data to work with.

Secondly, I offered young women participants the opportunity to take part in walking tours, sometimes referred to as walking interviews (see, for example, Ponto, 2017). However, there was a hesitation, or perhaps a lack of interest on the part of young women to participate. I could speculate on the source of this hesitation—a sense of discomfort going outside of designated ‘youth activity’ hubs with an adult who defied normal categorisation (I was, after all, not a parent, youth worker or teacher). Or, perhaps their reticence was less about me, and more about the cold weather or their busy schedules. In the end, I did not do them because the young women were not interested in taking part.

Weather and time of year may well have influenced young women participants’ enthusiasm for taking part in not only outdoor data collection, but any data collection activities during the winter months when there are few hours of daylight and cold temperatures. This certainly may have deterred some young women and adults alike from participating for part of the time I was in the field. However, I sought to counteract this issue by spending eight months (including Autumn, Winter and Spring) living in Inverness and collecting data.

Lastly, while I did initially consider documents as a data source, as the research evolved it became clear that they did not add to answering the research questions.
3.2.4 Section conclusion

In this section I provided a detailed account of the methods used, including participatory techniques and interviews. I then gave an overview of what these methods entailed, and the benefits and drawbacks of each. Following this, I justified why they were each appropriate for addressing my research questions. I concluded with a reflection on some of the limitations and challenges I faced choosing and using various methods.

In the next section I provide an overview of my data management strategy as well as an account of my approach to data analysis.

3.3 Data management and analysis

A clear data management strategy and critical consideration of the data analysis approach used are important steps towards the discovery of robust and nuanced research findings. This section provides an overview of the strategies I used to organise my data. I then justify and explain how I used thematic analysis to analyse the data.

3.3.1 Data storage and management

I recorded all workshops and interviews using two digital recording devices. I then transcribed all interview recordings, and the salient parts of the workshops. I adhered to the University of Edinburgh’s (2021) data protection guidelines when storing and managing data. I securely stored audio, transcripts and photographs I took of all the visual creations produced on One Drive on the SharePoint server at the University of Edinburgh and on my password protected personal laptop. I will delete the audio files 6 months after the successful completion of the PhD. As I collected data, I kept a detailed spreadsheet of all data collection activities on my password protected personal computer. I saved all audio files and transcripts with a unique code indicating the participant group (i.e., YW for young woman), method used (W for workshop and I for interview), and anonymised participant number. This code allowed me to easily keep track of data for young women who took part in several different research activities. It also
allowed me to quickly ascertain which participants were related across and within participant groups (i.e., which mother had two daughters interviewed). I also labelled each transcript with the location of the interview, the length of the interview, and the date the data was collected.

I used the qualitative data analysis software NVivo to assist with data management (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2017). The software is a useful tool for organising complex data, particularly data in a variety of formats. All visual data created including maps, photos and diagrams were accompanied by participants’ verbal explanations, or discussion, and these were transcribed for analysis. I then stored visual data alongside transcribed explanations in NVivo.

3.3.2 Thematic analysis

I used thematic analysis to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). This definition is intentionally vague, as thematic analysis is a flexible form of analysis and does not have a key seminal text which lays out stringent guidelines outlining how it must be carried out (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Rather, a few guiding principles and practices prevail – namely, thematic analysis is an iterative process of immersion in the data, coding, and theme identification, and then further theme refinement (Bryman, 2015). Thematic analysis is an ideal method for making sense of rich and complex qualitative data.

Thematic analysis includes the inductive process of “discovering, interpreting and reporting patterns and clusters of meaning within the data” (Ritchie et al., 2014, p.271). Thematic analysis is flexible, and themes may also be derived from the research questions, and “prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p.88). Thematic analysis thus fit with my research questions, included theme identification from the wider theoretical literature, while at the same time, allowed new unexpected themes and concepts to emerge from the data.
Data analysis starts with transcription as transcription helps the researcher immerse themselves in the data (Bryman, 2015; Ryan and Bernard, 2003). I transcribed interviews using a precise approach. I indicated non-verbal data such as pauses, laughter and gestures when I thought they were significant to the analysis and noted this in brackets within the text (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). I also included profanity and some filler words to “indicate the flavour” (Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p.4) of the conversations. All of my participants were native English speakers or spoke English fluently; this meant that translation was not an issue. Many of the people I interviewed used Scottish slang, or Scottish pronunciations of certain words. I indicated this in the transcripts by spelling words as they sounded to me. In several interviews, the interviewee’s pattern of speech, accent and/or background noise made some parts of the audio recordings difficult to hear. When the audio was not decipherable, I put unintelligible word(s) in brackets in the transcript with the time stamp.

While I transcribed the first workshop verbatim, given that, during the workshops, the young women spent a considerable amount of time doing icebreakers, energisers and taking breaks, it was not necessary to transcribe all the subsequent workshops. Instead, I listened back to the recordings and took detailed notes on key themes. I also transcribed snippets of the discussion relevant to the research questions. Moreover, after each workshop, I took pictures of the visual data generated from participatory techniques, as well as the flipchart papers which are a written record of discussions. All visual data produced, such as maps, were accompanied by a verbal or written explanation by the participants so that its intended meaning could be readily interpreted during analysis (Gallagher, 2010). I then printed out the workshop notes, and partial workshop transcripts, and went through a process of cutting and sorting them into piles and assigning them codes, and then grouped these coded text segments into overarching themes.

Coding involves labelling segments of text in transcripts, or other text data “that seem to be of potential theoretical significance and/or that appear
to be particularly salient within the social worlds of those being studied” (Bryman, 2015, p.573). Through a process of immersion in the data and sorting, I coded the parts of the transcript that I deemed significant, or which directly related to the research questions. I identified themes in a number of ways, including cutting and sorting data, looking for repetition in the data, identifying similarities and differences within and between participants’ responses, as well as by considering how the data related to existing theories and concepts in the social sciences (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). I also considered diversity across the data. Participants took part in various forms of data collection activities, and I looked at the data produced across each participant, across participants from similar/different social categories and across the young women-mother dyads, where possible.

To stay organised, I summarised and described these themes in a Word document. I also created an Excel spreadsheet where I kept track of the themes and codes (see, Figure 3). I then did the same with the interview transcripts. I read each transcript, highlighted segments of text and assigned these text segments initial codes. The initial round of coding generated a large number of codes. This process was iterative, and as I went, I inputted these into my Excel spreadsheet and refined and rearranged them under themes and subthemes as my thinking around them evolved. The themes, subthemes and codes formed the Y axis of the table. Data collection activities were listed on the X axis, and the cells in the centre of the table included transcript page numbers so the coded text segment could be easily retrieved. Additionally, my supervision team looked over the early codes to check for robustness in the analysis.
Once I had transcribed and coded the data, and organised it according to themes, I identified three headline themes, and then three to four subthemes for each of these. Each theme formed the basis for a findings chapter. Once I identified the salient chapter themes, I copied/pasted all text segments I had coded under these themes into a word document. I saved the Word document using the theme name, and then used headings to separate the coded data by sub-theme. I checked the validity of findings by searching for examples in the data that supported preliminary findings, but also those that contradicted them.

### 3.3.3 Section conclusion

In this section I outlined the way in which I managed a large amount of qualitative data, including how I securely stored and clearly labelled audio, text and visual data. I then introduced thematic analysis and identifying why it was an apt approach to analysing the data. I then described the way in which I carried out the analysis, including transcription, coding, theme identification, elaboration and refinement.
The next section considers several key aspects of ethical research with a particular focus on the ethical complexities of researching with young people.

3.4 Ethics

I sought ethical approval from the University of Edinburgh School of Social and Political Science’s ethics committee in keeping with PhD requirements. Formal ethical approval from the University was a necessary first step, following which I considered ethics on an ongoing basis throughout the research process. In this chapter, I will address the following key ethical considerations: risk of harm, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, the research environment, feedback to participants and compensation.

3.4.1 Risk of harm

People’s wellbeing was, and continues to be, the primary consideration above all other research aims. It is possible that research into the social worlds of young women, and into the ins and outs of community life, will uncover sensitive topics. In anticipation of this, I gave every young woman I approached to take part in the research a research packet to take home. The research packet included an information sheet tailored for each participant group (see Appendix 4), a colourful research information pamphlet introducing myself and the research (see Appendix 5), a consent form and a parent/carer consent form for young women under 13 years old (see Appendix 3) and an ‘About You’ handout for young women and one for parents/carers. I sought to be inclusive throughout the research process and asked each young woman and parent/carer to fill in an ‘About You’ handout (see Appendix 6) prior to taking part in research activities. This handout included questions about additional support needs, languages spoken, religion, and the best way to follow up to share research findings. In this way, I tried to make research activities as sensitive and accessible as possible. However, I also realise such questions are quite personal and the handout included the caveat that young women and parents/carers should only fill in what they were comfortable sharing. Furthermore, before starting interviews
and workshops, I gave young women a handout with relevant information for a variety of local support services. I also went over ethics and provided time for participants to ask questions (Hill, Gallagher and Whiting, 2009).

During data collection with young people, it is good practice to have another adult onsite (NSPCC, 2020); this does not necessarily mean in the same room, but close enough to provide support if needed. Gatekeepers involved in the research also advised this as it is a practice they follow in their work. Moreover, parents and carers may be more comfortable permitting their children to take part in research if they are assured a trusted professional will be on site who has an existing relationship with their young person (Tisdall, Davis and Gallagher, 2009a). During my research, gatekeepers well versed in child protection were either in the building, or if, as in one instance they had to leave for a short time, they were close by monitoring their mobile phones. I was able to signpost participants to this person if they needed additional support, and also consult with them following research activities about possible child protection issues which I did twice directly following a research activity.

The structure of research activities can be designed in a way that makes participants feel comfortable, if and when sensitive topics arise. For example, to assist in creating a supportive environment, I started workshops with a warm welcome and an ice-breaker activity (Hill, Gallagher and Whiting, 2009). Similarly, I began interviews with a friendly introduction and asked the participants how they were doing and gave them the opportunity to ask questions before we began. Ensuring participants are physically comfortable during data collection is also a key dimension of ethical research. I sought out quiet and convenient venues to run the workshops and interviews. I often used a ground floor room in a youth centre with a kitchenette and toilet facilities nearby. All workshops included a snack/comfort break, and participants were often offered a hot drink prior to interviews. For workshops, I created a comfortable atmosphere by heating the room ahead of time and rearranged furniture to create a designated space where young people could
take a break from research activities if they felt uncomfortable or uninterested in the topic (Hill, Gallagher and Whiting, 2009).

Research topics during data collection, including friendship and social connections, had the potential to highlight feelings of not fitting in, or of loss. I was aware of these realities, and I paid careful attention to how participants felt during the research, including non-verbal cues. After sharing personal stories and experiences, participants of any age may feel vulnerable, or emotionally exposed as a result of the unequal sharing of personal information between the participant and the researcher. At times, some participants shared sensitive personal information, and at one point, a key adult started to cry. When this happened, I asked if they would benefit from taking a break, or if they wanted to stop altogether. I then redirected the line of questions.

It is common practice when interviewing to progress to more personal questions at the end of the interview. To shift conversations away from more personal matters, I ended interviews by asking participants if they have any questions for me, or if there was anyone that they could recommend I get in touch with who may also know about the topics discussed. For workshops, I ended sessions with a short evaluation to get feedback on how young women felt about the session. I then thanked them for their contributions, explained the next step, and allowed time for them to ask questions.

3.4.2 Informed consent

It is helpful to think about consent in social research as encompassing the following four guiding principles:

1) Consent includes an explicit act (for example verbal agreement, written signature) […].

2) Participants can only consent if they are informed about, and understand, something of the nature, purpose and likely consequences of the research […].
3) Consent must be given voluntarily, and without coercion […].

4) Consent must be renegotiable, so that children can withdraw consent […] (Gallagher, 2009, p.15).

These principles formed the basis for how I approached informed consent in this research. I initially sought informed consent through a written agreement and ongoing consent through continued discussion about ethics from all research participants (Gallagher, 2009). Consent is an ongoing process, and I communicated to all participants that they could choose to stop participating at any time or decide not to answer specific questions. No participants opted out of the research, but some declined to answer specific questions through the use of silences (Mazzei, 2007).

When researching with young people, it is ethically important to “negotiate informed consent with children themselves, rather than obtaining proxy consent” (Gallagher, 2009, p.16) from adults, such as parents, carers and gatekeepers. Negotiating consent with young people rather than obtaining ‘blanket’ consent from parents/carers aligns with the position taken in this research that young people are competent social actors (James and Prout, 1997; Coyne, 2010). Moreover, the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991 suggests that children with a general understanding of what it means to do so can consent to take part on their own behalf, following medical consent provisions. However, in Scotland there is no fixed age in the law of when children and young people can give consent. In keeping with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) at the time the research ethics were submitted to the University of Edinburgh’s Ethics Review Board, for participants 13 or younger, I required both their own consent and parental/carer consent.

Even when young people’s consent was primary, I also gave information about the research to parents/carers. This provided an opportunity to then ask parents’ own consent to be interviewed. When researching with young people there is a balance between, on the one hand,
respecting young people’s ability to choose whether or not to take part in the research and, on the other hand, “acknowledging parental responsibility to ensure children’s safety and well-being” (Graham et al., 2013, p.57). In recognition of this balance, it is considered best practice to keep parents and carers informed about research with their young people (Graham et al., 2013). I therefore created information sheets tailored to every participant group. Moreover, I asked young women for a parent’s/carer’s phone number once they agreed to take part in the research and told them I would use it to reach out to their parent/carer to invite them to take part in a separate interview. In this way, young women helped in facilitating an introduction to their parents/carers once they themselves had decided to take part, and told their parents/carers about the research (Munford and Sanders, 2004).¹ Young people’s consent was primary, and ongoing, and they also had an active role to play in facilitating my contact with their parents/carers. At the same time, parents/carers were informed about the project, and had my details if they wanted to reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

Informed consent is more than a signature; it is an ongoing process and ideally includes an educational component. Participants of all ages may not be familiar with what research entails; thus, part of conducting ethical research is ensuring participants are aware of “the nature, purpose and likely consequences” (Gallagher, 2009, p.15) of the research. Prior to conducting data collection, to ensure potential participants knew what they were agreeing to take part in, in addition to information sheets, I created and distributed a colourful informative pamphlet outlining the aims and objectives of the research (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). The pamphlet included a section where I introduced myself and explained why I wanted to conduct the research, and how young women could get involved (see Appendix 5). Furthermore, I paired passing out printed information with conversations with all potential young women participants and, in doing so, I introduced myself

¹ The exception to this was with research with Travellers. In this case, gatekeepers played a more active role in explaining the research and approached both young women and parents/carers to gauge their interest before getting back to me.
and my research in layman’s terms, at times, using a visual aid which addressing the question, ‘what is a PhD?’ This explanation was important to share as most young women did not know what a PhD was. Knowing what their contributions are being used for is a vital element of informed consent (Gallagher, 2009). I therefore endeavoured to be transparent regarding possible outcomes and outputs with participants of all ages.

Lastly, language and literacy were sensitively addressed so that consent was truly informed. I asked gatekeepers to look over the research information sheet and consent form to ensure the content was clear. Gatekeepers who worked with Travellers fed back to me that particular care must be taken with some words such as ‘gender’, which may carry negative connotations in Traveller culture. In several cases, due to parent/carer illiteracy, the gatekeeper went through the consent form with them prior to their meeting me to gauge their interest in taking part.

3.4.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality are closely linked, but separate ethical concerns. For this research, what participants shared was anonymous unless there was a disclosure of significant harm. Significant harm includes sexual, physical or psychological abuse. I ensured that participants knew of this exception before consenting to take part in the research. Ahead of any data collection activities, I identified two gatekeepers I could discuss child protection issues with. Both worked closely with young people on a regular basis and worked for organisations with clear child protection procedures. There were two instances over the course of the fieldwork, and one instance during transcription, that I needed to contact them to share concerns about what participants said. Having both gatekeepers and supervisors who were willing and able to discuss these matters as they arose was essential for meeting ethical requirements, and also for ensuring the safety of the research participants.
To protect participants’ anonymity, I used pseudonyms in all research outputs. To avoid duplicate pseudonyms, or participants knowing each other’s pseudonyms and thus being identifiable to each other, I assigned pseudonyms at the point of transcription. Pseudonyms were chosen at random from the Scottish National Records Office popular baby names lists (National Records of Scotland, 2020). Damianakis and Woodford (2012) advise considering the “degree of specificity about participants’ social identities and/or study context” (p.715) prior to data collection. Disclosing the gender, exact age and background of a participant may make them identifiable because the research was conducted in a small community. I therefore decided to be judicious in choosing what identifying information to share and used details about participants’ backgrounds only when it was applicable to the findings. I did not name the organisations involved in the research or the professional positions of the key adults I interviewed because of how small and connected the community is.

The ethical issues surrounding anonymity are linked with that of confidentiality. Punch (2009) shared that in her research with children in rural Bolivia she changed the names of both participants and the communities where she conducted research. She did this because she did not want children to be identifiable to their parents as some children had shared information they did not want their parents to know. I did the same, as my research focuses on where young people go. I was aware that this could involve places that their parents are not aware of, but that pose no immediate risk to the young person.

In some social research, the field site is anonymised to ensure that participants and gatekeepers are not identifiable (see, for example, Sernhede, 2011). In my research, however I name Inverness so that key findings may be applied in context (Brent, 2009). The choice to name Inverness as the field site was also practical as “any disguise would be impossible to maintain” (Brent 2009, p.14). Scottish cities are unique and any level of detailed description about the nature of the built environment, green
spaces, or other distinguishing features would reveal its location to the curious and informed reader. Although I did not anonymise Inverness, I did anonymise the three residential communities in which the participants lived, worked and/or attended school and community activities. Some level of place-anonymisation was necessary to preserve anonymity of both young people and adults. This is a sacrifice, as anonymising place may take away from the possible impact on local policy and service provision at the local level. This was, however, a necessary compromise to uphold ethical requirements.

Damianakis and Woodford (2012) note “the risk of breaching confidentiality standards increases when engaging small groups or networks in which individuals know one another” (p.708). Community members and gatekeepers may be aware of who is taking part in the research. Some gatekeepers necessarily knew who took part in the workshop because records were needed of who was in the building for health and safety purposes, and after interviews some of the young women asked to have a look around the interview location and meet the adult gatekeeper on site. In a small and connected community anonymity is harder to maintain.

In a setting where research participants are likely to know each other, it is advisable to consider additional ethical considerations in the planning process. In the consent form for participants, I thus included an “acknowledgment of the small connected nature of the community” (Damianakis and Woodford, 2012, p.715). I began data collection activities with a discussion on confidentiality and ‘ground rules’ for workshops, which participants helped brainstorm. Included in these was respecting one another’s thoughts and opinions, and not disclosing what others have said outside the group, and, at the same time, ensuring that participants were aware of the limits of confidentiality.
3.4.4 Wrapping up the research

After I completed data collection, I wrote thank you cards for every participant involved, including the adult participants. As a way of further thanking the young women, thoughtful and proportionate compensation is appropriate as “participating in research involves children giving up their spare time” (Hill, Gallagher and Whiting, 2009, p.129). In recognition of this, with the participants in mind, and in conversation with gatekeepers, I determined an appropriate way to thank all participants for taking part in the research. In addition to a thank you note, I gave the young women a small, colourful notebook. This was well received and appreciated by participants. To mark the last research workshop, I ordered pizza and had a small celebration for the young women involved. Compensation for transport was not necessary for the research as all interviews and workshops were conducted within walking distance of where the young women lived.

I asked participants how they would like to be followed up with after the completion of research activities, for example, another visit, report, leaflet, video or blog (Hill, Gallagher and Whiting, 2009). Feedback to participants is a key component of ethical research. Most participants said they did not have a preference on how to be followed up with, although the majority said that an email would suffice. A few parents/carers said they would be happy to be followed up with over the phone or by text. I was fortunate to have completed my data collection by the time the COVID-19 pandemic reached the UK. That being said, my research was not unaffected by the pandemic.

In Scotland, the travel restrictions and general upheaval caused by the first lockdown in March 2020 presented difficulties following up with my participants. After completing my analysis, I was not able to visit the field site, something which I had initially considered. Instead, I emailed or, in a few instances, texted participants to share my findings and get feedback. However, my communications arrived in what was, for many, a stressful time at the beginning of Scotland’s first lockdown when in-person school and
youth work came to an abrupt halt. For example, one key adult whom I interviewed was furloughed when I followed up with him. As a result, he said he would wait to look at initial findings. I only received a reply from three participants out of the total of 41 with whom I followed up. This was almost certainly influenced by the pandemic. To ensure the ethical best practice of following up with participants was met, I contacted participants again in July 2021 with a summary of my findings.

3.4.5 Limitations

There is a tension in research between upholding ethical imperatives and providing sufficient context and detail when referring to participants and the field site to ensure the clarity and future impact of the research. In this section, I briefly summarise the issues I faced and the decisions I made surrounding how much detail to share about participants and the field site. I then discuss the implications of these decisions.

As previously discussed in this chapter (see 3.4.3 Anonymity and confidentiality), it is difficult to maintain the anonymity of participants in a small and connected community (Damianakis and Woodford, 2012). After spending several months in Inverness getting to know potential participants, it was clear that the pool of professionals that I wanted to include in the research was very small and many knew each other. Moreover, there were often only a handful of people who held specific job titles making them easily identifiable to others. With this in mind, and given the sensitive nature of the research topics, I made the decision to anonymise the job titles and employers of participants and only reveal information about their social identities when relevant to the analysis. This decision had several implications for the research.

A potentially limitation of anonymising the job titles and employers of participants is a lack of specificity in the findings which may make it challenging for readers to check the credibility of ‘expert’ participants. For example, it is difficult for a reader to judge the participants’ qualifications to
speak to certain issues. Furthermore, it may be challenging for researchers, policymakers and practitioners to follow-up on research findings with specific organisations and individuals involved in the research, potentially limiting the research impact. However, these limitations were a necessary trade-off I made to build trust with participants. In hindsight, they were also justifiable considering the candid and often critical stories and opinions that participants shared with me. For example, when discussing gender and transport, female employees were openly critical about their male-dominated workplace environment, which may not have not been the case if they were identifiable. It is likely participants’ personal comments about their employers and the beneficiaries with whom they worked would have been different if this level of anonymisation were not applied. In addition, one key adult, prior to an interview, specifically requested that her job title not be given because she was the only person working in that role in all of Inverness and the surrounding region. When discussing these sensitive topics, the anonymisation of personal and employer details was helpful, though this was a sacrifice as some level of detail was necessarily obscured in the analysis.

To balance these limitations, I provided as much clarity to readers as possible without risking participants being identifiable. Where possible, I included information about the general area key adults and policy professionals worked in (i.e., transport sector). Additionally, I included information about the social identities (i.e., ethnicity) of specific participants when it was necessary for understanding the data discussed. For clarity, in Appendix 1 there is a master list of the participants who took part in the research organised by participant group (i.e., young women, parents/carers, key adults or policy professionals). Each participant is listed under their pseudonym with a corresponding participant code, which is used in the findings chapters alongside all direct data quotes and summaries.

In addition to anonymising certain aspects of my participants, I also made the decision to anonymise the neighbourhoods in the research field site (see section 3.4.3 Anonymity and confidentiality). This decision was
related to the issue of participants being identifiable. For example, in one
neighbourhood there was a prominent youth worker that everyone knew, and
to name the neighbourhood would reveal their identity. To ensure participants
remained anonymous, I assigned the neighbourhoods pseudonyms.

Moreover, the residents of these neighbourhoods and professionals
who worked in them were initially suspicious of me as a researcher and
reluctant to participate due to a concern about how their neighbourhood
would be widely represented. Anonymising the neighbourhoods helped build
trust with potential participants and ensured that my thesis problematised,
rather than propagated, place-based stigma: something academics may
unwittingly spread through the repetition of stigmatising narratives about
specific places in their work (Wacquant, 2007). To maintain the anonymity of
these neighbourhoods it was necessary to exclude extensive descriptions of
the physical features of place. This is a potential limitation because
describing the physical landscape of the field site is often helpful in situating
and contextualising research. Not all readers will have prior knowledge of
what Inverness and the surrounding residential areas looks like. This again
was a small sacrifice I needed to make to ensure my research did not have
negative consequences for the people who lived in the field site.

All decisions I made surrounding anonymisation were made with
reference to the specific context the research was conducted in. The field site
was a small and highly connected community where many people knew one
another. In addition, the people living in the neighbourhoods I conducted the
research in contended with place-based stigmatisation. I made decisions
around anonymity, which necessarily obscured certain details about people
and places in the research to serve the more ethically important goal of
ensuring the research was conducted with consideration and care for the
wellbeing of participants and the wider community.
3.4.6 Lessons learned

My experience conducting fieldwork in Inverness presented several ethical challenges which I navigated with the support of my supervisors and the gatekeepers. One instance stands out as it captures the previously mentioned tension between young women’s consent and parental consent.

Two 13-year-old young women arrived to take part in the second workshop who had not attended the first. The young women had not told their parents/carers where they were going, or about taking part in the research, though they received research packets including a parent/carer information sheet. I urged them to call their parents/carers and let them know about the project before we started. This is because “ethical research involves informing and respecting everyone concerned” (Alderson and Morrow, 2004), including parents/carers. One young woman’s mother, after her daughter explained where she was and the research over the phone, agreed to her daughter taking part. However, the second young women’s mother, after hearing about the opportunity over the phone, wanted her daughter to come home. It was unclear if this was because she was uncomfortable with the research, or for another reason. After her daughter spoke with her, I also briefly talked to her on the phone and offered to provide more information about the research, and send another research packet home; however, she still wanted her daughter to come home at that point.

While it is necessary to recognise young women’s competency and ability to give consent, it is also ethical to let parents/carers know about research activities and allow them the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification about the research (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). The consequence of this, however, was that there was a young woman who wanted to take part in the research who was not able to after she told her mother about it. I provided her with a research packet to take home to her mother, including my email address, and encouraged her to get in touch with me if she had any questions or concerns. In the end, she did not, and the young woman did not take part in the research.
This example illustrates how ethical dilemmas play out during data collection. They are rarely clear cut, and often involve considering multiple, competing ethical imperatives while, at the same time, balancing other competing priorities, in this case, facilitating a workshop which was already underway.

3.4.7 Section conclusion

In this section I provided an in-depth account of the ethical considerations in this research, particularly as they apply to research with young people. I firstly outlined the risk of harm and the measures I took to mitigate this risk in the field. Secondly, I considered informed consent and the importance of ensuring participants not only receive information about the research but understand fully what they are agreeing to take part in, and how the data will be used in future. Next, I considered anonymity and confidentiality. I then considered the process of wrapping up the research, that is, how I determined to leave the site in a way that brought closure and expressed my gratitude to those who gave up their time to participate in the research. Lastly, I reflected on a lesson learned concerning the challenge of balancing competing ethical imperatives.

In the next section I move on to a discussion of reflexivity, and the way in which my own personal identities impacted the research.

3.5 Reflexivity

There is no one agreed definition or way of ‘doing’ reflexivity. Tisdall and colleagues (2009b) define reflexivity as:

The thoughtful reflection of a researcher upon the impact of her or his research on the participants, their social world, on the researcher her or himself and on the knowledge produced (p.229).

A reflexive approach can be variously applied to different stages of the research, from its design to dissemination (Finlay, 2003; Whitaker and Atkinson, 2019). In this research, I apply a reflexive approach by considering
the “situated, emergent and negotiated nature of the research encounter” (Finlay, 2003, p.8). In short, my approach to reflexivity included considering my own position as a researcher and critically reflecting on how power, identities, judgements and biases influenced the research design, process and outcomes.

### 3.5.1 Positioning of the researcher

In qualitative research with young people, the researcher is faced with the ongoing decision of how to position themselves. This positioning has implications for the nature of the data collected. Some researchers assert gaining ‘insider’ status through friendships with participants generates more honest findings (Heath et al., 2012). However, this approach is ethically problematic, particularly with young people, as it blurs the boundary between researcher and participants, and may make it difficult to decipher when and where research is being cared out. Moreover, in contemporary Western society, concerns over ‘stranger danger’ abound (Pain, 2006). In this climate, young people and parents alike could consider it suspicious if an unknown adult approached, let alone befriended, a young person.

I was in my late twenties as the time the research was carried out and my relative young age was helpful for building rapport with young women (Heath et al., 2012). That being said, I put necessary boundaries in place to keep the relationship with young people appropriate. For example, I met young people through gatekeepers, I did not accept friend requests from young people on social media, and I communicated with young people via my university email account or through gatekeepers. I did not try to be like one of the young people, nor did I align myself with authority figures (such as teachers). Instead, I emphasised my student status and background as a volunteer youth worker. I did this not only with young women, but with mothers as well. This is because in an early interview with a key adult who worked with families in the area I was advised to dress down (jeans and a sweater), particularly when interviewing parents, so that I would not be
associated with a social worker or other authority figure who, in these communities were often distrusted.

It is important to note that one’s positioning as a researcher may evolve over time and change depending on the participant group. Gallagher (2008) initially distanced himself from the role of an authority figure in his research with children, but then found himself “becoming a teacher at points” (p.146) later in the research. There were instances during the research when I “drew an ethical or moral ‘line’ over certain behaviours I witnessed” (Davidson, 2017, p.235) and used my adult status with young people to gently challenge behaviour. For example, when young women in workshops used subtle exclusionary actions towards each other I diplomatically redirected the behaviour.

My invitations to take part in the research were met with a combination of responses from the young women, including interest in the research and/or my American accent, disinterest and even suspicion. My accent clearly indicated I am not from the UK, and often functioned as a helpful icebreaker when meeting potential research participants. There are benefits to being clearly identifiable as a ‘outsider’ when conducting research. Corsaro and Molinari (2000), in their ethnography of early education in Italy, found that, “one of the strengths of cross-cultural ethnographies of children is that the foreign ethnographer is often seen as a less threatening adult by children and young people” (p.183). Moreover, Heath and colleagues (2012) suggest that those with outsider status are “more likely to question taken-for-granted practices and are less likely to become embroiled within community relations and tensions” (p.112). While my outsider status did garner some advantages, it had its drawbacks. For example, since I was an unknown person in the community some parents/carers were initially suspicious of my legitimacy as a researcher. When I was made aware of this, I endeavoured to share more information about the research and answer any questions they had.
3.5.2 Power, representation, judgement and bias

Complex power relations are at play when conducting qualitative research with young people (Gallagher, 2008). It is therefore necessary to carefully reflect on the ways in which this affects the research outcomes. Traditional conceptualisations of power in research with children assert that the researcher must work to even out unequal power relations by handing over more power to children. However, Gallagher (2008) challenges this view of power. Instead, he suggests that children can and do resist and confront the power adult researchers wield, to great effect (Gallagher, 2008). This was certainly the case in my research as the young women, at times, chose to redirect research activities with side conversations with their peers, or through silences, or, on one memorable occasion, an audible sigh.

I was sensitive to the way individuals were represented in research findings and sought to be respectful of the stories participants shared, recognising that their stories are helping me to further my career. It is crucial that participants, particularly those from areas labelled as deprived, do not become “the fixed ‘object of inquiry’ for scholars, or the ‘problem to be solved’ for policymakers” (Hyndman and Giles 2011 p.367). A danger inherent in research is the overemphasis of particular people or phenomenon which are strange, shocking, startling or conflict oriented. It is important that the researcher have a holistic approach to data collection noticing and representing the mundane and unremarkable, as well as instances of cooperation and collaboration (Heath et al., 2012).

Dealing with personal judgement and biases towards one’s research participants is a challenge, and the researcher is faced with the choice of whether or not to consider “suspending moral bias” (Bourgois 2003, p.189). My research brought to light sexist attitudes and negative views towards women. Furthermore, some participants relayed incidents of racism; others used language that at the very least could be considered not politically correct. I do not think that all values and moral judgements must be ‘checked at the door’ when doing social research; however, I found myself grappling
with these challenges and how to respond to them on an ongoing basis. To deal with these constant tensions during fieldwork, I reflected on and critically interrogated these issues in my research diary, particularly how and why I chose the research participants, as this impacts the framework for learning about their lives (Kovacs 2015). I also continued to reflect on how my own multiple identities, such as age, gender, class, race and ethnicity were impacting the research (Davey, Dwyer and McAlister, 2009).

3.5.3 Section conclusion

In this section, I considered my own role in shaping the process and outcomes of the research. By using a reflexive approach throughout the research process, I have endeavoured to bring to light the ways in which my own identities, biases, values and assumptions have impacted the research findings and my contribution to academic discourse. I then considered my own position as a researcher, and the importance of proactively considering power and representation.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the epistemological approach underpinning the research. I then moved on to a consideration of the early stages of the research, including a discussion of the field site, gatekeepers and participant selection. Next, I provided a critical justification for the use of multiple, qualitative methods, including a series of pilot workshops where I trialled several participatory techniques with young women, and semi-structured interviews with key adults, policy professionals, mothers and young women.

I then provided an overview of my strategy for data management and data analysis including a detailed account of the way in which I stored the data, and the process of coding and identifying themes. In the next section, I provided an overview of the ethical considerations in this research, including the risk of harm and potential benefit of participating in the research, and the necessity of gaining informed consent from participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were also discussed, including the anonymisation of both
people and places. I then provided an overview of how I wrapped up the research and several lessons that I learned through conducting the research. In the final section, I briefly outlined my reflexive approach, and reflected on how my own identities, experiences, judgements and biases shaped the research design, data collection and findings.

In the following three chapters I will present my research findings.
Chapter 4 Young women’s (im)mobilities

From young women’s embodied experiences of walking, to inequalities embedded in the transportation sector, this chapter spotlights the numerous, complex, and layered ways in which gender, in combination with other aspects of social identity such as class, age and ethnicity, influences young women’s (im)mobilities in Inverness and the implications this has for their social connections. Young women’s (im)mobilities do not happen in a vacuum, nor are they solely a result of young women’s personal preferences. Instead, young women’s (im)mobilities are shaped by environmental variables; self-imposed and parental regulations; transportation policy and infrastructure; and systematic inequalities, to name a few, all of which have gender dimensions.

This chapter focuses predominantly on young women’s ‘independent mobilities’, that is, their “ability to be free to move around in their environments without a parent or another adult” (Malone and Rudner, 2016, p.3). As acknowledged previously, framing young women’s mobilities dichotomously as either independent (without an adult) or dependent (with an adult) is widespread in the literature but lacks specificity as young women often travel with other companions (Mikkelsen and Christensen, 2009). I will therefore lay aside these terms when discussing my findings and either refer to young women’s mobilities generally, or specifically their mobilities without an adult when applicable (see Chapter 2 for more discussion).

Research exploring young women’s mobilities is necessary because “mobility and control over mobility both reflect and reinforce power” (Skeggs, 2003, p.49). Gendered mobilities research evidences that women move with less freedom and ease than men do, and even when there is no perceptible difference between men and women’s movements, the meanings given to them by others are often very different (Clarsen, 2014). This chapter
therefore explores the ways in which young women’s mobilities are influenced by gender, and other intersecting social identities.

The first section addresses research question one and looks at how and by whom young women’s mobilities are regulated, and how mobility restrictions are negotiated by young women. The second section answers research questions three and four and identifies the modes of transportation young women utilise, and the influence of gender on their decisions and experiences of travel. The final section also addressed research question one, and identifies the way gender intersects with personal, environmental, and structural variables to shape young women’s (im)mobilities. All three sections address research question two and consider how young women’s social connections relate to their gendered (im)mobilities.

4.1 Mobility regulations and negotiations

The regulation of young women’s mobilities was once seen as the responsibility of parents/carers, but more recent research has shown that mobility is determined “through more fluid and reciprocal negotiations over time” (Nansen et al., 2014, p.476) between parents/carers and young women. While parents/carers have a crucial role to play in establishing the parameters of young women’s mobilities, young women themselves, as well as their peers and other key adults, contribute to how their mobilities are regulated, negotiated and determined. This section firstly considers if and how parents/carers set and determine mobility regulations, and on what basis, and secondly evidences how young women responded to them.

4.1.1 Parents’/carers’ mobility regulations

Parents and carers played a large part in determining if, where, how and when young women moved in Inverness. This is in keeping with Matthews and Tucker’s (2006) research in England which found “teenagers were commonly restricted in where and when they were allowed to go by strong parental constraints, fuelled by fears and anxieties” (p.165). In this research, parents’/carers’ mobility regulations for young women were
similarly influenced by parents’/carers’ fears and anxieties, but also by their interpretations of the environment as risky or safe; their own lived experiences; and their perceptions of if/how social identities such as age, gender and ethnicity heightened young women’s risk of harm.

This section spotlights Fiona because she had the most concerns for her daughter’s mobility without an adult compared to the other mothers. Her views also capture an array of common concerns expressed by the other mothers in the research and found in the literature. Moreover, her example highlights the way in which “race, gender, and class together shape parental worry and strategies of caretaking and control” (Gordon, 2008, p.35).

Fiona lives with her family a short walk from their local garage. When asked if she allowed her children to go places on their own, Fiona said:

No, no, no, no, no, no – they're not allowed that. Even to the 13-year-old. She'll ask me, ‘Mum, can I walk over to the garage to get juice?’ I was like no. […] but wouldn't it be something that like 16, 17, then I would let her go, but otherwise I'm frightened because you never know who's out there driving, you never know who's walking past (PCI.004).

Fiona regulated her daughter’s mobility based on safety concerns (for similar findings, see Foster et al., 2014). Stranger danger, traffic accidents and bullying are just a few of many factors affecting parental decision making related to young people’s mobilities without an adult (Shaw et al., 2013; Malone, 2011). Fiona’s comment, “you never know who’s out there driving”, may refer to the risk pedestrians face from traffic accidents, but equally it may also refer to the risk of encountering dangerous people, a fear more clearly expressed by her second comment, “you never know who's walking past” (PCI.004). However, unlike Fiona, Sharon saw Inverness as safe in comparison to the larger English city she grew up in. Sharon said, in Inverness, “The kids can wander around if they want to. They don’t have to be picked up and dropped off from every activity” (PCI.002). These contrasting accounts of Inverness illustrate the power of parental perceptions
of place in determining young women’s mobilities, resulting in different rules and expectations for their daughters’ movements.

The risk of injury from traffic was also identified by key adult Ian. He shared that a recent road survey carried out on the route from Fiona’s home to the local garage found a lack of appropriate safety infrastructure (pavements and streetlights) along the road. Once identified, the Council addressed the issue by constructing a footpath (KAI.010). While the road safety risk to pedestrians was identified and remedied, Fiona’s fear for her daughter’s safety while walking alone, like the other mothers in this research, was more than an issue of infrastructure, and was also linked to the people her daughter might meet along the way.

For Fiona, the threat that people posed to her family went beyond the abstract fear of ‘stranger danger’ (Pain, 2006). Fiona and her family identify as Travellers, an ethnic minority in Scotland, and their experiences of racism informed their choices. Fiona said:

I just don’t like [my children to] go, like if they go walking by themself, because you never know who is out there, ey? This world is just too dangerous, ey? Well, that’s what I think anyway if they [non-Travellers] know they’re Traveller kids, they’re going to get picked on […] that’s why I left the house [up North] (PCI.004).

Fiona identified being a Traveller as a factor which made her daughter a target for bullying. Travellers in Britain experience racism and discrimination from the wider non-Traveller public (Cemlyn et al., 2009; Cromarty, 2018), and these experiences have implications for their mobilities. Fiona explained that prior to living in Inverness she and her family lived in a town in Northern Scotland where children shouted profanities at her children based on their ethnicity. These experiences contributed to her decision to move to Inverness.

According to Nayak (2017), young women’s lives are “racially structured” in a way which “impinges on their daily mobilities” (p.295). Black,
Asian and Minority Ethnic young women in “majority white localities” in the UK experience “risk laden movements” (Nayak, 2017, p.295), particularly in the absence of adults. Fiona’s fear that her daughter would experience bullying based on her ethnicity, combined with her own past experiences, influenced her attempts to minimise these risks through limiting her daughters’ mobilities without an adult.

Like ethnicity, young women’s age influenced parental mobility regulations (Brown et al., 2008; Valentine, 2003). In the first quote from Fiona, she spoke about how, at 13 years old, her daughter was not allowed to walk to the garage; she conceded, however, that at “16, 17 [years old], then I would let her go” (PCI.004). Fiona viewed her daughter’s young age as a characteristic that made her more at risk from a variety of threats, and mobility freedom as something that she would allow her daughter to a greater extent when she was older and (presumably) more able to keep herself safe, or at least navigate threats.

Growing older was seen in the research by the majority of mothers as justification for giving young women more mobility freedom. This is in keeping with literature which shows older young people have more spatial freedom than younger young people (Hopkins, 2010). Young women also said that age was a determining factor in how far, and/or how late they were allowed by their parents/carers to stay out (YWI.002; YWI.005; YWI.008). Sharon, for example, gave her son more freedom of movement than her daughter because he was older (PCI.002). However, out of all the mothers interviewed, only Fiona’s mobility regulations for her daughter were also overtly tied to gender.

Fiona had strict rules about her daughter’s mobilities with reference to whom she could undertake mobilities with based on gender. Fiona said:

> I wouldn't let my girls like, 14-15 [year-olds] run about with boys and all that because it's not right. Anything could happen, you know what I mean. They could sleep
Olivia, a young woman who identified as a Traveller (not Fiona’s daughter), similarly evidenced the gendered nature of young women’s mobilities in some Traveller communities. She explained, “sometimes [Traveller] girls are just a little different than [Traveller] boys because [Traveller] boys can be like a little bit more, like, they have more freedom sometimes” (YWI.007). Fiona and Olivia’s comments correspond with findings from Marcus’ (2019) research with Traveller girls in Scotland; she found Traveller families regulated girls’ mobilities to protect their chastity, reputation and future marriage prospects. Ian similarly commented on the norms he observed from his work with Travellers in Inverness. He said:

[Traveller] girls shouldn't be alone with boys, their virginity is very much protected, they're very much looked on as soiled goods if they lose their virginity and the chances of getting a husband are limited (KAI.010).

Parental adherence to cultural norms thus informed young Travellers mobilities in terms of where, how far and when they moved through their communities, but also with whom they went places with.

Marcus (2019) furthermore observed, “[Traveller] girls revealed that their individual movement was restricted [...] because they are girls they were not allowed to leave their homes unaccompanied” (p.211). In some cases, gender norms and expectations within the Traveller community related to how a young woman should act and behave contributed to young women Travellers having less unaccompanied mobility than non- Traveller young women in this research. In keeping with Fiona’s quote and Marcus’ (2019) findings, evidence of gender-based mobility regulations within the Traveller community in Inverness arose in an interview with key adult Elaine who worked with Traveller families. Elaine said, “[Traveller] young women don't go places on their own, really. I think they're accompanied a lot of the time [by family members]” (KAI.009). However, this was not always the case, and
Olivia shared she goes for runs and bikes on her own and in groups with other young people. These examples firstly evidence the influence of cultural norms on mothers’ perceptions of the risks young women face, and the mobility regulations they put in place for young women to manage these risks. However, contrasting Fiona’s views and Olivia’s experiences further highlighted that Travellers are not a monolith, and cultural norms may be followed to greater or lesser extent by different individuals and families.

This section outlined factors influencing mothers’ decisions about young women’s mobilities. These factors include parental perceptions of the environment as safe or risky, lived experiences, and understandings of how social identities such as age, gender and ethnicity relate to the likelihood of encountering threatening situations and their ability to navigate them. Differential understandings of these social categories, in combination with other factors, contribute to producing inequalities and differences in young women’s mobilities (Christensen and Cortes-Morales, 2017). The next section shifts from considering parental regulations of young women’s mobilities to consider the ways young women responded to them.

4.1.2 Accompanied mobilities extend mobilities

Young women negotiated and extended their mobilities when accompanied by diverse companions such as friends and mobile phones. Accompaniment provided young women with more time and opportunities for social interaction outside of their homes (for similar findings, see Christensen and Cortes-Morales, 2017). In this section, I highlight how young women extended their mobilities through accompaniment, firstly, by carrying a mobile phone, and secondly, by traveling with other young people.

The use of mobile phones among young people is widespread in Inverness, even in families who are less well off (KAI.004). In fact, every young woman participant, except for one, had her own mobile phone. Parents’/carers’ mobility regulations for young women were more flexible when they had mobile phones as it provided a means of communication
when parents/carers wanted young women to come home (Pain et al., 2005), and, in some cases, acted as a replacement for blanket curfews. For example, Eve said, “As long as she knows what I'm doing, who I'm with, and if she calls, I have to pick it up. And she'll give me a time to come back” (YWI.010). This was also the case for Katie, who said, “So, because I have my phone, they usually just phone me when they want me home” (YWI.002). In this way, Eve and Katie did not have set curfews, but rather expected their parent/carer to contact them via their mobile device when they wanted them to come home. The times parents/carers phoned or texted young women and asked them to come home varied based on the day of the week, school holidays, the season (hours of sunlight), and family commitments.

Mothers expressed flexibility in where and when young women went in Inverness if they had a mobile phone and kept their parent/carer informed. For example, Sharon said:

As long as she has her phone, there’s plenty of charge on it, volume on so she can hear me [...]. If her plans change and she's going somewhere different she has to get in touch and let me know that she's going somewhere different (PCI.002).

When asked what, if any, rules they had about where young women go in Inverness, Claire and Michelle, like Sharon, mentioned the use of mobile phones to stay up to date on evolving social plans (PCI.001; PCI.003). Pain and colleagues’ (2005) research on mobile phone usage among young people in England also found that having a mobile phone afforded young people “more negotiating strength about where they are permitted to go” (p.822). Mobile phones allowed young women flexibility when making plans if parents/carers were kept up to date.

Mobile phones also function as a way of allaying both young women’s and parents'/carers’ concerns about their safety because they provided a way of checking-in, and, if necessary, arranging a ride home. Michelle said:
If [Emma] is not walking home from youth club with a friend she'll ring up [...] and say, 'Dad, can you come and pick me up I don't want to walk up the road on my own, it's dark' (PCI.003).

Emma’s mobile provided her with reassurance that she could contact her parents, so she did not have to walk home alone in the dark. Similarly, Pain and colleagues (2005) found young people who had a mobile phone felt safer in public spaces because the phone acted as a security device providing a reassuring reminder that help was just a call away. Mobile phones enabled young women’s mobilities and allowed them to move more freely in the public realm with the knowledge that they had a convenient way to reach out for help if necessary.

The second way young women negotiated, and often extended their mobilities, was by traveling with friends, siblings or peers. Young women often travelled in pairs or groups, and these groups were usually, but not always, single gender groups. For example, Sarah and Emma walked to every research workshop together. Key adult Bethany said of the young women she worked with, “They’ll always go in little groups” (KAI.001). Being accompanied by friends gave young women an opportunity to socialise, provided them a sense of security, and reassured parents/carers of their safety.

Going places in the company of other young people also reassured young women about their safety. Olivia, for example, said having people with her helped her feel safe. She said, “Every time I go somewhere mainly anywhere I take one of my sisters” (YWI.007). Somewhat contradictorily, Olivia also shared examples of running and biking alone; however, it may be that she did not count exercise as ‘going somewhere’ or that she felt safe in the areas she exercised. Matthews and colleagues (2000) explain that traveling with other young people not only allays their fears, but “encourage[s] a broader range of place use and at different times (for example, after dark)” (p.68). Young women in this research were able to negotiate staying out later when they had a trusted companion with them.
Katie shared that she was able to attend a late-night youth club event because she went with a friend. She said:

My mum didn't want me to go because it was in Bellford, it was far away, and it was late, and she thought it would be unsafe. But in the end, I was with my dad, so he let me go as long as Emma [...] was with me. So, she's older than me and I've been friends with her for however many years. So, as long as I stayed with her, walked there, and walked back with her because she lives just down the road, I was allowed to go (YWI.001).

This example evidences the differences that can exist between parents'/carers' rules and shows how accompaniment can extend young women's mobilities and opportunities to socialise outside of their homes. While Katie’s mother was worried about her being out late outside of Thistlevale, her father was okay with it if she was accompanied by a friend. The fact that Katie’s friend was trusted (they had been friends for a while) and older increased her credibility as a suitable walking companion. Here, like in the previous section, older young women were viewed by parents/carers as more capable of navigating risks.

Parents/carers had restrictions on when and how far young women could go in Inverness, but these restrictions were negotiated by young women when they were accompanied by other young people or a mobile device. In so doing, young women increased the time and opportunities they had to build their social connections in the public realm.

4.1.3 Section conclusion

Young women's mobilities are often regulated, but these regulations are subject to negotiation. Parents/carers have a significant role to play in determining young women’s mobilities. The regulations they have for young women are influenced by several factors including their perceptions of the environment, experiences and risks. Moreover, young women’s cultural context matters, and in this research young women who identified as Travellers experienced gendered mobility regulation based on cultural norms.
and the fear of ethnicity-based bullying, although, this varied from family to family. Despite these regulations, all young women were active in negotiating their mobilities, and, by traveling with other young people or having mobile phones, they often extended their mobilities and reassured themselves and their parents/carers of their safety as they moved through the public realm.

The next section considers the modes of transportation that young women use, and prefer, and if and how their transportation decisions were influenced by gender.

4.2 Young women’s use of different modes of transportation in Inverness

The use of different modes of transportation by young women created opportunities for their involvement in activities and facilitated access to social opportunities outside of their neighbourhoods. Young women in Inverness reported using active (walking and cycling) and nonactive (cars, buses, taxis and trains) modes of transportation for a variety of journey types, including travel for education, to socialise, for leisure, and other necessary errands. Gender, in combination with other social identities, affected young women’s experiences of travel, and the different modes of transport they used.

In this section, I identify the modes of transportation young women used and preferred in Inverness. I then consider the ways in which youth organisations enabled young women’s mobilities through transportation support and provision to encourage their participation in activities and foster in-person social connections.

4.2.1 Active travel

Active travel is defined as walking, cycling, or a similar mode of transport relying on the body to get an individual from point A to point B. This section is concerned with how young women “navigate, negotiate, and traverse” (Middleton, 2010, p.579) the public realm through walking and cycling. Middleton (2010) argues that much of the existing research on walking “assumes [it] is a homogenous and largely self-evident means of
getting from one place to another” (p.578). However, gender, in combination with other social identities, affects young women’s “pedestrian practices” (Horton et al., 2013, p.96) and the meanings others attribute to them (Clarsen, 2014).

According to the Scottish Health Survey, the percentage of children and young people meeting the minimum recommended physical activity requirement in Scotland decreases as they get older, with only 18% adherence among 13 to 15-year-olds (Bardsley et al., 2018). The survey also showed a lower percentage of young women than young men meeting these standards (Bardsley et al., 2018). However, my findings revealed that for most young women, walking was a frequently used and favoured form of transport and several of the young women participants shared that they frequently walked more than the minimum 60 minutes a day (W3).

The majority of the young women who took part in the research lived within walking distance of the city centre, and walking was recognised by participants across all interview categories as their primary mode of transportation. Most young women lived close to their school and walked there and back every day, sometimes twice a day. Several young women, mothers and key adults shared that it was not uncommon for young women to walk distances of three to four miles at one time if there was something they needed or wanted to do, for example, to go to the cinema, or to see friends.

The challenges of walking, identified by young women as getting tired in the morning while walking to school, having to walk in bad weather, and walking while running late (W3) were seen as undesirable, but they did not change young women’s travel mode choices (YWI.001). Katie said the convenience of walking compared to public transport outweighed the challenge of physical exertion. She said, “[Walking] used to bother me, I used

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2 The minimum requirement is 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day – including walking/active travel.
to get really tired and stuff but now I do it so often it doesn't bother me” (YWI.002). Further benefits young women associated with walking included avoiding traffic jams, being environmentally friendly, and socialising with friends (W3). In fact, the research revealed that walking was not only an important mode of transport, but a pleasurable leisure activity for many young women (for more examples of young women walking for leisure see, Christensen and Mikkelsen, 2013; Horton et al., 2013; Khalili, 2016; Wijntuin and Koster, 2018).

The young women often used walking as an opportunity to socialise with friends. Emma, for example, said she and her friends, “just sit and have a laugh when we're walking around, we'll just laugh about things” (YWI.001). Similarly, Horton and colleagues (2013) research exploring pedestrian practices in England found that walking was valued by children and young people for its “sociability […] and playfulness” (p.101); characteristics captured by Emma in her account of laughing with her friends while out walking. Moreover, walking created a moving place for meeting friends outside the home (see, for example, Christensen and Mikkelsen, 2013). Adey (2017) asserts, “a route well-travelled may over time turn into a meaningful place, just like the places or the nodes at either end of the route” (p.94). Young women thus created a place for social interaction when they walked together which proved an opportunity for fostering friendships.

Walking for young women was an unremarkable, but central feature of both their friendships and daily routines (for similar findings see, Horton et al., 2013). Cycling, however, was not part of most young women participants’ daily routine. There was no clear consensus among participants to what extent young women in Inverness used and owned bikes, but it certainly arose far less frequently than walking during interviews and workshops. Olivia was the only young woman participant who shared that cycling was a form of transport she used. She said, “Sometimes I will cycle somewhere” (YWI.007). Elaine said it was a form of transportation the young people she worked with used only occasionally (KAI.009). Key adult Wendy noted that
biking was viewed by young women more as a mode of transport, rather than a leisure activity. She said, “Rather than sort of biking for pleasure I think it's more of a way of getting places” (KAI.011). Martin said that he did not think many young people owned bikes, and, among the young cyclists he did observe, he made a distinction between young men’s and young women’s use of them:

Occasionally the boys will come down on their bikes. Very rarely see any of the girls on their bikes, not sure if that's because they don't have bikes, which is very likely, or if it's seen more as a boys' mode of transport because they're all out on their bikes (KAI.004).

Active travel professional Gemma confirmed the presence of a gender divide in cycling. She said, “I know that generally less women than men cycle. Like everywhere across Scotland, not just in Inverness” (PPI.002). This corresponds with research undertaken by Bike Life in 2017 which found that, “men are twice as likely to use a bicycle for travel on a regular basis than women” (Sustrans, 2018, p.3).

For women, personal safety, a lack of time, confidence and appearance act as barriers to cycling (Sustrans, 2018). Frater and Kingham (2018) found similar barriers in their study of young women’s cycling behaviour in New Zealand. Their study found that more young men than young women cycle to school (Frater and Kingham, 2018). The reasons for this were multifaceted, and included young women’s “concerns about image, being social, being feminine and shunning physical activity” (Frater and Kingham, 2018, p.130), among others. Here, gender norms and stereotypes asserting young women must conform to certain narrow standards of beauty (styled hair, makeup and not sweating) may act as barriers to cycling as it is likely to result in helmet hair, runny makeup and visible perspiration (Frater and Kingham, 2018). Moreover, typically ‘feminine’ clothing, such as skirts, dresses and high heels may make cycling uncomfortable (Frater and Kingham, 2018). A similar gender divide in cycling may exist in Inverness, though more research is necessary. Another possible explanation for why cycling was not popular
among the young women in Inverness is that it was not perceived as a sociable mode of transport, which was something they valued (Frater and Kingham, 2018).

In Inverness, walking was a popular mode of transportation among young women. Young women valued walking as it was a convenient mode of transportation, but also because it provided an opportunity to socialise. Cycling was less popular among the young women participants, perhaps because cycling is a less sociable mode of transport, or maybe because most young women did not own bikes. The exact reasons for this remain unclear, but literature on adolescent cycling behaviours suggest that there is a gender dimension rooted in the perception of cycling as ‘masculine’. More research is needed to understand young women’s cycling behaviours in Inverness.

4.2.2 Public transportation and car travel

Understanding young women’s use of motorised transportation is important because, according to Lagerqvist (2019), “young people are largely dependent on parents and well-functioning public transport for their everyday travel and participation in society” (p.281). In this research, however, public transportation and car rides were not depended upon by all young women all the time and some young women found creative ways of meeting their transport needs outside of traditional transport systems. Young women were more reliant on motorised transport in the face of their own, or their parents’/carers’ safety concerns for them. This section therefore considers young women’s reliance, or not, on motorised transportation in Inverness.

After walking, car travel was the most commonly used, and the most popular choice of transportation among young women. Car travel referred to being driven, rather than driving, as none of the young women had a full drivers’ license at the time the research was conducted. The majority of young women mentioned that their families owned a vehicle and that there was a licensed driver living at home. This is consistent with Transport
Scotland (2016) statistics which show car ownership in Scotland is increasing, and in 2015 the majority of households in Scotland had at least one car available for private use. Parents/carers were not the only people whom young women relied on for car rides, and friends, extended family members, and key adults were also mentioned as drivers.

Car travel is unique to other forms of transport because “although cars are moving spaces which travel through public spaces, they are often experienced as private, domestic spaces” (Barker, 2009, p.60). For this reason, they were often perceived as safer alternatives to other forms of transport by young women and parents/carers. For example, Lucy said that her father drove her to and from school after an incident where, while walking to school, a boy offered her a cigarette (W1). Michelle, Emma’s mother, in the previous section shared that Emma often called her father to pick her up in the car in lieu of walking home in the dark, which she did not like to do, especially alone (PCI.003). Moreover, Sharon sent a friend to collect her daughter from the cinema in a car rather than allowing her to walk home at night (PCI.002). The car was thus conceptualised as a safe ‘private space’ which shielded young women from encountering risky individuals. Paradoxically, car travel poses more risk of personal injury to passengers than many other modes of transportation in Scotland (Transport Scotland, 2018).

Apart from cars, buses and taxis were the primary transportation options young women reported using in Inverness (W3). Buses were mentioned by seven young women in the research as a form of transportation they used. Of these, three took the bus on a weekly basis to attend courses at a local university. This journey was necessary for the completion of their studies, and the bus passes were paid for by the university. Prior to attending courses there, two out of three of these young women said they did not take the bus at all. Buses were not a preferred or enjoyed mode of transport among young women. According to key adult Zoe, the young women she works with are “pretty unwilling to take public
transport” (KAI.003). The possible reasons for this will be explored in the next section.

Taxis were seldom mentioned by young women as modes of transportation they used, except when provided by the Council for school transport. Of the young women who participated in the research, two took taxis to school. Young women in this research only took buses and taxis regularly without an adult when the journey was for educational purposes (required) and the cost of travel was covered by either the educational institution or Council. For all young women in the research, neither taxi nor bus travel were their primary mode of transportation. Train travel and plane travel were the most infrequent among young women participants and usually undertaken for holidays, school trips, or other special events. In sum, the young women had a variety of experiences taking different forms of transport.

Available transportation options in Inverness, including buses and taxis, did not always meet young women’s transportation needs. Hannah explained how she and her social network, through the use of the social media Application Snapchat, leveraged their online connectivity to organise an informal, paid ride-sharing scheme in Inverness. Hannah explained how this works, “They'll put on their [Snapchat] Story like, like ‘I'm on lift’” (YWI.004). A Snapchat Story is a photo or video the user posts in the Snapchat Application on their smartphone or tablet. The post can have text overlaid on it and the Story is visible to the user and their friends for 24 hours from the point it is posted. The phrase ‘I’m on lift’ indicates that the person is available to provide rides in their car. After the Story is viewed, Hannah explained what happens next:

Normally you just message them and say, ‘Can I get a lift from so and so’, and they say okay and that will be this much. Or sometimes, if they’re really nice they’ll just give you it for nothing and you'll just get like a free lift (YWI.004).
Hannah was the only participant who mentioned this approach to ridesharing, possibly because she was 17, and her peers were more likely to have their driver licenses, which young people in Scotland can get at age 17. Social media enables young women to connect with their peers across Inverness and one of the benefits of the system was that drivers were often known to young women. Another benefit of the scheme was its low cost compared to taxi services. Unlike carpooling of old, these young drivers charged a small fee for providing rides, certainly an entrepreneurial (though perhaps not fully legal) endeavour. It is unclear how widespread this ridesharing scheme through Snapchat is in Inverness, or across Scotland.

This example shows how young people created a new transportation structure by mobilising online connectivity to facilitate their physical mobilities. By organising her own transportation through Snapchat, this young woman used the resources available to her to meet her own transportation needs.

### 4.2.3 Youth organisations’ transportation support and provision

Key adults spoke about the challenges of engaging young women in extracurricular activities. The reasons for this ranged from complex home environments where young women often had responsibilities (i.e., as young carers), to limited access to transportation, to young women’s own anxiety related to taking public transport. To address these barriers, youth organisations stepped in to support transportation to give young women opportunities they might not otherwise have to engage in activities and events and build social connections outside of their immediate neighbourhoods.

The first way that they did this was through transportation provision. While a lack of transportation was not the sole reason preventing young women’s engagement, supporting them to get to events did appear to increase their participation, and provide opportunities for relationship building. For example, Zoe worked with an organisation which provides
mentoring for young people. Mentors and mentees meet in various locations around Inverness to do a range of activities together. The pre-agreed terms of the mentoring arrangement include adult mentors picking up and dropping off young people every week from their homes. Mentors must have a car and a driver's license to participate in the programme. On the odd occasion a mentor was allowed to take part in the programme and did not have a car, the relationship broke down. By providing transportation this organisation gives young women the opportunity to build mentor/mentee relationship with an adult without the added responsibility of getting to a different meeting location every week, thereby eliminating the challenge posed by transportation.

Young women in the research expressed feeling nervous about taking public transportation, particularly when traveling for the first time on their own, on an unfamiliar route, or traveling outside of Inverness (YWI.004; YWI.008). Zoe attributed young women’s nervousness about taking public transport to a fear of publicly making a mistake, leading to embarrassment and bullying. According to Zoe, “we’re all crafting our online social identity” and as a result, “people [are] looking at us all the time and potentially keeping track of us” (KAI.003). Zoe shared this example:

I mentored a young person who was really, really cyber bullied to the point where people would view a video of her 10,000, 15,000 times. Yeah, horrendous. So, I think in terms of the influence and their decisions of where they’re going and how they’re going to get there, if they have a real [online] audience and the repercussions of making mistakes, the bar is so high that taking a risk and just jumping on a bus and, ‘Oh it doesn’t matter if we get there or not’ it’s not acceptable to make mistakes anymore as a young person (KAI.003).

There is currently little research looking at the intersection of young women’s use of public transportation and online bullying. However, online and offline violence are often impossible to separate as “digital technology is enabling or facilitating violence against children in different environments” (Kardefelt-Winther and Maternowska, 2020, p.227), including the private sphere of
home and the wider public realm. In this way, bullying which begins online may continue in-person in the physical public realm.

Apart from online bullying, young women’s nervousness about taking public transport in the transport literature is, in part, attributed to a fear of victimisation from sexual violence in transport spaces (see, for example, Ceccato, 2017; Vanier and d’Arbois de Jubainville, 2018; Ceccato, Näsman and Langefors, 2020). This is possibly another reason for young women’s nervousness taking public transportation in Inverness, but more research is needed to make this point conclusively as it was alluded to in interviews with adult participants, but not directly mentioned by the young women. The young women’s silence on this topic has several possible explanations, including the fact that participants were not directly asked about violence. Alternatively, young women may not perceive sexual violence on public transport as a threat, or they may not have brought up the topic because of its sensitive nature.

While transportation provision is an approach which worked for the mentoring organisation, providing young women with transportation does not guarantee their participation. For example, Inverness Leisure Centre hosts a wide variety of activities, including a swimming pool, gyms, and fitness classes. However, it is not easily accessible via public transportation because, while there used to be a bus route from the city centre, the service stopped because it was an infrequently used route (PPI.006). Given the difficulty getting public transportation to the Leisure Centre from the city centre, let alone Bellford (PPI.004), Martin organised a trip there. He said:

We've put on buses for [young people] and we couldn't get anyone on the bus. We advertised it months in advance. Free transport to Inverness Leisure, and we'll even pay for you to get in there, and in fact, we'll give you a free session on such and such, just get on the bus and come with us! And nobody got on the bus. Not one person (KAI.004).

The success of the transportation provision approach within the context of the mentoring charity may be attributed to the weekly routine, the intensely
The relational nature of one-to-one activities, or simply the ease of being picked up at one’s own residence. Young women’s lack of participation in the trip to the Leisure Centre likely is a result of innumerable variables (weather, conflicting schedules, forgetting at the last minute, not wanting to exercise in public, etcetera). In fact, at least one young woman who attended Martin’s club regularly walked to the Leisure Centre with a friend on a weekly basis, suggesting she simply may not have wanted to attend in a group or at the scheduled time. One clear conclusion can be drawn from this example: transportation provision does not guarantee young women’s involvement in organised youth activities.

For many organisations, limited budgets mean regular transportation provision is not possible. Moreover, some organisations have strict policies prohibiting adults driving young people in personal vehicles (KAI.004). Others, however, did not. Key adult Robyn shared an example of driving three young women to a short course. She said:

I drove them back and forward in the car a few times and listened to them in the back, there was three of them, none of whom had any friends, and just listening to them talking I was like, aw that’s amazing and then gradually started hearing that they were meeting each other in town or doing other things together.

In this example, the transport provided by Robyn created a space for the young women who were previously socially isolated, to build a friendship with each other. These examples show that transportation provision, in some cases, supported opportunities for young women to build new friendships, however, it is not the antidote to a lack of involvement in events outside the neighbourhood.

Apart from transportation provision, some youth organisations opted to support young people’s transport by scheduling activities around bus timetables and choosing to host events in locations near the bus and train stations. Other approaches used included financial support, for example, providing immediate transportation reimbursement on arrival to alleviate the
burden on young people to have the round-trip journey fare ahead of time. Logistical support was another way youth organisations supported young women’s use of transportation. For example, youth workers met young women at the bus or train station before or after activities to ensure they knew where to go (KAI.001; KAI.002).

Youth workers also provided reassurance to young women while en route to events. Young women sent their youth workers photos of taxis’ registration numbers and texted updates regarding bus delays while traveling to youth activities in order to feel more comfortable knowing a trusted adult knew their whereabouts (KAI.001). Bethany made a gender distinction regarding young people’s feelings and behaviours while transiting. She said:

When it comes to things like getting on a bus or booking a taxi it’s the young women [who] are a lot more nervous. So, I’ll constantly have texts for girls going, 'I'm on the bus', 'bus is here', 'I’m due in at this time', 'Oh no, the bus is late'. Whereas I'll get a text from a boy going, 'So my bus just broke down, I'll see you when I see you' (KAI.001).

When asked why this difference might exist Bethany said she was not sure.

From this quote, it appears young women were more concerned, or nervous about taking buses and taxis than young men. This is unsurprising given the prevalence of unwanted sexual behaviour and harassment young women experience while using public transport (Engender, 2020; Gekoski et al., 2017). However, young women’s nervousness about taking public transport is not only a product of actual risk of victimisation, but it is “the outcome of gendered social and power relations” (Dunckel-Graglia, 2013, p.86). The gender stereotype that women, particularly young women, are likely victims of crime is a trope frequently depicted in the media (Callanan and Rosenberger, 2015) and mentioned by one key adult (KAI.002). In fact, women are twice as likely as men to be portrayed as victims in the media (Ndangam et al., 2015). Moreover, young women are socialised from childhood to believe that they are more likely to experience violence in the public realm due to linkages between femininity and victimisation and
masculinity and crime perpetration (Hollander, 2001; Callanan and Rosenberger, 2015); especially in transit spaces. In the absence of concrete evidence from young women explaining the reasons for their nervousness on public transportation, this is a very possible explanation, but more evidence is needed to make this point conclusively.

Another way youth organisations supported young women’s participation was through a learn-by-doing approach where youth workers helped young women navigate the process of taking public transportation. For example, one local youth club took a bus across town together to visit a sister club, in so doing teaching young women to take the bus and providing them with an opportunity to see friends who lived further afield. The learn-by-doing approach was aimed at equipping young women with the confidence and know-how to navigate transportation on their own in the future.

From transportation provision to equipping young women with the skills and confidence to use transportation, adults who work with young women shared a number of approaches to eliminate transportation as a barrier to participation in youth activities. Equipping young women with the skills, ability, or access to take transportation can, but does not always, increase their social connectivity and access to the public realm. There is, moreover, possibly a gender dimension to young women’s apprehension when using public transportation rooted in actual risk of victimisation, but also in gendered social and power relations which requires further research.

4.2.4 Section conclusion

This section outlined the modes of transportation that young women use and prefer in Inverness, including active travel, public transportation and car travel. Young women frequently walked both as a mode of transportation, and for leisure. Cycling was far less popular among young women, and while the reasons for this in Inverness are unclear, research in other parts of the world revealed a gendered dimension to young people’s cycling behaviour. Public transportation, including buses and taxis were used by young women,
though their use was more consistent when the cost of the fare was covered, and the travel was necessary for education. Moreover, when available transport options failed to meet young people’s needs, they created an option that did. Youth organisations did their best to remove transportation as a barrier to young women’s participation in events and activities and took a variety of approaches to support their mobilities.

It is essential to identify and understand the factors that enable and the factors that constrain young women’s transportation use to ensure that they have sufficient access to activities, events and opportunities for social connection. The next section takes a closer look at the factors affecting young women’s transportation use in Inverness.

4.3 Factors affecting young women’s transportation use

Young women’s transportation decision making is not a simple reflection of their preferences; instead, it is shaped by the complex interplay of personal, relational and environmental variables (Christensen and Cortes-Morales, 2017). This section identifies five factors which emerged as influential to young women’s transportation choices or, in some cases, their ability to take certain modes of transportation. It then considers the way in which gender intersects with structural factors within the transportation sector which influence young women’s mobilities.

4.3.1 Cost

Cost was mentioned by the young women as a factor they consider in relation to their transportation decision making and is one reason walking (which is free) was a popular alternative. Bethany explained:

Young people I work with [are like], 'Oh I want to go meet so and so but if I go to take the bus in, I can't have lunch with them.' And you know, I've seen young people walk three miles just to get into town, just so they can have lunch with their mates, and they'll walk back. Yeah, a lot of it is around money, and if you don't have
money, you’re not doing anything, you know, which is a shame (KAI.001).

Context is crucial to understanding young women’s transportation use. The research sample was drawn from an area with a mixed socio-economic makeup, but one recognised for having high levels of deprivation (Scottish Government, 2020b). Many of the families who took part in the research were not in paid employment and/or were recipients of benefits; the young women thus made choices with money, as it was not in limitless supply.

Leah, for example, attended a weekly course at the local university. She explained, “buses are good, but they can cost a lot if you're going two places” (YWI.008). Though Leah took buses to the university for classes she often walked home with friends, which took her an hour, significantly longer than the bus journey. The university provided her bus pass, however, Leah lost hers and had not replaced it. Instead, she walked as a way to save money, but also because she enjoyed the extended opportunity to socialise with her friends.

In the example shared by Bethany and in the case of Leah, the cost of transportation was weighed against more desirable alternatives, namely, spending time with friends and eating out. In this research, the young women often chose to walk, adding time to their journey, instead of taking a faster, but more costly, form of transportation. The act of walking was valued as a social endeavour and the added journey time accrued by walking was considered preferable to spending money on transportation.

The cost of transportation also arose as a key consideration for mothers with regards to car ownership, but the calculations made were different. The cost of petrol was mentioned by Michelle as a necessary expense:

We have a car […] even though petrol is quite expensive, we sort of work it out […] I'd rather put the money in petrol than I would in food because I think it does us good to get out and about (PCI.003).
Michelle has a physical disability, and her husband is her fulltime carer, and neither is in paid employment. In Inverness, not all buses are wheelchair accessible (KAI.007) and, for Michelle and her family, the convenience of the car meant that they could travel together to different parts of Inverness and Scotland for leisure and take their daughter to her extracurricular activities. However, with neither parent in paid employment, the benefits of car travel were weighed against other expenses, such as food. In this example, petrol was prioritised as a necessary expense, as it allowed for the family to spend time together.

The young women, in a group discussion about the benefits and barriers to different modes of transportation, recognised that car ownership is not affordable for all families (W3). Though it is common in Inverness, car ownership is expensive and not just because of the cost of the car, but as one policy professional, Craig, noted, “the very act of learning to drive is a very expensive process” (PPI.007). Though cars, their upkeep, petrol, and learning to drive are costly, the ease and convenience of car travel, at least in the case of Michelle’s family, trumped concerns about expense.

In each of these examples, the cost of transportation was weighed by young women and their parents/carers against other expenses and influenced their choice of transportation. Cost was a factor in transportation decision making for young women and their parents/carers and, in different ways, the choice that provided an opportunity to build and maintain social connections was prioritised.

4.3.2 Atmosphere

Young women’s perception of the atmosphere in transit spaces influenced which modes of transportation they used and preferred. The atmosphere of a transit space is shaped both by its physical and material attributes and by the people sharing the space. Atmosphere is thus derived from the complex relationship between people, place, and things which are “sensed often through movement and experienced in a tactile kind of way”
However, though the differential and changing atmospheres of transit spaces form the “ubiquitous backdrop of everyday life on the move” still they are “forceful and affect the ways in which we inhabit these spaces” (Bissell, 2010, p.272). The following excerpt from my interview with two young women highlights the importance of atmosphere:

Interviewer: And how do you find that experience of taking the bus? Do you like it, not like it?

Morgan: I actually don't mind it. I mean it's kind of annoying when there's loads and loads of people and you have to stand.

Eve: And when you're squished together in a tiny little space and the bus driver keeps letting more people on, and then people start getting aggressive and shouting at each other.

Interviewer: Really?

Eve: Yeah.

Interviewer: What happens then?

Morgan: Do they?

Eve: It's happened a few times.

Morgan: I've never noticed.

Eve: The bus drivers just tell them to be quiet, but he can't really do anything cause he's driving (YWI.010.011).

This exchange illustrates that young women’s perceptions and experiences of atmosphere are subjective, and may differ; however, some commonalities exist. Morgan and Eve, though traveling on the same bus route, experienced bus travel differently. Both valued their personal space, but while Morgan was annoyed by the crowded bus and having to stand for the duration of the journey, Eve used much stronger language to describe her experience. She
highlighted being “squished” and other passengers’ aggressive behaviour as negative aspects of bus travel. The aggressive behaviour Eve witnessed was a surprise to Morgan, who did not recall this though they travelled on the same route. The physical experience of being crowded affected both young women’s comfort while taking the bus. The aggressive behaviour of other passengers, and the driver’s inability to change their behaviour, highlight the way that Eve’s experiences were influenced by the presence of others. Dawn similarly explained that her daughter did not like “the over crowdedness” of the bus, and for that reason avoided bus travel altogether (KAI.008).

One central aspect of taking public transportation is the experience of “being with others whilst on the move” (Bissell, 2010, p.271). In some cases, this creates a sense of shared experience and togetherness; however, it may also result in “uncongenial relations between passengers” (Bissell, 2010, p.278) which may make the journey unpleasant, as was the case for Eve. While a bus is moving it is near impossible to extricate oneself from the prevailing atmosphere of the open interior which typically affords little personal space (Clayton, Jain and Parkhurst, 2017). Overcrowding is a transport issue affecting all passengers; however, it affects women in particular (Ceccato, 2017). According to Ceccato (2017), overcrowding on public transportation, although not a “cause of sexual crime against women in transit […] is definitely a facilitator” (p.279), and while this was not explicitly said by participants, is perhaps an underlying concern for them. From these examples, it is clear that the presence, proximity and behaviour of others affected young women’s experiences of bus travel, though it did not always prevent their use of it.

In the previous examples, the close proximity of other passengers had a negative effect on young women’s perceptions of the atmosphere on buses. In contrast, for Megan who took a taxi to school, the absence of other passengers, combined with not knowing the taxi driver, affected her experience of atmosphere:

Interviewer: How do you get to school every day?
Megan: Yeah, a taxi comes and picks me up and back and forward.

Interviewer: Do you go on your own or with?

Megan: [interrupts] On my own.

Interviewer: Yeah, do you like that?

Megan: [makes a noise of disagreement and shakes head]

Interviewer: No? How come?

Megan: Some taxi drivers I don't know at all and it creeps me out.

Interviewer: Aw okay. You don't get the same one every day?

Megan: See like how we're close to the weekend? I get the same taxi driver like every single day, but sometimes I don't, and it like creeps me out and it gets awful weird.

Interviewer: Do they talk to you? The taxi drivers?

Megan: Yeah, they just say, 'How's your day been?' and I just say, 'It's been okay' and then I just sit quietly cause I don't know them. I don't talk to anybody I don't know (YWI.006).

Like Eve and Morgan’s experiences of taking the bus, it was “being with others whilst on the move” (Bissell, 2010, p.271) which affected Megan’s perception of the atmosphere in the taxi and her experience of the journey. Megan was uncomfortable being alone with a driver she did not know, but Olivia, another young woman who travels by taxi, had a different experience. She commented that she did not mind taking a taxi to school and sometimes chatted with the driver (YWI.007). Like Morgan’s and Eve’s experiences of buses, Megan’s and Olivia’s experiences of taking a taxi are different as both felt varying levels of comfortability with a (male) driver that they did not know.
Megan does not have a choice in how she gets to school as she lives too far away to walk, her parents/carers cannot drive her, and there is no convenient bus service. Young women did not always have a choice in the type of transportation that they used and, regardless of the perceived atmosphere, they sometimes had to settle for what was available to them, even if it made them uncomfortable.

The examples so far have spotlighted young women’s perceptions of the atmosphere while using transportation, shaped largely by those they share the journey with. Young women, however, not only experience, but help create the atmosphere on public transportation for those around them. Transport professional James shared how young women, at times, negatively affect other passenger's experiences:

James: If you see somebody who is maybe not, I don't know the PC [politically correct] way to say this, someone who looks a bit different, you'll always get the, maybe a comment made to the individual, a derogative comment to the individual which then gets a reaction.

Interviewer: By a young person?

James: Yes. It might be done with, and it usually is done with just a laugh, but it never ends up that way. Some stories about knives being taken out, if you've got somebody whose suffering with mental stability issues and you get comments like that, that can be really dangerous. And I'm not talking about isolated incidents. This is quite a frequent occurrence. It's so much the bravado thing, and it's not just guys. Girls, you get a group of girls together and they can be just the same.

James highlights that young women are just as likely to cause a disruption while taking the bus as young men. This in and of itself exposes “widely held conceptions of gender associat[ing] femininity with vulnerability and masculinity with dangerousness” (Hollander, 2001, p.84). Moreover, it is notable that James says, “you get a group of girls together and they can be just the same” (PPI.006), because although a young woman alone connotes
vulnerability, together young people of any gender are often perceived as ‘risky’ or, threatening (Holloway and Valentine, 2000). Though instances of young women antagonising passengers on buses did not arise at any other time during this research, the example functions to make the point that young women do not passively experience public transportation; they too actively participate in creating the atmosphere through their actions which may contradict traditional gendered expectations.

The atmosphere felt by young women while taking different modes of transportation affected their experiences of the journey. At times, the atmosphere influenced the transportation they used, but in other instances, though young women did not enjoy the transport experience, atmosphere did not change the transport they used. This was particularly true when the transportation was provided for a required activity, for example, taxis to get to school. Young women themselves have a role in shaping the journey experience of others and contribute to the atmosphere on public transportation.

4.3.3 Accessibility

When asked in an interview if there was ever a time that she could not participate in something that she wanted to because she did not have a way of getting there or getting home, Hannah reflected that her family’s car, and particularly her mother’s driver’s license, provide her with ease of travel:

I could see if my mum couldn't drive, because Inverness is quite big, and buses are like a pain as well, so I could see if my mum didn't drive it would be an issue (YWI.004).

The ease of reaching one’s destination is referred to as accessibility in transport literature (Preston and Rajé, 2007). Accessibility addresses the questions, from the communities where young women live, how easy is it for them to get to different destinations, and, from locations they frequent, how easy is it for them to travel home? Accessibility is also a term which refers to
how easy is it for someone with a disability to use a particular mode of transportation.

The first way in which accessibility can be understood is in terms of the ease of getting from home to a given destination, or vice versa. Family car ownership and the presence of a licensed driver living at home increased accessibility for young women participants. The importance of car ownership in Inverness was a common refrain expressed by mothers. Claire said, “I’d be lost without the car” (PCI.001), succinctly summarising the feelings of many. One policy professional went so far as to say that car ownership is “just a requirement of the area” (PPI.007). After eight months living in Inverness, I can attest that not having a car was difficult.

For those families who did not have a car, their mobility was limited. This was particularly true for families who did not live near bus routes, such as Fiona and her family:

Interviewer: Does she [Megan] do any out of school activities like sports or clubs after school?

Fiona: No

Interviewer: Does she want to do any?

Fiona: Yeah, she wanted to, but I don't drive myself and my partner is not with me at the moment. So, I have no way of getting up, you know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah. Transport's an issue?

Fiona: Yeah. It's an issue. I have got my driving theory test [...] this month, so I just hope I pass my theory.

Interviewer: What about the bus? Is there a bus that comes here?

Fiona: No, you have to get a taxi from here to the town.
Interviewer: Okay, yeah, how much is a taxi to get into town?

Fiona: It's like £8.

Interviewer: Wow. That's expensive.

Fiona: It is, yeah, it is (PCI.004).

This exchange illustrates that immobilities are not always the choice of young women, who have limited access to opportunity due to issues of cost and accessibility beyond their control.

Car ownership is considered an area requirement because the other options (namely taxis and buses) are poor alternatives, particularly for young women. Taxies are prohibitively expensive for daily use, and Inverness largely has a hub and spoke system of bus transport with most routes running in and out of the city centre. This system in which public transportation routes radiate out from an urban centre to surrounding communities was originally designed (by men) with the traditional male breadwinner in mind who would travel into the city centre for work (Criado-Perez, 2019; Engender, 2017). Research shows women have more complicated travel patterns due to gendered divisions of household work, caring and employment that often require multiple stops and connections between residential areas around the city centre (Ng and Acker, 2018; EIGE, 2019). Women's, and I assert, young women's travel patterns, have not historically been considered by transportation planners and decision makers when determining bus routes.

With regard to bus travel between residential parts of Inverness, transportation professional Lynne commented, “I mean there are ways but it's probably quite convoluted to do it” (PPI.003). Bus travel from one residential area to another often requires changing buses and sometimes changing bus stops. There are, however, a few bus routes that are exceptions to this rule. For example, transportation professional Andrew said:
There are some bus routes that will operate across the city center onwards to other areas. They don’t necessarily all turn around and go back the way they came, which will give a bit of a percentage chance of getting an onward journey that you might want to take. (PPI.005)

Bus transport was not always convenient for young women who wanted to travel to destinations outside the city centre because of the placement of bus stops and the routes which are determined based on profitability by commercial operators, rather than by their usefulness to passengers.

A commercial operator was running most of the buses in Inverness at the time the data was collected. Lynne explained the way bus routes are determined:

You don't have a body or a collection of people saying this is the route network we should have because it's better for the people, it makes it more efficient you know, it makes it more frequent (PPI.003).

Accessibility, in terms of ease of travel between home and a given destination, is a challenge affecting young women’s use of different modes of transportation, particularly when traveling between residential parts of Inverness. Accessibility is largely controlled by local transportation infrastructure, including the location of bus stops and bus routes, which are often determined without intentionally considering the particular transport needs of women, not to mention young women. Furthermore, transportation that provides a direct connection is often more costly (i.e., taxis and cars) than buses, so the issue of accessibility is more pronounced for those who are not able to afford this type of transportation.

The second way accessibility can be understood is with reference to how easy is it for a person with a disability to use a particular mode of transportation. The example of Michelle already brought to light a critical issue in Inverness: not all buses are wheelchair accessible (KAI.007). It should be noted efforts have been undertaken to increase the accessibility of
both transport vehicles and infrastructure in Inverness. For example, there is an effort to get an wheelchair accessible electric taxi running (PPI.001). Furthermore, transport organisations have community consultations on improvements to infrastructure and seek the views of the general public, as was the case with Accessing Inverness, an initiative to redesign the streets and spaces surrounding the bus and train stations (Highland Council, 2018).

When given the choice, parents/carers with disabilities in this research chose car travel (as in the case of Michelle) because it was easier. Similarly, Sharon said she preferred car travel due to her anxiety:

I got my own car, so I tend to drive most places. I personally can't do a bus on my own because of anxiety, but I can do a bus if I've got somebody with me. That's where the kids come in to being a young carer […]. But most of the time I will be driving (PCI.002).

Lucy also shared how her father’s physical disability impacted their travel choices:

If it's pretty close, we can walk. If the things are too, if my dad's legs can't survive the long walks, then we will have to take a car (YWI.003).

Parent/carer’s disabilities impacted young women’s use of transport. The choice of whether to take a car, a bus, or walk, may depend on the parent's/carer’s ability, or desire to do so and in some cases, as with young carers, require them to travel with their parent/carer.

Accessibility is a factor affecting the types of transportation young women use due to considerations outside of their control, such as where they live, the infrastructure connecting their neighbourhoods to other parts of Inverness, and their families’ resources. Accessibility can also be understood as it relates to ease of travel for people with disabilities. Accessibility, in this sense, affects young women who themselves have a disability, or who have a family member or a friend with a disability. Accessibility is a complex factor with infrastructure and policy components rooted in a system of transportation originally designed by men for men. Improved accessibility,
particularly on buses, could lead to an increase in young women’s use of public transportation and streamline access to destinations around Inverness.

4.3.4 Reliability and frequency

Transport professional James pointed out that the bus service in Inverness is lacking in two respects – reliability and frequency (PPI.006). Reliability and frequency arose in the data with specific reference to the bus service. Unlike cars and taxis, buses operate on a set timetable. If that timetable is not accurate, or fails to provide a sufficient number of journeys, the service will not be perceived as an attractive option. James' point was similarly expressed by policy professional Craig as a central transport issue in Inverness. He said:

Buses don’t turn up sometimes, they change the routes almost on a whim. They drop seemingly profitable routes because they have a threshold essentially, and if they find it not to be used enough they'll just drop a route without even thinking about it (PPI.007).

The unreliability of buses was also a view held by the young women. For example, Lucy’s perception of buses was that they could be late, and that a lift from a parent/carer in a car was a more reliable option (W3). The importance of a frequent and reliable bus service was echoed by transport professional and mother of teenagers, Lynne. She commented:

It has to be a reliable service because if [young people] are trying to get somewhere and the bus is continually 15-20 minutes late then they just give up and they come and annoy their parents to take them in the car (PPI.003).

Lynne’s point suggests a reliable bus service would encourage young people’s mobilities without an adult, and decrease dependency on parents for transport.

The issue of reliability is, in part, a symptom of insufficient road infrastructure. The population of Inverness has increased 15% since 2001.
(Hardie, 2016), and infrastructure developments have not kept pace with the growing population and resulting increase of vehicles on the road (PPI.006). Moreover, Inverness does not have many priority bus lanes and buses are often delayed due to traffic at “pinch point[s] within the network” (PPI.003). The bus service is therefore frequently delayed because of insufficient infrastructure and planning and, as such, is less attractive to young women.

Reliability and frequency are factors which go hand in hand; infrequent and unreliable buses result in long wait times. This was particularly felt on evenings and weekends when the bus service is less frequent and wait times are longer, posing challenges for young women and their parents/carers. For example, the movie theatre, located outside the city centre, is a popular destination for young women at the weekend. Sharon said:

I didn't know [the movie] didn't finish until after 10pm and she [her daughter] said, ‘Oh the bus isn't for another 45 minutes, we're just going to walk.’ And I'm like, ‘You're not walking at that time of night!’ (PCI.002).

Infrequent bus times, in combination with parental concerns regarding young women's safety walking home or waiting for a bus at night, left Sharon and her daughter with few options both were comfortable with. In the end, Sharon organised for a friend to pick her daughter up as she did not have access to her own car at the time. Due to the unprofitability of evening and weekend services the Council supports buses through contracts held by a commercial operator. There is a limit to how frequently these routes can run based on budget constraints (PPI.006). Frequency of buses is therefore largely founded on the financial viability of the route, and/or available subsidies. It is also worth noting that while Sharon overtly said gender did not impact the rules and expectations she had around her daughter’s mobilities, this quote gives evidence to a gender-based concern for her daughter’s safety walking at night.
Reliability and frequency are twin challenges which strongly impact bus use. The underlying challenge to improvements in this area is budgetary. The bus service in Inverness is commercially operated and thus the routes are determined with profitability in mind (PPI.006). Some young women in this research chose to navigate the bus system, in spite of its shortcomings, at times because they did not have a choice, whereas others, rather than endure long wait times at bus stops, sought out alternative options.

The next section looks at how gender intersects with transportation policies, and how structural factors influence young women’s travel patterns.

4.3.5 Gender and the transportation sector

Systems, policies and structures within the transportation sector impact young women’s mobilities in ways that are not immediately obvious. Transportation professional Gemma commented:

> I don't know why it surprised me, but it did surprise me to realise that there were so few women at a high level in transport, which means that women's voices are pretty much absent from discussions, or the decisions, really (PPI.002).

Similarly, policy professional David said, “you do sort of notice that it is a more male […] the transport industry more widely [has] more males than females within it” (PPI.004). In much of the world, including Scotland, women are underrepresented in the transport sector, especially in leadership positions (Engender, 2017; Wynn and Correll, 2018). This is, in part, a result of gender bias, or, widely held beliefs about gender which privilege men (Wynn and Correll, 2018).

In 2020, women led only two out of Scotland’s 16 transport authorities, public companies and regional transport partnerships, up from one in 2017 (Engender, 2017, 2020). The absence of women in the transportation sector affects the way that decisions are made and whose needs are prioritised. From drivers to high-level management, women are not equally represented
in the transport sector though they make up the majority of public transportation users (Engender, 2017). The majority of transportation professionals I interviewed, both men and women, recognised the underrepresentation of women in the sector. Transportation professional Kristy said:

There could be a couple hundred people and it just feels like, it's a room of suits. There're not really females there much at all, and especially at these really key strategic meetings the ones who are making the key decisions, it's mostly male (PPI.001).

Women are underrepresented in the transportation industry, especially in leadership positions (PPI.005). That is not to say that there are no women working in the sector; transport professional James pointed out that the Traffic Commissioner for Scotland, Claire Gilmore, is a woman (PPI.006). Moreover, three of the seven policy professionals I interviewed were women, though they themselves were not in high level management positions.

Employees in the transportation industry with whom I spoke did not necessarily feel it was within their remit, or that they had the capacity, to create programmes and policies that specifically consider the needs of young women. In interviews this "gender-blind" (Engender, 2017, p.66) attitude towards policy and programme development was conveyed and, contradictorily, at the same time a commitment to gender equality was also expressed. For example, when asked if they had done any projects specifically looking at women, and/or minorities, Kristy said:

We don't really tend to do that I think because it's almost not equal then, as well. So, I think I'd raised something like that before, like a while ago, just that we could do something looking at female transport actually, and the risks involved. And then, actually, when we talked about it in a group, we don't tend to be that specific with our projects because we are trying to be inclusive. So, we cover it within our wider project, […] so like improving a particular service it would be included within that, but it wouldn't be that's the sole
focus of the project because we’re normally trying to cover a wider range (PPI.001).

Kristy said focusing on the specific transportation needs and experiences of women is not inclusive as it fails to include the needs of all transport users. However, this approach is problematic because it ignores the inequalities women have faced for generations and “will not help transform the unequal structure of gender relations” (Engender, 2017, p.66).

It would be unfair to label the transportation industry as indifferent to the needs of young women. Transportation professional Andrew said:

I do think that the gender equality area that you are looking at is one that we could do more. I think actually getting better input from younger people is something that we could be doing more of and better and we are keen to pick up on both of those areas (PPI.005).

This is an example of a transportation professional who wanted to incorporate the “social, cultural, economic and political roles and needs” (Engender, 2017, p.66) of different gender and age groups; challenges, however, remain.

Firstly, there is the issue of competing priorities. Transportation professionals in the Highlands face challenges due to the size and complexity of the region they are providing services for (roughly the size of Belgium). Creating sustainable, frequent and accessible transportation routes in a mostly rural setting comes with a hefty price tag. The large size of the Highlands and the complexity of the transportation challenges within the region were mentioned by the majority of the policy professionals I interviewed whose remit not only includes Inverness but all of the Highlands. The transportation sector is stretched thin and working hard to keep services running. In the face of such challenges, the needs of particular demographic groups were not prioritised.

The second challenge is that of consultation. I asked the policy professionals I interviewed if and how they conducted community
consultations. Some said that when community consultations were conducted, the feedback was not usually disaggregated by age and gender. Disaggregated data is important as it identifies the differential needs and experiences of various demographic groups and, importantly, helps identify inequalities (Halliday, 2020). Key adults shared that transportation is often identified as a significant challenge for young people in the Highlands (KAI.004); they also shared the difficulties they have had trying to communicate young people’s views to the transportation industry. Bethany said, “we have tried working with the bus company, but it didn’t end well. We’re going to try again though” (KAI.001). The bus company whom Bethany was referring to did not get back to me regarding an interview, however, another transportation professional, James, who works in the industry, asked me, “With your discussions with young people, what is their perceptions of transport in Inverness?” (PPI.006) Transportation professionals are not indifferent to what young people think, but it is unclear to what extent interested transportation professionals and young people are connecting in order to have these conversations.

There is room for improvement in the transport sector, particularly when it comes to taking into account the views and needs of young women. The transportation sector would benefit from imbedding gender sensitive policies and programmes into their day-to-day and future activities. To ensure that young women’s transportation needs are considered in the creation and implementation of transportation policy, more women must be included at the decision-making table. That means hiring more women, considering transport policy and programmes through a gender lens, and listening to young women.

4.3.6 Section conclusion

Cost, atmosphere, accessibility, reliability and frequency impact on young women’s choices and ability to utilise different modes of transportation. Relationships played a role in transport decision-making, as time with friends and family were often prioritised over cost. Car ownership
and the presence of a licensed driver in the home added an element of ease to young women’s travel. Where young women were provided transportation for a required activity, they often used this mode of transportation even if it was not their preference. Buses in particularly were considered a subpar mode of transportation largely because they were not perceived as a better alternative to other available options.

Public transportation policies and programmes in Inverness have traditionally not considered the specific needs of young women. The lack of gender and age disaggregated data from community consultations mean it is impossible to know if young women’s views are being considered in transportation decision-making. Moreover, the radial bus system has insufficient cross-community connections to support women’s differential travel patterns.

The extent to which young women have access to different forms of transportation has implications for their access to opportunities to build and maintain social connections with others, their inclusion in public life, and their ability to develop a sense of belonging. From family disability and socio-economic status to available infrastructure, young women’s transportation use is not simply a direct reflection of their personal preferences, but a complex negotiation of personal and interpersonal level variables. Not only that, but at the macro level, transportation infrastructure and policies which do not take into account historic gender inequalities, in combination with the absence of women decision makers within the transportation sector, further reinforce age-old gender disparities.

4.4 Conclusion

To understand the factors affecting young women’s mobilities, it is imperative to consider the influence of gender, including the way in which gender stereotypes, gender norms and gender inequalities intersect with young women’s experiences navigating their environments in female bodies. Gender influences personal, relational and structural factors affecting young
women’s lives, and, as such, their mobilities. Gender affects where young women are allowed to go within their own communities and beyond. Widely held gender stereotypes equating femininity with vulnerability and an increased risk of victimisation, in combination with stereotypes about other social identities (Wynn and Correll, 2018), contribute to young women’s and their parents’/carers’ concern for their safety. At the macro level, stereotypes propagated through the media and popular culture portray women as victims more often than men (Ndangam et al., 2015). Moreover, gender and cultural norms prioritising the chastity of young women may curtail their mobilities in the name of protection from sexual violence, and experimentation (Marcus, 2019). Gender also influences how young women travel in their communities.

Transportation infrastructure and policies, historically designed by and for men fail to consider the differential transportation needs of other demographic groups, such as young women. Moreover, patriarchal power structures in society contribute to shaping young women’s experiences in transit spaces, where a heightening sense of fear and nervousness is reported among young women passengers, perhaps in part, because of the possible threat posed by the (male) stranger.

This chapter addressed research question one and identified factors limiting young women’s mobilities and factors encouraging young women’s mobilities. Young women’s mobilities are limited by parents’/carer’s gendered perceptions of the environment, experiences and understandings of how social identities relate to the likelihood of experiencing harm; central to this are gender stereotypes, gender and cultural norms. Increased parent/carer concerns affected the places and spaces that young women frequented. However, young women negotiated regulated mobilities and, by traveling with friends or with a mobile phone, they were allowed more freedom and were able to travel to a wider variety of spaces and places at different times. This section thus also helped answer research question two, which considers if and how young women’s social connections are related to their (im)mobilities.
Section two outlined young women’s use of active and nonactive forms of transportation. This section addressed research question two and the second half of research questions three and four and looked at the transportation young women used, and their access and perceptions of it. Walking and car travel were preferred by young women for daily use, though other forms of public transport such as buses were also used. Walking was valued as an enjoyable mode of transportation, but also as a leisure activity as it provided young women a place to socialise and foster social connections ‘on the move’. Preliminary findings also showed cycling was not a popular choice for most young women. Additionally, to remove barriers to participating in activities, youth organisations supported young women’s mobilities through transportation support and provision to increase their opportunities to build and maintain in-person social connections not only within their own neighbourhoods, but to further flung destinations across the city.

Section three addressed research question one and the second half of research question four. Factors that affected young women’s mobilities included cost, atmosphere, accessibility, reliability and frequency. This section demonstrated that young women’s transportation use is not a direct reflection of their personal preferences, but a complex negotiation of influencing factors. There are also underlying structural and institutional factors within the transportation industry with strong gender components affecting young women’s travel choices. Namely, a lack of women working in the transportation sector means women’s perspectives are absent when decisions are made. The diverse needs and challenges of historically excluded and marginalised groups are not always a priority in light of the challenge of providing transportation in a large area. The transport sector, in practice, takes a gender-blind approach to transportation which, rather than addressing gender disparities, perpetuates inequalities.

Research into mobilities which considers the impact of gender will lend valuable insight into a number of key policy areas including young women’s
mental and physical health, the environment, and most critically for this research, their involvement in, and access to, the public realm. This chapter has thus explored the nuanced and complex ways in which gender affects and influences young women’s mobilities in Inverness. The next chapter moves on to consider young women’s use of the public realm in Inverness.
Chapter 5 Young women in the public realm

Young women’s presence in the public realm is often met by concern, control, surveillance, disapproval and fear from the adult public, who view them as “out of place” (Nairn and Kraftl, 2015, p.4) in these environments (Woolley, 2003; Skelton and Gough, 2013). However, young women appreciate physical spaces to meet together in person to try out different social identities and build friendships. In fact, in-person social interactions with peers often positively impacts young people’s mental health and wellbeing (Orben, Tomova and Blakemore, 2020). Moreover, the process of finding, repurposing and occupying parts of the public realm helps young women build a sense of belonging there (Skelton and Gough, 2013b). This chapter addresses research question three and four and identifies where young women met in Inverness, their perceptions of these spaces and places, and their access to them. It also addresses research question two and briefly considers how young women’s social connections are affected by their (im)mobilities.

In this chapter, I use the terms ‘space’ and ‘place’. As previously outlined in the literature review, according to Tuan (1977), space becomes “place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” (p.6). Similarly, Cresswell (2014b) notes, place is defined as “a portion of space [which] has accumulated particular meanings at both the level of the individual and the social” (p.3). I will base my usage of both terms on Tuan and Cresswell’s definitions, which is to say that space becomes place when people give it meaning. Meaning is ‘accumulated’ in a number of ways – through spending time and socialising in a space (personal experiences), but also through memories, ideologies, emotional attachment, naming and storytelling (Cresswell, 2014b; Nairn and Kraftl, 2015). Moreover, other people’s stories and representations also shape young women’s place meanings (Nairn and Kraftl, 2015).
In this chapter, I firstly identify where young women spend their time together in Inverness and how they created, repurposed and/or appropriated parts of the public realm, thereby endowing them with their own meanings through personal experiences. As outlined in Chapter 1, ‘public realm’ is defined in thesis as “all aspects of society and the social world that are not exclusively private (e.g., private property, private life)” (Neal, 2010, p.624); that is, the physical spaces and places young women move in and through when they are not at home or attending school. Rather than simply describing young women’s spatial preferences, I unpack the reasons behind their choices and consider why some spaces are frequented more than others. Secondly, I consider the intergenerational politics of sharing space. Next, in light of young women’s presence in the public realm, section three considers adult responses to young people in ‘adult’ spaces. Lastly, I consider the visible and invisible spatial constraints that kept young women from using certain parts of the public realm in Inverness.

5.1 Young women’s social uses of space

From the aisles at Tesco, to hedge rows, to the covered waiting area of the train station, accounts of young women “reconfiguring adult space on their own terms” (Jones, 2000, p.37) arose frequently in this research. My findings revealed numerous examples of young women meeting together and repurposing pockets of the public realm to create their own micro-social spaces. Young women’s uses, experiences and access to the public realm, however, were not homogenous. Rather, they were diverse and situated, influenced by family rules and expectations, disability, class, cultural backgrounds, and other aspects of their social identities (Worth, Dwyer and Skelton, 2015).

In this research, Hannah, Lucy, Megan and Olivia, for various reasons, spent less time in the public realm than their peers. The reasons for this were complex and multifaceted, and included parental safety concerns, cultural norms, ill health, a lack of transportation and disability. Therefore, they contributed fewer accounts of the social spaces they used with peers in the
public realm. Key adult Paul, however, had a different explanation and said many young people do not go out anymore. Instead, he suggested, “It's a [...] technological world now. It's not face-to-face talking, it's to a screen” (KAI.007). While mobile phones and other devices were certainly widely used, they did not replace young women’s desire to meet face-to-face, a fact clearly evidenced by the remaining eight young women participants (Emma, Eve, Julie, Katie, Laura, Leah, Morgan and Sarah) who shared detailed accounts of socialising in the public realm. However, even when these young women frequented the same physical spaces in Inverness, the “meaning and uses of these spaces” (Vanderbeck and Johnson, 2000, p.8) varied between them.

‘Hanging out’ is a term commonly found in research exploring young women’s social use of the public realm (Matthews et al., 2000; Skelton, 2000; Thomas, 2005; Skelton and Gough, 2013). According to Thomas (2005), hanging out is “a term that captures the complex spatiality of social practices, as well as the particular activities that girls ‘do’ when socialising” (p.591). ‘Hanging out’, according to the young women in this research, referred to the unstructured time young people spend socialising with their friends, often outside of their homes. Hanging out, in this sense, may take place in a particular location, or ‘on the move’ as young women walked around Inverness.

Young women choose various parts of the public realm to hang out in to fulfil different social purposes in their lives. Lieberg (1995) identified two types of places young people seek out, “places of retreat” and “places of social interaction” (p.722). Places of retreat are those places where young people go in order to “withdraw away from the adult world”, to be with a few select friends with a certain degree of privacy (Lieberg, 1995, p.722). Places of social interaction, in contrast, are ‘stages’ “where young people are on display and out and about to see and to be seen by others” (Lieberg, 1995; Matthews, 2003, p.109). Places of social interaction maximise chances for social encounters with a variety of young people.
In this section, I consider young women’s use of places of social interaction and places of retreat in the public realm. Firstly, I consider how the city centre served as a popular destination for social interactions. Secondly, I outline young women’s use of green spaces as places of retreat. Moreover, going beyond Lieberg’s (1995) typology, I consider how green spaces also functioned as locations where young women tested the boundaries of acceptable spatial practices and behaviour. The prevailing theme uniting the following sections is young women’s desire and ability to carve out places for themselves in the public realm to be with friends. This section identifies these places and explores young women’s perceptions of them.

5.1.1 Town

Town was a colloquial term used by participants (both adults and young women) to refer to Inverness city centre and was seen as a place young people could go to socialise and pursue their interests such as shopping and reading (W1; W3). Town included an indoor shopping mall, the high street, main square, as well as the train and bus stations. Young women liked spending time socialising in town as it was centrally located, with access to comfortable seating, and food. Ruth said, “young people go to places their friends are going, places they can get to” (KAI.016). Town provided a central meeting point for young people across Inverness and an opportunity to socialise with young people from different schools (YWI.001) and is a prime example of a place of social interaction (Lieberg, 1995).

McDonald’s, in particular, located on the high street, was identified as a popular place for young people to meet. In fact, eight young women, six key adults, and one mother mentioned McDonald’s specifically as a popular destination for young people. I asked Lauren to explain the draw of McDonald’s as not only a fast-food restaurant, but as a social hub for young people:
In this brief explanation Lauren gives three reasons why she and her friends choose to go to McDonald’s. Firstly, McDonald’s afforded them access to generous portions of food. While Lauren does not specifically comment on cost, Adekunle’s (2017) research with young people in London found that inexpensive restaurants such as McDonald’s are important gathering points for young people. Similarly, it is likely the low cost of food contributed to the popularity of McDonald’s in Inverness. In fact, no other restaurants, aside from KFC and Subway, were mentioned by the young women as a popular hangout spot, perhaps indicating the importance of an affordable menu and an informal environment to young women.

Kayla commented, “Food is such a key part of what motivates [young people] to go to a place” (KAI.002). Food was mentioned by five key adults as a factor that drew, or was expected to draw, young people to a space. The majority of young women participants mentioned going to get food as something that they enjoyed doing with friends, and a factor that attracted them to the city centre. Neely and colleagues’ (2014) thematic synthesis of young people’s food practices (defined as activities involving food – eating together, cooking, gifting food or cleaning up) revealed that “young people use everyday food practices to build, strengthen, and negotiate their social relationships” (p.50). It is therefore unsurprising that going to get food was an activity young woman frequently did together in Inverness. This also relates to the second reason that Lauren went to McDonald’s, which was because there was space for her and her friends to sit and socialise. The McDonald’s in Inverness is spread over two stories and features long benches and clusters of comfortable seating ideal for groups of young people to hang out. For Laura and her friends, McDonald’s was meaningful as a social destination in its own right.
Lauren’s third reason for going to McDonald’s was that there were few other places for young women to go in Inverness, particularly after 7pm. A lack of social space for young people is a complaint documented in research with young people in the UK in both rural and urban settings (Matthews and Tucker, 2006; Nayak, 2003). Part of McDonald’s’ popularity was the fact that it was one of very few available venues in Inverness open late. I can attest to this, as it was one of the only non-pub venues open for evening interviews. Further emphasising her point that “there’s not many places to hang out” in Inverness, Lauren said, “There's just nowhere else to go so we just end up heading to McDonald's” (YWI.005). The lack of suitable spaces for young people to meet was also commented on by one mother and six key adults in the research, and cited as a common problem in the literature (Hopkins, 2010). This is notable because it stands in contrast to the many spaces that young women and key adults shared that young women did spend their time. However, what these interviewees were alluding to was a paucity of venues which offered young women the same degree of open access and comfort that McDonald’s did.

McDonald’s functioned as a centrally located gathering point; a place that was open late every night of the week; a place that served affordable food; did not serve alcohol (which gave young people access to the space); and allowed young people to hang out with limited adult interference. McDonald’s is well known for its ‘family friendly’ marketing, and part of its corporate aim is to provide customers with “a fun and safe environment” (McDonald’s, 2020, para.1). In this way, young women’s use of McDonald’s aligned with its ethos. That being said, McDonald’s is also a commercial space, a company whose priorities include profitability and the young women who spent time there were not always customers. Emma, for example, said, “If we go to McDonald’s or something I'd normally just sit there and they're [her friends] just eating and I'm just there like, I can't be bothered” (YWI.001). Young women co-opted commercial spaces for their own use, stretching, expanding and, sometimes, disregarding the locations’ original designed
purposes. Through their regular presence in the space, young women gave it their own meaning as a social venue. According to Matthews and Tucker (2006) commercial spaces are often used and repurposed by young women in the UK, not as “acts of defiance” but because they “provide secure, delimited, overseen settings where young girls can mix and socialise with their peers in safety” (p.171). This was the case in my research as young women’s use of commercial spaces like McDonald’s was one of necessity because, as Lauren said, there were few available alternatives, especially from the evening onwards.

Another commercial space young women frequented in town was the shopping centre (see, Vanderbeck and Johnson, 2000; Thomas, 2005). Eve and Morgan explained how going into town for them included walking around the shopping centre, going in and out of shops, and getting free samples from their favourite chocolate shop (YWI.010.011). Young women who spent time in the shopping centre did not always use the private, commercial space in the way it was envisioned by its designers, as a place for spending money (Hopkins, 2010) (though sometimes they did), nor did the young women always have a particular fixed geographical location within the mall that they went to socialise (Christensen and Mikkelsen, 2013; Matthews and Tucker, 2006). This is another example of young women attributing commercial spaces with a different meaning from that which its adult designers intended and using the space in their own way.

This example of young women walking through the shopping centre moreover demonstrates that young women’s spatial practices are rarely sedentary, and they constructed place in the dynamic and social sense. This is in keeping with the way Massey (1991) theorised place and spotlights the importance of studying mobilities, space, and place together to understand young women’s experiences in the public realm. Like Christensen and Mikkelsen’s (2013) ethnographic research with girls in Denmark, my findings revealed that young women “strategically pursued their interests, social relationships and well-being through companionship in movement” (p.204).
By spending time together on the move, young women benefited from an array of opportunities for ad hoc entertainment, people watching and social encounters.

Young women frequented the city centre of Inverness with their friends in order to hang out outside of their home environments. In the absence of places for young people, young women often flocked to commercial spaces to spend time together. Fast food restaurants and shopping centres proved particularly conducive to the needs of young women to sit, eat and talk to friends. In sum, town proved ideal as a place for young women’s social interactions.

5.1.2 Green spaces

Aside from town, the young women frequented green spaces in Inverness. While the young women did not use the term ‘green space’, the Scottish Government (2020) uses green space as an umbrella term to refer to “public green or open spaces […] for example a park, countryside, wood, play area, canal path, riverside or beach” (p.2), many of which the young women did specifically cite as places they frequented. Inverness has numerous parks, a river, and a canal running through it, and these green spaces were visited by young women and cited as popular hangouts for young women by adults. Green spaces were used, and, in some cases, preferred by young women for two reasons: firstly, they provided places of retreat where young women went to have private conversations with a select group of friends, and, secondly, going beyond Lieberg’s (1995) typology, they provided a place where young women could break with established ‘adult’ rules governing spatial practices in the pursuit of having fun with friends.

Green spaces are not separate from the city, but are part of its composition, though often less densely populated with people in comparison to the city centre. They therefore provided an ideal opportunity for young women to ‘get away’ from their peers and family with a select group of friends. Whereas town functioned as a place where young women went to
encounter their peers, some young women intentionally used green spaces as *places of retreat*. Katie explained:

> I think most people go up town and stuff which is kinda why I don't go there anymore because I've had a lot of trouble with people in school. So, I kind of try and avoid most people (YWI.002).

Katie’s intentional decision to avoid her peers influenced where she chose to spend her time, that is, *not* in town.

Young women valued and used green spaces for a variety of reasons (see also, Mäkinen and Tyrväinen, 2008). Olivia, on the one hand, used green spaces for recreation and exercise (YWI.007). Sarah and Emma, on the other hand, enjoyed the natural beauty by the canal, and frequently walked there with friends and Sarah’s dog, sometimes stopping along the way to take photos on their phones of flowers and trees (W4). Katie alternatively explained, “Most of the places that I go are kind of ‘naturey’ - a lot of trees, and mud, and rough” (YWI.002). Unlike Emma, Oliva, and Sarah, Katie highlighted the mud and ‘rough’ aspects of green spaces as attractive and valuable to her. Here, we get a glimpse of how the materialities of the environment connect Katie to this place. Wyn and colleagues (2020) similarly found that in their longitudinal study in Melbourne, Australia that “the materiality of specific places”, for example, tall trees and greenery, provided participants with a “sense of connection or ease” (p.18) in specific places. In this research, many of the young women used green spaces as places of retreat, but the particular reasons why they preferred green spaces were as diverse as the young women themselves. Young women are not a homogenous group and have a variety of spatial practices and preferences. Understanding the aspects of green spaces that young women value, and how they use these spaces is important because it could provide insight to those responsible for planning, maintaining and developing these areas (Mäkinen and Tyrväinen, 2008).
Katie went on to provide an example of the outdoor places she liked to go with her friends:

Me and my friends often we go inside the hedge and just sort of hang out sitting on top of the hedge or in the hedge. It's kind of weird, but yeah (YWI.002).

Katie and her friends created a place for themselves in part of the public realm that was not designed or intended as a social venue for teenagers. The hedge was likely planted by adults to function as a decorative feature or spatial divider, yet Katie and her friends repurposed the hedge to function as a unique social space for themselves. Christensen and Mikkelsen (2013) similarly found that young women in their research created a den in a shrub along a busy road, a place of their own to get away from adults. The reason Katie sought out alternatives to town was not specifically to avoid adults, but to avoid encountering certain peers which she, unlike other young women in the research, actively avoided.

Apart from places of retreat, green spaces also arose as places where young women experimented with testing the boundaries of acceptable spatial practices and behaviour. For example, Eve shared her experience of spending time in the park with Morgan. She said:

We sit on the swings and just talk, and like, be stupid. Cause like, I think it's [this one park] has like a pool, and it's closed off, so we still need to climb over the fence and try to push each other in (YWI.010).

Eve said she was looking forward to when she and Morgan could climb over the fence and attempt to push each other into the pool. Eve recognised that the fence was there to block access to the ‘closed off’ pool; however, this physical barrier put in place by adult city planners to limit access to the pool, was instead seen as a barrier to be overcome in the pursuit of fun. These examples illustrate the varied ways in which young women use space and how young women often attribute different meanings to places than adults. Green spaces were not solely used by young women as places of retreat, but
as places that young women, to greater or lesser extent, tested boundaries and broke rules governing spatial behaviour where there were few adults present to reprimand them. More extreme examples of young women breaking rules and testing boundaries arose in interviews with three mothers and two key adults who cited parks and other green spaces as locations of underage drinking, drug taking and other risky behaviours.

Young women used green spaces as places of retreat to socialise with a close group of peers, and to avoid encountering other young people. Young women used green spaces for walking, and hanging out with their friends, but valued green spaces for a number of different reasons. Lastly, beyond places of retreat, green spaces afforded young women with opportunities to test boundaries and break rules in the pursuit of fun.

5.1.3 Section conclusion

Young women use a variety of spaces and places in the public realm to socialise. From commercial spaces in town to green spaces, young women’s use of space was not strictly sedentary, but dynamic and changeable as young women moved through and interacted with their environments. Young women sought out comfortable spaces to hang out with friends, and though these spaces were often designed for other purposes by adults, young women repurposed and gave them their own meanings through their continued use of them. This section has thus addressed research question three and identified the places and spaces where young women met in Inverness. It also shed light on research question four, young women’s perceptions of these spaces.

The next section looks more closely at the importance of finding and creating social spaces specifically for young people, away from the watchful supervision of adults and the pestering presence of younger children.

5.2 Young people only

This section considers if and how young women shared their social spaces with adults, younger children and young men, and considers their
perceptions of sharing these spaces. Young women often sought out places in Inverness that they could spend time away from the “institutional restrictions of school or the watchful eye of family” (Hopkins, 2010, p.207) or other adults and the presence of younger children, such as “annoying siblings” (Lucy, W1). These findings reinforce literature which asserts that young people want “places to call their own” (Nairn and Kraftl, 2015, p.2). While young women made a concerted effort to avoid adults and younger children, they did not make the same efforts to avoid young men. Young men’s and young women’s use of the same space, however, was at times different and contested.

5.2.1 Avoiding adults
Young women cited town as a popular destination for young people who wanted to avoid supervision from adults they knew, such as parents and neighbours, especially in the evenings and at the weekend. According to Matthews and colleagues (2000), young people often meet in urban spaces to “share and enjoy a range of informal activities, unhindered by the adult gaze” (p.66). For example, Emma pointed out that some young people went to town specifically to smoke and not get caught, thereby avoiding the inevitable surveillance of adults in their own neighbourhoods (YWI.001).

Eve and Morgan liked spending time at Tesco because they found it was largely unsupervised by adults.

Morgan: Sometimes we just sit on the floor. Like, if her sister's there [at Tesco].

Eve: The employees don't really do much about it anyway. Cause we were by the ice cream one time, just lying on the floor, spread out.

Interviewer: At Tesco?

Eve: Yeah, and [...] an employee came down like a row and saw Morgan on the floor and just did nothing. Like, they're always on their phones, they don't really do much.
Interviewer: Are they like, young employees?

Eve: Well, there's a lot who work in Tesco that we know.

Morgan: I think it like ranges.

Eve: There’re more our age, like 17, 18. It's the young ones who are always on their phone doing nothing and then the employees walk past, and they don't do anything. That's the reason why we hang out there (YWI.010.011).

Eve and Morgan could break with acceptable (adult) behavioural norms in Tesco (i.e., lie on the floor) without being reprimanded by adults because the staff who worked there were mostly young people they knew who did not appear to care what they did. The staff’s indifference to their behaviour was the very reason that Eve said they chose to spend time there. Eve and Morgan found a space where, as the previously section noted, they had access to food and somewhere to sit, but also a space away from adults seeking to correct their behaviour. According to Valentine (1996b), young people are often “expected to show deference to adults and adults’ definitions of appropriate behaviour” (p.214), for example, to parents/carers in the home, teachers in school, and other adult authority figures in the public realm such as police officers. For Morgan and Eve, Tesco was a place where they could behave as they liked without adult correction.

The young women sought out spaces where they knew their behaviour would not be regulated by adults. Tesco, for example, was valued by Eve and Morgan as a place to go and socialise because they knew their behaviour would not be policed, even when they contravened acceptable behavioural norms.

5.2.2 No place for children

Apart from adult supervision, the young women also expressed a desire to have time away from younger siblings (W1), and younger children in
general. In Skelton’s (2000) study of teenage girls’ use of public space in Wales, the young women participants expressed resentment at the presence of pre-teens at their dances. Lauren expressed a similar resentment at the presence of younger children at McDonald’s:

Lauren: Sometimes you get the younger ones from the primary schools coming in, and that’s weird and I’m like eehhhl, I can’t talk around you [laughs].

Interviewer: Do they come in on their own?

Lauren: Yeah, I’m like, I wasn’t doing that at your age.

Interviewer: Like P7 or something?

Lauren: Yeah, I’m like, no.

Interviewer: Like, a lot of them? In little groups?

Lauren: Yeah, I’m like, what are you doing here? (YWI.005)

Lauren’s problem with the presence of primary school aged children at McDonald’s was that the space no longer felt private, it no longer felt like it belonged to her and her friends. Through their consistent presence and use of the space Lauren and her friends felt a sense of ownership that these unsupervised younger children threatened to erode. This territoriality is commonplace in literature on young people’s use of space, as Woolley (2003) notes, “teenagers value places to gather in and claim as their own” (p.6). Going to town by yourself, particularly in the evening, was seen as a rite of passage by Lauren that was achieved after beginning secondary school. Lauren and her friends thus viewed primary school aged children in McDonald’s as an unwelcome presence in their space.

In this example, through their regular presence in the space, Lauren felt she and her friends had more claim to McDonald’s as a place to hang out than younger children. Young people thus viewed McDonald’s as a place for
young people, a place they had more “social ownership” (Matthews and Tucker, 2006, p.169) of than younger children.

5.2.3 Young women only?

Young women made spatial choices to avoid adult supervision and younger children, but the same was not true of gender. Young women used many of the same social spaces as young men; however, they often kept to single-sex groups within those spaces. Young women did not base their choice of where to socialise on avoiding young men, nor did they appear to see young men as out of place when sharing their social environments in the same way they viewed children. However, young women and key adults working with young women were aware of the gendered nature of some spaces, particularly those associated with stereotypically masculine subjects or activities, and this affected young women in different ways.

Young men and young women often used the same social spaces. Kayla and Leah explained, for example, that McDonald’s was a popular destination for both young men and young women, and Katie said, “I think men and women just hang out together anywhere” (YWI.002; KAI.002; YWI.008). While no young women in the research said they made decisions about where to socialise in the public realm based on avoiding young men, Hannah, unlike Katie, said, “the boys tend to stay together, and the girls tend to stay together and then they’ll meet each other if there’s, like, a party” (YWI.004). Most young women shared examples of spending time with other young women, though several said they are friends with young men too.

Some young women and adults made gender distinctions about how young men and young women liked to spend their time. Gansen and Martin (2018) assert that these gender distinctions are learned in childhood through interactional processes of socialisation from peers and family, and from macro-level influences such as the media which teaches children appropriate ways of being ‘boys’ and ‘girls’. Many participants’ perceptions followed these traditional gendered lines, including the belief that young women are more
interested in shopping, while young men are more interested in smoking, causing trouble and playing team sports. The shopping centre, for example, was seen by Kayla and Leah as a place frequented more by young women, while the skate park was cited by Martin as a place frequented more by young men (KAI.002; YWI.008; KAI.004). These gender stereotypes are problematic because they “play a major role in maintaining power differences between women and men” (Risman, 2018a, p.22) and have spatial implications.

Key adult Zoe also commented on the role of socialisation in influencing young people’s interests. She attributed the ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ division of activities to what young women and young men are ‘pushed into’ by others:

I think that yeah, boys are generally more pushed into sports, and again, I think that's a broader issue. But I do think that they would be more likely to be part of the rugby club, or anything athletic (KAI.003).

However, Shona said that in her experience, both young men and young women took part in activities such as football and rugby, a point corroborated by Julie, an avid sports player (KAI.005; W2). Bethany, however, said that she thought that gender stereotypes, and the resulting gendered use of space by young people in Inverness, was eroding:

It seems to be that young women have slowly begun using the same spaces. So, it used to be the girls would stick to the East Gate Centre, the boys would be at the gym or the rugby club, and now it's you know, you'll see the lads at Starbucks as well and you'll see the girls at the gym (KAI.001).

Bethany points out that she has seen a change in the way that space is used in Inverness – observing that now, more than ever, young men and young women use the same social spaces. However, as Zoe and others pointed out, gender socialisation influences young women’s choice of hobbies and interests, and these have spatial implications. Young men and young women,
at times, frequented different spaces because of gender norms encouraging young men and young women to pursue interests in keeping with stereotypical conceptions of appropriate masculine and feminine pursuits.

Yet, the young women did not always accept the gendered segregation of activities and spaces. Katie, for example, shared her experience of entering a stereotypically ‘masculine’ space, a science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) club. She said:

> When I joined [the STEM club], it was like all boys that went, I was the only girl there and I got told that I shouldn't be there and stuff because it was like a 'boy thing’, engineering and that sort of stuff (YWI.002).

Alsop and Clispy (2019) point out that young women in the UK “still feel they receive gender stereotypical expectations and careers advice from teachers and their peers” (p.849) around their choice of subjects, their behaviour, and what activities they are likely to excel in, or not. This is particularly true of STEM subjects which are still often represented as ‘male’ (Alsop and Clispy, 2019). In the above example, the gendered nature of the activity, and the space, was pointed out to Katie by her peers, but Katie rejected this and instead chose to participate. Emma similarly shared that she was the only girl in her bowling club, which made her feel nervous. She said she wished more girls were on her team, though she did not elaborate on the reason why (YWI.001). These example evidence Katie’s and Emma’s awareness of gender stereotypes and biases which attempt to exclude young women from traditionally ‘masculine’ spaces and pursuits. Their responses in the face of these gender power dynamics exemplifies the diverse ways in which young women respond to transgressing these gendered spatial boundaries.

Key adults identified gender differences in the spatial practices of young people who attended youth clubs. Although young men and young women were seen to occupy the same spaces, young men were perceived as the dominant, and often problematic, actors therein. Ruth reflected:
I think anywhere young women go, if there are young men there then they're the underdog [...] their needs would be less than the guys, so, if you're talking about youth clubs, sports halls, it'll be the football is on whether the girls want this or that the youth worker would need to negotiate. The boys always feel it's just their right that they would get that, and I think they would feel that with public spaces as well. They would have more right to be there than the young women would have, and I think it would be hard for young women to challenge it, but I think they do (KAI.016).

Ruth makes several strong statements about young men’s and young women’s spatial practices and position in society. She says that in a youth club setting, young men’s spatial preferences dominate. Ruth points out the important role that youth workers play in mediating the use of shared spaces. Ruth goes so far as to imply the spatial inequality is a symptom of gender inequality in society, as she identifies women as the ‘underdog’ and young men as problematic social actors (see, for example, Dumas, 2016). This is in keeping with feminist conceptualisations of patriarchy, which argues that men hold the power in society, which then functions to exclude and marginalise women (Laperriere and Orloff, 2018).

Ruth believed that, when young women and young men use the same space, young men dictate the terms of its use. Bethany brought a similar example of young men’s appropriation and control of space in a youth club:

They [the boys] will shout ‘football’ until your ears bleed. And the girls predominantly that I work with like badminton. And see if the hassle of going right, you can have the hall for half the session doing this, and you can have the hall for half the session doing that, doesn't work because the boys will dominate. You turn your back for two seconds and they're in there playing football around the game of badminton (KAI.001).

Bethany’s example of the way in which young men dominate a space gives evidence to Ruth’s point that when a space is contested, young men will seek to dictate the terms of its use. Young men’s tendency to dominate shared recreational spaces, and to use more space than young women for their
games/pursuits is a recognised issue in informal youth spaces (Walker and Clark, 2020; Queiser, 2016). Moreover, according to Bethany, the boys disregard rules laid out by a young, female adult. According to Ruth, young women do challenge young men’s claims to space, or as she puts it, their *right* to space, but the issue, in her eyes, is that young women do not hold enough power and are not valued enough in society to be given equal access to it. Bethany, however, did not view this as an issue of gender inequality. Instead, she viewed the conflict as an opportunity to, as she later said, “break down barriers” (KAI.001) between separate social groups of young men and young women. In Bethany’s view young men are simply more confident (and louder) when making their opinions heard, in part, because of their privileged position in society. Both key adults recognised young men’s appropriation of shared space at the young club, but they interpreted it differently. It is unclear from the data what young women thought of this because they did not raise it as an example during workshops or interviews.

In short, young men and young women faced gender socialisation from peers and family on the interactional level which, in combination with macro-level forces such as media and popular culture, often steered young people to participate in hobbies along gendered lines, which had spatial implications. When young men and young women occupied the same social spaces the women who worked with young people commented on gender differences in how the use of space was determined, occupied and controlled.

5.2.4 Section conclusion

This section demonstrated that young women desire a space to socialise with their friends away from younger children and adult regulation. Young women viewed adults as rule-enforcers ready to police their behaviour, and young women viewed unsupervised younger children as ‘annoying’ because their presence threatened their claim to that space. Young women did not, however, make spatial decisions based on avoiding young men even though they were aware of if and when they were the only
young woman in a given space. Moreover, when space was shared, key adults viewed young men as much more likely to determine how that space was used, a reflection of the gender power imbalance in society.

The next section explores the notion of adults as rule-enforcers and considers adults responses to young people’s uses of space.

5.3 Adult responses to young people’s uses of the public realm

This section addressed research question four by considering young women’s access to the public realm in relation to adults who act as gatekeepers, and regulators of the space. Intergenerational conflicts are not uncommon when young people and adults share the public realm (Matthews et al., 2000; Skelton, 2000; Pain, 2003). In general, “public space is often designed by and presumed to be for the use of adults” (Woolley, 2003, p.7) and thus young people’s presence in these ‘adult’ spaces evokes a variety of often negative responses from the largely adult public. Adult responses are contingent on a number of factors, including where young people are socialising, how many are gathered, and if and how noticeable they are (i.e., their manner of dress, volume and activities) in the space (Hopkins, 2010). This section explores several adult responses to young people’s social use of space in Inverness, revealing the underlying assumption that young people do not belong in the public realm.

5.3.1 Surveillance

Wandering the hallways of East Gate shopping centre with friends, “not consuming very much, in a place dedicated to consumption” (Sibley, 1995, p.xii), young people were viewed with suspicion by security staff (KAI.005). Young people’s use of shopping centres and their surveillance therein has attracted considerable academic research over the years (see, Matthews et al., 2000; Vanderbeck and Johnson, 2000; Millie, 2008; Pyyry, 2016). Young people often use these spaces first and foremost as a place to socialise, disregarding the original designation of the space as one for
consumers. Matthews (2003) describes shopping centres as “temple[s] of consumption, where the visible presence of young people who are neither shopping nor spending money means that their behaviour is beyond the pale” (p.113). Young people’s “legitimate but competing claims” (Millie, 2008, p.383) to space can thus be sources of tension, resulting in the surveillance of young people who are seen as defying an unwritten, but expected, code of consumerist conduct (Sibley, 1995).

Shona shared how the young people she worked with came to her and said that they felt like they were being followed by the shopping centre’s security staff, “being chased out of the East Gate Centre [...] just because they had a Thistlevale Secondary School [jumper]” (KAI.005). The young people believed they were being unfairly watched and followed, not because of their age, but because of the reputation of their school, and the neighbourhoods within its catchment area. Negative place reputation affected perceptions of the place itself, but also the people who lived there (see Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion of place-based stigmatisation). In response to young people’s concerns, Shona arranged a meeting between the young people and East Gate staff. At the meeting, East Gate staff explained that it was not just students from their school that were being targeted:

He’s saying it’s not just [our school], it’s other schools as well, so it’s actually every kid is getting watched and followed. And it was really good because he took us into this CCTV room to show us actually it's everyone getting watched, there’s so many cameras. But they just felt paranoid, well not paranoid, they just felt that it was them because they had [our school’s] logo on them. But that was really good actually, experience taking them there and saying, they were actually like, okay we don't feel quite like it's because we go to [this school] (KAI.005).

The meeting between students and the East Gate staff was considered successful because the young people involved had a chance to realise that they were not being unfairly targeted because of the particular part of
Inverness where they went to school. Through Shona’s facilitation, they were invited ‘behind the scenes’ into the inner (adult-only) workings of a commercial space. It is unclear from the data if the invitation and the time security staff took to show young people around would have been possible without the ‘legitimate’ request of an adult intermediary. Furthermore, the fact that “it’s actually every kid is getting watched and followed” (KAI.005) was not considered problematic. Based on Shona’s account, it appears that the surveillance of young people in the shopping centre by security staff was either not problematised further by the young people or adults involved, or simply not commented upon during my fieldwork.

In this example, security staff, according to Shona, had a valid claim to watch and follow all young people based on the fact that they were young. Young people’s propensity to use the shopping mall as a place to meet up with their friends only increased adult suspicion of young people in this space as they were not there, as adults were presumed to be, as likely consumers prepared to spend money on food and shopping.

5.3.2 Exclusion

Apart from surveillance, young people are also, at times, excluded from the public realm through rules and procedures that are not young people friendly. The UK has a history of excluding children and young people from the urban public realm, for example, The Vagrancy and Malicious Trespasses Act of 1829 “declared illegal a range of activities in the streets, including football, flying a kite or any game considered to be an annoyance to inhabitants or passers-by” (Malone, 2005, p.160) which, of course, overwhelmingly affected children and young people. While this is an extreme example, in modern-day Scotland, young people are still excluded from parts of the public realm. For example, Lucy explained how the green space near her home bears a large sign which reads, “no ball games here”, a rule most likely to affect children and young people (YWI.003).
In Inverness, key adults who worked with young people were sympathetic towards their desires to have somewhere to hang out, a place for young people that they could put their stamp on. Martin shared how a space can change from being one that is welcoming towards young people to one that, through small acts of exclusion, becomes somewhere young people do not want to be. Martin explained:

We ran our youth club from that building for years and it failed because young people were not welcomed, were not invited in, were not given a space to call their own. They weren't allowed to touch any of the artwork on the walls, they weren't allowed to put their own artwork on the walls. Their sports hall was turned into a theatre – they had no interest in theatre! They wanted to kick a football around. Tiny little changes, like the kitchen became off limits. They weren't allowed in the kitchen without having done a three-hour long course. And silly little things and slowly but surely it was eroded away, and the youth just stopped coming (KAI.004).

Martin was not the only adult to comment on the way that the rules changed in this previously accessible community centre in a way that excluded young people. Ruth also brought up the changes made:

[They] were asking for young people to lift their feet higher when they were walking because they were making black marks on the floor with their shoes. So, ridiculous stuff like that. So, for me it was the young people were nay welcome there (KAI.016).

According to Martin and Ruth, the small changes made the community centre a place that no longer welcomed young people. While it was never overtly said, the changes made slowly excluded young people from the space. Martin identified the importance of young people being able to make the spaces they gathered into a place of their own by putting their own artwork on the walls. Similarly, Martha, reflecting on ‘successful’ youth clubs from the past noted that these spaces for young people were not shared premises, and young people were able to, for example, leave their artwork and other projects out until the next day (KAI.013). Martha went on to explain that
government funding cuts are the reason such places are no longer in existence as, in the age of austerity, youth work budgets are limited (KAI.013).

The idea that young people need a place of their own, a ‘home’ in the community was a sentiment expressed by key adult Zoe. She said, “they don't seem to have a home, or somewhere that they sort of go to” (KAI.003). She said:

There isn't all that many places for them to congregate. There's no real, I think there's a few youth clubs in and around, but there's no real place for young people to hang out (KAI.003).

From my research in Inverness, I learned that there are several youth clubs in and around the city centre and surrounding residential neighbourhoods. However, from this quote it appears that Zoe was referring to something other than a youth club, as she differentiated youth clubs from places where young people could hang out. Hanging out was likely seen by Zoe as a less structured and less supervised alternative to youth clubs.

Zoe’s comment is significant because it reveals an assumption. That assumption is that young people require a specific space designated just for them because they do not belong in spaces not specifically designed for young people. Moreover, Zoe’s comment that “there’s no real place for young people to hang out” was not an isolated view. Key adult, and parent, Dawn, said that her daughters go into town for coffee, but “there’s like nowhere” (KAI.008) for young people to go, that is, nowhere that they can gather together and call their own. The lack of places within the public realm designated for young people’s use is well document in literature exploring young people’s uses of the public realm (Hopkins, 2010). This has implications for policy and practice in Scotland, and the UK more broadly, for if young people desire a place that is safe, warm, for unstructured social time with peers – some youth organisations would benefit from intentionally creating spaces where this can happen (and certainly some already do).
Adults who did not work with young people, but shared spaces with them, made changes to the rules and regulations of previously young people friendly spaces, which functioned as barriers to young people’s use of the space. The idea that young people lacked a ‘home’ or somewhere to go in Inverness further underlined the dominant view that young people need their own spaces, and that they are out of place in adult environments.

5.3.3 Erasing young people from the public realm

Another way that adults responded to young people’s uses of the public realm was by trying to get them to move on from places they deemed inappropriate to gather. Young people congregating on the high street in front of the McDonald’s was a cause for concern for the Council and members of the public, in part, because their presence threatened the urban aesthetic and, perhaps made them feel uncomfortable, or even fearful. According to Millie (2008), young people’s presence on the street “carr[ies] with it symbolic cues hinting at intimidation, rudeness and general unpleasantness, be it the language of fashion, mannerisms, or the way young people talk” (p.383), which does not fit with the way the public realm should look and feel and how the people within it should interact.

Bethany shared how the Council deemed the benches in front of McDonald’s an unsuitable meeting point for young people:

Bethany: The benches just out front outside McDonald’s, they got taken away last year due to antisocial behaviour because for years teenagers had been ‘causing riots’ […] The minute they were taken away, the elderly generation went 'Oy, we need them' so they were put back because two angry old ladies started screaming at the Council. But again, it was that perception of, they’re young, they’re sitting there, they’re causing trouble. And then the elderly ladies going, ‘No, no, no, we need them because we’re not walking up and down the high street’. Suddenly, they were all put back in […] it was almost like double standards […] one rule for one part of the - one
Interviewer: So, what was it about those young people congregating there that made the Council, or society, uncomfortable?

Bethany: I think it was because it was during summer and it was like the first time half the city had seen young people. You know, they're either in school, in their community groups, or at home. And suddenly this little group went we're going to go outside, and people weren't used to that, and it was a bad image for tourist season. You know, the image of the city. So, the city of Inverness has a brand, a brand that we sell internationally and obviously a bunch of teenagers congregated outside a fast-food restaurant normally doesn't show the city in a good light, but then suddenly when other people started complaining, well actually, where they gonna go now? All they do is go into the East Gate but then suddenly the East Gate Centre went, ‘Nah, nah, we've got too many teenagers’. They're buying stuff! It's custom, isn't it? [laughs] And again, it took two very angry old ladies before all the benches were reinstated. Very quickly I may add. I don't think I've ever seen the Council workers put in a bench that quick (KAI.001).

In the summer the area outside of McDonald's, a popular destination for young people, became an extension of the space inside. In the first section of this chapter, the young women shared that available seating was one of the reasons they chose to spend time in certain places with friends, and the removal of the benches targeted an aspect of the built environment that young people valued and used.

Furthermore, the above example evidences a well-documented phenomenon in the literature in which young people’s presence “transgress[es] the sensibilities of those adults who define the public realm as an extension of their own private domain” (Matthews and Tucker, 2006, p.166). The Council and members of the adult public identified young people’s behaviour in that space as ‘antisocial’. The way in which antisocial
behaviour is defined, according to critics such as Millie (2008), is largely dependent on “people’s behavioural expectations for a particular space and time” (p. 279). In this case, young people gathering on the high street did not meet adults’ behavioural expectations, and adults then attempted to create an environment that did not welcome them.

In this example, the people’s expectations that ‘mattered’ were adults, as evidenced firstly, by the removal of the benches (a Council decision), and secondly, by their reinstatement following the elderly women’s complaints. This highlights generational politics at work, where the voices of adults are considered and respected more than those of young people. The primacy of adults in the determination of space and spatial practices leaves little room for young people to contribute to setting the standards of normative behaviour in the public realm. Young people continue to contend with the adultist view that they are “disrupting the moral order of the street” (Valentine, 1996a, p. 596), and in light of this ‘othering’, their views and spatial needs are not prioritised by adult decision makers.

Bethany also highlighted that “it was like the first-time half the city had seen young people” because they were previously in school, at home, or youth clubs in places where young people are thought to ‘belong’. This surprise at encountering young people is evidence of the “generational segregation characteristic of the contemporary urban landscape” (Christensen and Mikkelsen, 2013, p. 99) in which children, young people and adults attend different institutions, and occupy separate spaces, or the same space at different times (Melville and Hatton-Yeo, 2015). Zeiher (2003) asserts places for children “are scattered like islands on the map of the city” (p. 66), which results in the wider adult public’s surprise at their presence elsewhere. While Zeiher’s (2003) research was with 10-year-old children, the institutionalisation of childhood is an idea that is applicable to young people, who were viewed as not belonging on the high street in Inverness.
Bethany’s own perspective shaped the way she presented this narrative, and it was clear from her choice of words and the spirited way in which she recounted the event during the interview that she had strong feelings about the situation. However, several of the points she made provide useful insight into the tension between young people’s use of the public realm, and adults’ desire to see it used in a certain way. This is an example of how young people’s use of space in the public realm was deemed as troublesome, whereas the older generation’s use of the same space needed to be accommodated. According to Bethany, the reason for this discrepancy was teenagers gathering together “doesn’t show the city in a good light” and failed to align with the city’s *brand*.

Why is it that a group of teenagers are considered a blemish on the cityscape, whereas other adults, or children are not? This goes back to the societal view that a group of teenagers together are likely to cause trouble. In fact, Matthews and colleagues (2000) noted:

[Young people’s] visibility in public places is seen as discrepant and undesirable […] a polluting presence, because by congregating together they are seen to be challenging the hegemony of adult ownership of public space (p.63).

As such, groups of young people are viewed as out of place in public spaces. Not only that, according to Bethany, they are seen as tarnishing the image of the city. Wall (2019) argues that the historical adultism pervading society today, and evidenced by the example above, must be met with childism. According to Wall (2019) childism is “a lens or prism for approaching children as not just objects but also subjectivities that creatively challenge engrained normative assumptions” (p.12). Through childism, longstanding social norms and structures which fail to consider the views and experiences of children and young people may give way to make room for a more age-inclusive society (Wall, 2019).
5.3.4 Section conclusion

This section spotlighted several examples of how adults responded to young people’s use of the public realm in Inverness. In all three examples, adults viewed young people as undesirable in these spaces and undertook measures to change their behaviour in the space or dissuade them from using it entirely. In the first example, young people’s surveillance in the shopping centre was normalised and considered a necessary measure because young people used it as a place to socialise and gather. In the second example, the community centre made small changes to the rules and regulations of the space which (either knowingly or unknowingly – it is not clear) excluded young people from the space and made them feel unwelcomed. The third example showed how young people’s presence on the high street was met with concern by some adults who viewed large groups of young people as blemishes on the cityscape.

In sum, young people’s use of the public realm was not positively received by all adults, particularly when the young people gathered in large groups in central, and visible locations. The negative reaction groups of young people receive is based on the view that young people are somehow a risk to those around them, deviant, and up to no good. This section argued that despite how young people are perceived in the public realm, they have just as much right to use the space as adults. Young women sometimes face opposition from adults when they attempt to use the public realm because the way that they use the space may not align with how it was designed or its original intended function. Space should be created to encourage understanding of generational differences in social and spatial practices.

The next section shifts focus from adult reactions to young people’s presence in the public realm to consider the places and spaces within the public realm that young women will not go, and why.
5.4 Spatial constraints

Spatial constraints are factors limiting or deterring young women’s access to certain spaces in the public realm and their mobilities therein. These factors may be visible, physical aspects of the build environment such as a trainline separating two communities, or invisible factors, such as the widely held belief that a particular street is dangerous. This section identifies several visible and invisible spatial constraints affecting the spaces and places that young women go in Inverness, thereby addressing research question four.

5.4.1 Young women’s geographies of fear

Fear of crime is important to consider when exploring young women’s access to, and involvement in, the public realm because it “can be considered to create and reinforce exclusion from social life and from particular urban spaces” (Pain, 2001, p.903). Young women’s fear of crime acted as a spatial constraint which caused them to regulate their mobilities and limited the places and spaces they chose to spend time in Inverness. Shirlow and Pain (2003) assert that "fear is not known, nor wholly measurable" but "diverse, dynamic and open to interpretation" (p.18). In this research, the young women often did not specify the precise nature of what they feared, but rather explained that there were places, spaces and routes that they chose not to use because they were scary, creepy or unknown. That being said, not all young women experience fear in the same way (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2013; Pain, 2001; Wattis, Green and Radford, 2011), and fear of crime, in particular, is influenced by “a range of factors including income, class, area of residence, housing status, sexual orientation, disability, [and] experience of victimisation” (Pain, 2001, p.901), to name a few.

Mothers and key adults, when discussing where young women did not go were more descriptive in their explanations than the young women, citing a fear of violent crime. However, at times they dismissed the legitimacy of young women’s fears. Angela shared that, while her daughters do not have a
curfew, they often choose not to be out at night in Thistlevale because they had heard stories of “lasses getting attacked” (PCI.005). She said, “My girls don't have curfews, they do what they want, but that's why they don't want to go out because they're scared” (PCI.005). According to Angela, her daughters were happy to traverse their neighbourhood during the day, but they were not willing to do so at night. The correlation between young women’s heightened perception of risk and night-time was a theme that arose during interviews with both young women and adults.

This example furthermore evidences that young women’s perceptions of risks to their personal safety are profoundly affected by gender and this plays a key role in determining their “experience of the city and freedom of movement” (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2013, p.414). Young women’s fears are informed by representations of young women as victims propagated by the media and fuelled by place-based stories of attacks (Ndangam et al., 2015). Notably, it is not necessarily actual violence that sparks such fears, but rather “the social production of women’s vulnerability” (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2013, p.414). Young women’s fears therefore often differ from young men’s (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2013; Pain, 2001), and understanding young women’s fears are central to understanding gendered experiences of the public realm.

In this research, the young women said they avoided parts of the public realm where violence was reputed to have taken place. In this way, stories of place spread through word of mouth shaped young women’s place meanings. Take Emma, for example:

Emma: There's this one lane, [...] It's quite near here and I don't like it, especially in the dark.

Interviewer: Why don't you like it?

Emma: Because, just as you like, go down the street bit, there's like another turning and it's a dead end and it's quite scary.

Interviewer: Is it scary? Why is it scary?
Emma: Because it's always like really dark under there and you never know if someone's following you.

Interviewer: Have you ever heard of that happening before?

Emma: Yeah, I'm pretty sure, I'm not like, I did hear that apparently someone got killed in like, the little lane bit. Like, just at that dead end and I'm like, yup, I'm not going down there (YWI.001).

In this example, Emma had not personally experienced a physical attack in this place, nor did she know anyone who had. Fears, however, are often learned over time, not only from personal experiences, but through “local discourses of risk” (Murray, 2009, p.481), which are often gendered and attached to certain places. This, in combination with her personal knowledge of the place, meant that it was a route she chose to avoid in order to feel safer. In this way, fear “shape[d] [her] mental maps and hence, [her] everyday geographies” (England and Simon, 2010, p.202). It should be noted that while the young women expressed fear of attacks from strangers, young people are more likely to experience violence at the hands of someone that they know (Pinheiro, 2006). In Emma’s account, her fear was heightened based on the place being ‘dark’ rather than it being night. This is particularly salient in Inverness given the limited hours of daylight during the winter months. On the shortest day of the year, for example, the sun rises at 9am and sets at 3:30pm meaning young people sometimes must walk in the dark to get to and from school. Davidson (2013a) similarly found that in her research with young people in a Scottish city that “environmental conditions, such as darkness or isolation, were highlighted as indicators of risk” (p.6) by some young people.

According to Vanderbeck and Johnson (2000):

Concerns about violence and personal safety frequently have concrete spatial manifestations in terms of people’s use of space and the ways in which they navigate their environments (p.15).
This was true in this research as places reputed to be unsafe were generally avoided by young women on their own. Key adult Denise shared how the reputation of one neighbourhood as violent and dangerous impacted a young woman who was spending time with her friends there:

Yeah, we have got one girl [...] she originally went to a different school, and she moved here and just this week actually she was saying that she was out with friends who live here at the weekend and then they all kind of got split up, they had to run away, someone was chasing them, and she was terrified. She said, 'I was genuinely terrified, I thought that I was going to get murdered' so she had to phone her mum and dad to come and get her because she didn't know where she was and because of the perception of the area she was convinced that within an hour she'd be dead, that someone would have got her and take her away. So, her mum and dad had to come pick her up. She was really frightened. But when she was with her friends in that area, she was okay. But as soon as they got split up, she was terrified. Nothing did happen to her, she was okay, but she was frightened (KAI.006).

From this quote, it is clear that the reason that the young woman was frightened when she was separated from her friends was “because of the perception of the area”, the perception being that she was likely to face personal violence (i.e., get murdered). This example illustrates the power of place reputation in creating and reinforcing where young women do and do not want to spend time (a more in-depth discussion of neighbourhood reputation to follow in Chapter 6).

There are, however, certain factors that do override place-based fear of violent crime. For example, this young woman’s place-based fear did not deter her from going into this neighbourhood with her friends to begin with. Her perception of the area as a dangerous place became an issue significant enough to prompt her to call her parents when she was separated from her friends, and she had lost her bearings. The negative neighbourhood reputation meant that she did not want to be in the area alone, because being alone made her feel more at risk of experiencing harm.
Young women were more likely to venture places that they considered unsafe if they were accompanied by friends. When young women travel together, they often feel more safe (Matthews, Limb and Taylor, 2000; Skelton, 2000), even when the place is unfamiliar, or of ill repute. The young woman in the previous example was not from the area and, therefore, her lack of personal knowledge and experience of the community contributed to her feeling more frightened. Her fear was grounded in what she knew of the place from others, and her brief experiences there, which was then amplified by her perception of its allegedly dangerous reputation.

The built environment also impacts young women’s access to certain spaces and places within Inverness. In fact, invisible spatial constraints such as fear of crime and neighbourhood reputation may be reinforced by physical spatial constraints. Take, for example, the presence of a railway bridge between two residential neighbourhoods. Martin explained:

There’s a railway bridge that connects the two [neighbourhoods] and is the only way in and out of the […] area, so you go under that bridge and on to [the] road, and beyond that there is no other way out of that community. So, that bridge becomes very much a barrier. If they’re walking anywhere, it could only be literally 200 yards from their house, but because there’s a railway line separating them, they have to walk the mile around, and then back. Yeah, so it becomes a bit of a frustration. There’s a lot of people in that Myrtlewood area that will not cross under that bridge for any reason. Em, it’s a trek, it’s a bit of a hassle […] once they go home after school there’s very little likelihood of them then retracing that journey back out (KAI.004).

Bellford and Myrtlewood are small, residential areas positioned next to each other; however, the presence of the railroad line cutting between them means residents do not have easy access to their neighbouring community. The design of the built environment can function to isolate neighbourhoods and in this way, “the architecture of a place functions as a form of regulation; it constrains the behaviour of those who interact within it, often without their
even realizing it” (Schindler, 2015, p. 1934). For example, youth clubs positioned in Bellford, geographically close to where young people in Myrtlewood live, proved difficult for them to reach. The physical barrier of the bridge kept young people from Myrtlewood from participating in activities outside of their neighbourhood which decreased opportunities for them to build social connections with non-residents. Spatial constraints are not isolated variables but are interrelated, and physical spatial constraints may reinforce negative perceptions of certain areas because they physically isolate residents and deter non-residents from going there. The physical barrier of the railway bridge reinforced some non-residents’ negative perceptions of that community as unsafe because it is not a place that they needed to pass through.

The examples in this section demonstrate how young women’s fears of violent crime, the negative reputation of certain spaces and places, combined with the build environment, act as spatial constraints limiting young women’s access to certain parts of the public realm. In some cases, this functioned to curtailed young women’s mobilities depending on the time of day/night and if they were on their own or accompanied by friends. The next section considers how the presence of people under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol rendered certain places and spaces unattractive to young women.

5.4.2 Junkies, druggies and alcoholics

Spatial constraints are not isolated factors, but usually influence, overlay and reinforce one another. Negative place reputations are built over time and are an amalgamation of beliefs about the goings on in a certain locality. Central to negative place reputations are beliefs about the people which might be encountered there. This section considers the effect that people (both adults and teenagers) abusing drugs and alcohol had on young women’s use, access and desire to spend time in areas where ‘junkies’ ‘druggies’ and ‘alcoholics’ were reputed to frequent.
The presence of people abusing drugs and/or alcohol was mentioned by six young women, two mothers and four key adults as a factor limiting or affecting where they went in the public realm. The young women spoke openly and frequently about needing to avoid areas where people took or sold drugs illegally, and where people (particularly adults) were getting drunk, for safety reasons. In fact, the majority of young women in the research mentioned that they avoided areas where they knew that drug and/or alcohol abuse took place because these people posed a risk to their safety. Eve and Morgan, for example, equated the presence of such people with how safe a place was:

Interviewer: What makes a place feel safe?

Eve: Just like the people around, if they're nice.

Morgan: Yeah, I guess, not many druggies or anything.

Eve: Yeah.

Morgan: Yeah, and I guess like alcoholics and stuff, like, there's not many (YWI.010.011).

Eve and Morgan viewed druggies and alcoholics as people who made a place feel less safe and contrasted them with people who were nice. Morgan commented that a safe area would “not have many druggies or alcoholics”. Therefore, a safe community in her eyes was not the absence of these people altogether, but rather, the safety and desirability of the community was inversely correlated to the number of junkies, druggies and alcoholics who frequented the area.

Leah said, “Near the Thistlevale Primary School is where mostly drug dealers go, and I try and avoid that place” (YWI.008). The young women knew where substance abuse took place and chose to avoid those areas. According to key adult Gillian, young people pointed out specific back alleyways to her and said, “You don't go down this one past a certain time” (KAI.014). Similarly, Denise said:
There's certain areas that they [young women] won't hang out because of the junkies or the alcoholics, and, you know, they talk about that. 'Oh no, don’t go near there that's for the junkies and stuff’ (KAI.006).

Young women’s knowledge of where drug and alcohol abuse took place in the public realm helped them to plan their journeys selectively and decide where, and at what times, to meet friends. Nayak (2003) similarly found that in North East England young people have “knowledge of drugs (who the dealers were, in what places they operated and who were their respective clients)” and as such, had “developed a complex mental map of ‘safe’ and ‘risky’ zones” which allowed them to “navigate their communities” (p.305). In Inverness, young women not only knew where people abusing drugs and alcohol were likely to be found, but also had a sense of what times this was likely to occur. Junkies, druggies and alcoholics were more likely to be encountered at night. Areas that were acceptable to go during the day were thus considered dangerous and off limits at night, both by young women, and their mothers (for similar findings see, Beunderman et al., 2007; England and Simon, 2010; Rodó-de-Zárate, 2014). In this way, the meanings young women and their mothers attribute to spaces and places were shaped by both spatial and temporal factors which influenced their access to and use of the public realm.

Hannah, for example, said that she avoided going to town late at night because of drunk people (YWI.004). Katie said her parents do not allow her out after 9pm “because there's a lot of teenagers from my school and stuff that drink […] and hang about the streets” (YWI.002). Similarly, according to Lauren, it was not so much the place as the time of day that influenced where she chose to go. She said:

Lauren: Most places I wouldn't go to at night.

Interviewer: Okay, how come?

Lauren: Cause junkies.
Interviewer: Cause junkies, okay, so junkies are…
[pause] Tell me a bit about junkies.

Lauren: [laughs] Junkies, I don't know.

Interviewer: That's slang right?

Lauren: What's the word again, people who are addicted and people who are drunk and everything like that (YWI.005).

Unlike Leah, Lauren did not view ‘junkies’ as tied to particular localities. Instead, she viewed the time of day as the salient factors constraining her access to the public realm. Lauren did not want to go out at night because she did not want to encounter ‘junkies’ whom she defined as “people who are addicted and people who are drunk and everything” (YWI.005). The young women in the research made a distinction between themselves and their friends and those people abusing drugs and alcohol who they dubbed ‘junkies’, ‘druggies’ and ‘alcoholics’. Several participants suggested that drug and alcohol abuse was more prevalent at night and decisions to avoid people abusing drugs and alcohol were thus time-based.

Additionally, the remnants of drug and alcohol abuse also influenced young women’s perceptions and use of parts of the public realm. The way that a space looked played a role in if and how it was used, and by whom. According to Beunderman and colleagues (2007), “theoretically accessible space becomes unusable if it is unattractive or feels unsafe” (p.58). This was the case in Inverness, and the young women and their mothers pointed out that remnants of drug and alcohol use, such as broken glass bottles and needles made previously attractive areas, such as green spaces, unusable not only because they were not aesthetically pleasing, but also because they posed a potential danger to people (and pets) using the space (YWI.010.011; PCI.001; PCI.005).

The presence of people under the influence of drugs and alcohol and the carelessly discarded evidence of their habits made young women in the
research feel uncomfortable. Young women thus made decisions about where they did and did not go, and at what times, based on the likelihood of encountering people abusing drug and alcohol. Some young women felt that these people were not a place-based threat but a time-based threat, and thus likely to pose a greater risk at night. Young women were further deterred from using certain parts of the public realm by the discarded paraphernalia of drug and alcohol use.

5.4.3 Section conclusion

Young women’s fears, the presence of people abusing drugs and alcohol, in combination with the appearance of a place, and physical barriers around it, all act as spatial constraints limiting young women’s ability and/or desire to frequent certain parts of the public realm in Inverness. From laneways, to parks, to whole neighbourhoods, these spatial constraints restrict young women’s use of the public realm. This section also highlighted that there is a gendered component to spatial constraints which often goes unexamined. Understanding where and why young women do not go will lend insight into why they do go other places. Where young women choose to avoid and the reasons behind it will illuminate ways in which the public realm in Inverness might become more accessible to young women in the future.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter considered young women’s use of the public realm in Inverness and provided an overview of the spaces and places young women use, the intergenerational politics of sharing space and the spatial constraints limiting young women’s access to the public realm. The first section addressed the first half of research question three, and considered the ways in which young women created, repurposed and chose certain parts of the public realm to spend time. Young women sought out places of retreat where they could get away from family, siblings and peer groups with a select group of friends, and places of socialisation where they went to maximise the
possibility of a variety of social encounters with young people from around Inverness.

Commercial spaces in town and green spaces proved particularly popular destinations, and young women valued them for different reasons, in part, because they met different social purposes. Within these areas, young women chose smaller, at times unexpected, places to make their own, creatively giving meaning to, and repurposing them for their own social uses through spending time there. In the absence of young people only spaces, young women appropriated aspects of the public realm for themselves, and gave them meanings that, at times, clashed with the meanings and purposes the space was designed for. Moreover, young women’s social use of space was not always sedentary; young women created private social spaces on the move as they walked through the public realm together.

The second section addressed part of research question four and examined young women’s perceptions of the social spaces that they used in the public realm. Young women desired to have spaces and places where they could be with their friends outside of school and home. Importantly, young women sought out spaces away from adults and younger children. The same was not true, however, of young men. Young women did not appear to make spatial decisions to avoid young men but were very aware of when young men outnumbered them in a given space. When young men and young women shared a space and had competing views on the behaviour or activities that should take place there, key adults perceived young men as possessing more influence or control over how that space was used.

The third section also addressed research question four and considered young women’s access to the public realm by considering the way adults reacted to their presence there. This section highlighted challenges young people face while using the public realm as some adults did not view the presence of groups of young people as desirable. Young people who made their presence known in public faced adult surveillance and control. The intergenerational politics of sharing space thus arose as a
theme in the research. This chapter furthermore provided examples of adults excluding young people from public spaces through rules and regulations. This section argued that while young people’s presence in the public realm is not entirely welcomed by the adult public, young people should be included and accepted as public realm users, with equal access and claim to it.

The final section further considered research question four and identified the visible and invisible spatial constraints limiting young women’s access to the public realm. Notably, young women’s fear of crime impacted their desire to access certain parts of the public realm. Other factors constraining young women’s use of space included the presence of people abusing drugs and alcohol, the ‘look’ of a place, as well as the physical aspects of the built environment that functioned as barriers. This section moreover asserted that there is a gender component to the spatial constraints affecting young women.

Young women value the public realm as a social space to spend time with close friends, and their wider peer group. Opportunities to build and maintain social connections outside of the home are an important way in which young women develop their identities and build social skills. Furthermore, young women’s physical presence in the public realm helps facilitates the process by which unknown spaces become meaningful places. This place-making, in turn contributes to young women’s sense of place belonging. It is essential that policy makers, city planners and youth workers therefore realise the diversity of young women’s spatial needs, recognising that young women have an equal claim to the public realm, and their visible presence there does not equate to deviant behaviour. Moreover, young women may attribute different meanings to adult-designed spaces. This research furthermore revealed the importance young people place on having a sense of ownership over the spaces that they use. Young women desire spaces that are safe, where they can help set behaviour expectations, and make their own. In the age of austerity, cuts to youth work budgets (Mason, 2015) mean activities and programmes for young people are often held in
shared premises in which young people must conform to adult-centric codes of conduct (KAI.004; KAI.013).

Lastly, much of the academic research on young women’s presence in the public realm has failed to take into account their social/spatial needs. To ensure young women have equal access to the public realm it is imperative to consider their place preferences, the diverse ways in which they use and repurpose space, but also the factors that constrain them spatially, as well as the complex way that they negotiate the politics of sharing space. Understanding these factors is central to creating public realms that are welcoming and inclusive of young women.
Chapter 6 Territorial stigmatisation and place belonging

Young women’s (im)mobilities and their use of the public realm are highly contextual and informed not only by the socio-cultural context of Inverness, but also, at a smaller scale, by that of their neighbourhoods. As previously mentioned, I use the term ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘community’ interchangeably to refer to specific urban residential localities (namely, Thistlevale, Belford and Myrtlewood). I use the term ‘area’ to refer to one or more of these neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods, and the places and spaces within them, carry different socio-symbolic meanings, which inform young women’s (im)mobilities, use of the public realm and feelings of place belonging. The meanings attached to place are never neutral. In fact, widespread negative place meanings breed stigma, and place-based stigma affects the way young women and their families view themselves and others. The concept of territorial stigmatisation is a helpful way of understanding this phenomenon. Thistlevale, Belford and Myrtlewood have mixed demographics; however, they experience a host of socio-economic challenges including, to varying degrees, high rates of poverty, unemployment and crime. These, and other factors have contributed to the stigmatisation of these neighbourhoods, and the institutions and people therein.

As discussed in detail within the literature review (see Chapter 2), territorial stigmatisation is a concept popularised by Wacquant which “contends that certain groups of people are devalued, discredited and tainted by the reputation of the place where they reside” (Kirkness and Tijé-Dra, 2017, p.2). The degradation of certain neighbourhoods is symptomatic of “advanced marginality” (Wacquant, 2008, p.2), itself a by-product of “deindustrialisation and the rise of post-Fordism, the weakening of the welfare state, and intensified economic polarization” (Rhodes, 2012, p.684). Territorial stigmatisation may paradoxically act as a force that at times encourages the mobilities of young women living in stigmatised
neighbourhoods and at other times, limits their mobilities. How territorial stigma affects young women’s mobilities is dependent on several other variables, chief among which is their response to the stigma and their sense of place belonging. Place belonging is here conceptualised as “feeling ‘at home’, attached to, and rooted in a place” (Antonsich, 2010, p.647). Home, in this sense, is not simply the building where one lives, but “a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment” (Antonsich, 2010, p.646) which one may experience at different scales.

This chapter addresses research question one and looks at how territorial stigmatisation both limits and encourages young women’s mobilities depending on young women’s response to the stigma and their sense of place belonging. The chapter also touches on research question two and examines the ways in which young women’s social connections, particularly to family, create strong ties to place which may discourage future mobilities. The chapter also includes accounts of young women’s perceptions of the areas where they live, thereby addressing research question four.

In the first section, I look at the varying degrees of stigma surrounding Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood, and address some of the ways in which it is (re)produced and conversely, attenuated. Next, drawing on the experiences of young women, mothers and key adults, I examine residents’ complex, and contradictory, responses to territorial stigmatisation. At times, young women leverage mobilities to shake off place-based stigma, and at other times, young women rely on immobilities to counteract the “blemish of place” (Wacquant, 2007, p.67). Lastly, I investigate if and how young women forge a sense of place belonging in stigmatised neighbourhoods and the influence this has on their (im)mobilities now and in the future.

Understanding young women residents’ experiences of territorial stigmatisation is important because it disrupts stereotypical views of those living in areas labelled as ‘deprived’ and shows the diversity of their experiences. Moreover, this research sheds light on existing inequalities and
seeks to explore how territorial stigmatisation affects young women’s (im)mobilities and their sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods.

6.1 The (re)production of territorial stigmatisation
This section considers the way in which a cluster of three neighbourhoods in Inverness – Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood – are perceived by participants in the research (both residents and non-residents). This section then begins to unravel the way that these place meanings are (re)produced by young women, their mothers and key adults in this context.

6.1.1 Territorial stigma in Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood
During the time I spent conducting research in Inverness, I heard many, often contradictory, accounts of Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood. It is my intention in this chapter to draw attention to, and problematise territorial stigmatisation, without contributing to the further stigmatisation of the area. To do this, it is necessary to establish the existence of place-based stigma in the field site.

Firstly, some background information is necessary to illustrate the subtle variation within and between these neighbourhoods. Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood were, for the most part, referred to by participants as three separate neighbourhoods. However, Myrtlewood was sometimes considered part of Bellford. The way boundaries between neighbourhoods were drawn was inconsistent; however, the distinction between Bellford and Myrtlewood was made often enough for me to consider it distinct in this research. The Grove (a pseudonym) was a nickname used to identify Myrtlewood. The nickname ‘the Grove’ is imbued with meanings that I, as an outsider, did not fully understand when I first began data collection. While the moniker ‘the Grove’ was considered pejorative by some, the majority of young women and their mothers from Thistlevale and Bellford used the term almost exclusively to refer to Myrtlewood. Moreover, key adults said young people from Myrtlewood use the term as a badge of honour (KAI.004). Myrtlewood was the most deprived of these three neighbourhoods, with a
more deep-seated reputation for poverty, violence and drug use, and as a result, it was the most stigmatised.

Evidence of territorial stigma arose empirically in the research, particularly in interviews with key adults, both residents and non-residents who worked in the area. They spoke openly about the poverty and other 'social problems' young people from Thistlevele, Bellford and Myrtlewood, or who attended Thistlevele Secondary School, contend with. Referring to Thistlevele, Bellford and Myrtlewood, Gillian summarised the way the area is viewed. She said, “this side of town would be quite; [pause] it's not thought of well still” (KAI.014). Angela, a mother who lived in Thistlevele, alternatively gave evidence to the existence of territorial stigma through her claim that Thistlevele was “actually not a bad place” (PCI.005). The defence of the neighbourhood presupposed a “blemish of place” (Wacquant, 2007, p.67) that I was not initially aware of when I first started conducting research in Inverness, but one that became apparent the more unsolicited defences of the area that I heard.

The most overt example of the existence of territorial stigma and its impacts on young people came from Sharon, a mother and resident of Thistlevele, who reflected on the prejudicial treatment of young people from Myrtlewood. She said:

There's things like, [this one secondary school] is really bad if anybody's from Myrtlewood. Even down to the extent that there's, and this is people I've known, that the teachers do bully. 'Oh, you don't know what you're on about, you're just from Myrtlewood'. Terrible attitude, just because that's kinda passed as the rough area. And [that secondary school] just want[s] the posh kids. There is very much sort of a divide like that in some areas (PCI.002).

In this example, Sharon highlights the alleged low expectations that teachers from more affluent area schools have of young people from Myrtlewood. Sharon’s example illustrates the way that territorial stigma affects not only the place, but the people who live there, even when residents of those
neighbourhoods travel to other, non-stigmatised parts of the city. It should be noted this account is second-hand, but even if this teacher did not, in fact, say something of that nature to a young person, Sharon’s telling me about it evidences her perception that young people from Myrtlewood are mistreated because they are from a ‘rough area’. As the next section shows, when it comes to territorial stigmatisation, perceptions can be just as, if not more, powerful than facts.

Other participants intentionally countered negative place reputation without overtly acknowledging it by stressing the strength of area residents, particularly young people. For example, key adult Shona, referring to residents of Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood said:

I think the people are amazing. I think the kids that come to this school are great, honestly, they're just brilliant and a lot of them are just really honest and they'll just tell you how it is, and I love that! And honestly, I wouldn't want to work in another school, I wouldn't. I think the challenges that you face here you wouldn't get them necessarily in other areas (KAI.005).

Shona, like several other key adults, was careful in the way in which she spoke about the area. She did recognise the area’s socio-economic issues, but she did not want to contribute to the stigmatisation by making broad negative statements about the area, or the people who lived there. In fact, she emphasised the many positive qualities of residents, particularly the young people. Negative accounts of the area emphasising deficits and problems which arose in some interviews were thus balanced with counter examples of the positive side of these neighbourhoods by others. In this way, some key adults sought to resist reproducing territorial stigma by “recasting deficit discourses” (Stahl and Habib, 2017, p.280) and spreading more positive meanings of the neighbourhoods in which they worked through the stories they told about them.

From these examples, it is clear that participants gave very different accounts of the Thistlevale Secondary School catchment area as a whole,
and the specific neighbourhoods therein. The territorial stigma associated with the area, at different scales, was revealed in a number of ways, firstly, through some participants’ clear acknowledgment that the area was not thought of very highly by non-residents. Secondly, territorial stigma was revealed by others who confirmed the existence of stigma by presupposing non-residents, like me, held negative views of it.

6.1.2 The power of perception, representation and no experience of place

Perceptions and representation play a powerful role in the (re)production of territorial stigmatisation. Wacquant argues that the ‘reality’ within stigmatised areas is of less relevance than people’s (often unfairly) negative perceptions of them. He asserts:

> Whether or not these areas are in fact dilapidated and dangerous, and their population composed essentially of poor people, minorities and foreigners, matters little in the end: when it becomes widely shared and diffused, the prejudicial belief that they are suffices to set off socially noxious consequences (Wacquant, 2008, p.239).

Territorial stigmatisation of an area arises out of the collective belief that an area is ‘dilapidated’, meaning poor, and ‘dangerous’, that is, with high levels of crime, often in combination with prejudicial believes about the social identities of people living there. All three of these themes arose empirically in relation to all or part of the field site. Balanced, and less sensational accounts of these neighbourhoods were far less common than negative perceptions and representations of them, no matter on what basis they were formed.

In this research, non-residents’ place meanings about these neighbourhoods were often not grounded in personal experiences of spending time there, but in what they had heard about all or part of the area from, for example, other non-residents, the media or social media platforms. For example, Gillian shared that Thistlevale Secondary School is negatively represented in media because of its association with the catchment area.
from which it draws (including Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood), and its low ranking on lists of ‘the best’ Scottish secondary schools (for example, see Pagan, 2019). These lists are generated on the basis of students’ academic performance in five or more Scottish Higher qualifications, and therefore fail to take into account the positive non-university destinations many young graduates go on to achieve (KAI.012).

These lists are widely circulated by the media and were mentioned by three young women and two mothers in interviews with reference to Thistlevale Secondary School (YWI.004; YWI.010.011; PCI.002; PCI.005). Gillian went on to say that while the school staff are actively working towards changing the perception of the school, it is still reported on negatively by the press:

I know the head teacher has tried to raise the profile of it [Thistlevale Secondary School] in the press, but it's very much pushed back down again by press too (KAI.014).

This example evidences the power of journalists in the (re)production of territorial stigmatisation. These imposed representations are significant because negative representations of place “can result in public avoidance, selective outmigration and institutional (dis)investment” (Pinkster, Ferier and Hoekstra, 2020, p.523), which have significant consequences for the area residents, including young women.

Goffman (1990) explained the way in which stigma can spread to individuals who associate with a stigmatised person. This research found that the same is true of a stigmatised place. Young women who took part in the research from parts of Thistlevale considered ‘posh’ shared examples of their experiences of territorial stigma based on the fact that they attended Thistlevale Secondary School. The reputation of their school was inseparable from the reputation of all the neighbourhoods within its catchment area. Myrtlewood, for example, has higher levels of poverty and crime than Thistlevale. According to key adult Martin, a long-time resident of Bellford,
Myrtlewood “has a reputation, if you go in there alone you won't come back out”, which he argued is, “completely unfounded” (KAI.004). The schools’ reputation was thus inseparable from the most intense stigma associated with the neighbourhoods within the catchment area, and this influenced all of the students, no matter where they lived.

Young women who attended Thistlevale Secondary School shared that they felt that they were treated with suspicion and disdain because of the school that they attended (KAI.005). For example, Hannah, who lived in Thistlevale, said:

Say like you're in a discussion with someone from [other schools in Inverness] and you're from Thistlevale Secondary School maybe you didn't know something, they'd be like, 'Oh that's because you're from Thistlevale Secondary School' that sort of thing. Kind of like, not belittle you, but, I don't know the word, kind of make you think, ‘Oh’ (YWI.004).

Hannah went on to say, “I just feel like they feel a bit superior or whatever to our school” (YWI.004). Territorial stigmatisation can have a wide-reaching impact, affecting young people from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds not only because of where they live but because of the institutions (in this case, the school) they attended. Sernhede’s (2011) research with young people in Sweden similarly found that the territorial stigmatisation attached to suburban neighbourhoods “penetrates every corner of life” (p.163), including area schools. Territorial stigmatisation is a force affecting not only residents of stigmatised places, but also institutions.

The media plays a central role in creating place-meanings by, for example, linking stories and images of crime and violence to particular localities, which then become widespread in the popular public imagination. These representations of place produce and reproduce territorial stigmatisation (Kirkness and Tijé-Dra, 2017). Martin’s previously quoted assertion that there is a widely held, and in his view, false collective perception that Myrtlewood is a dangerous place is based on negative
representations of the neighbourhood in the media and, in his view, the misinterpretation of aggregated crime statistics. Speaking in relation to Bellford and Myrtlewood, Martin commented, “crime statistics for the area are quite high until you start looking at the types of crime” (KAI.004). He went on to explain that while the media headlines reported there was a “crime spree” and “drugs everywhere” a closer look at the statistics revealed a far less sensational story (KAI.004). According to Martin, the crime statistics only appear high due to significant numbers of minor speeding offenses following a police crackdown, and repeated cannabis possession charges among a small number of offenders (KAI.004). This example gives evidence to the fact that often territorial stigmatisation arises because of real area challenges, including crime. However, the way in which crime statistics are collated and reported not only influences how an area is perceived, but how its institutions and residents are perceived as well. Territorial stigmatisation may negatively influence young women’s and their parents'/carers’ perceptions of certain neighbourhoods. The reputation that a neighbourhood is dangerous therefore may limit young women’s access to stigmatised areas and their mobilities therein, particularly at night or after dark when risks are perceived to be higher (see Chapter 5).

In keeping with Martin’s comment, Myrtlewood was mentioned by the young women and some of their mothers as unsafe based on its reputation as a hotspot for crime, but also because of the people who might be encountered there. When the young women were asked a scenario-based question about where in Inverness they would tell a new girl who moved into their neighbourhood to avoid, Eve, Morgan, Olivia, Leah and Katie all cited Myrtlewood, or the Grove. Their justification for avoiding this neighbourhood was tied to the people they believed one might encounter there, especially at night. For example, Olivia, a former Bellford resident said:

Olivia: I’d tell her to avoid down there [the Grove] because sometimes you can get into trouble down there with other people. Because there [are] some people down there who just like to look for arguing and stuff.
Interviewer: Even if you don’t know them?

Olivia: [nods] (YWI.007).

Katie similarly noted that the area is known for having lots of fights (YWI.002). Eve, Morgan and Leah cited illegal drug use. Leah said, “It’s full of junkies and that, it’s not a good place” (YWI.008). When I asked Eve and Morgan what made the Grove unsafe, Eve replied, “Just the people”, and Morgan added “Yeah, probably like heroin addicts” (YWI.010.011). Territorial stigmatisation based on widely held place-meanings propagated by the media rather than personal experiences of a place led young women who did not live in Myrtlewood, to hold negative views of Myrtlewood, and its residents. Young women’s negative perceptions of Myrtlewood, moreover, sometimes deterred them from going there.

Not only did young women hold the view that Myrtlewood was an undesirable place to be, but several mothers also mentioned this. Michelle, a mother, and resident of Thistlevale, said of Myrtlewood:

My best friend, she used to live there [Myrtlewood], and she had so much trouble. She had all her car damaged and loads of people being horrible to her. A lot of it was jealousy because she could afford to have nicer things than them and they was all saying, ‘Well, what does she do to get her money?’ And it was really horrible, and in the end, they handed her out. It was horrible, it was a really horrible place to be. I know there’s always a lot of trouble, there’s been a lot of stabbings and all sorts down there and I don’t think I would like Emma to be down there at night on her own (PCI.003).

As in the quote by Wacquant at the beginning of this section, the twin themes of poverty and crime arose as central to the reproduction of place-based stigma and are evident in Michelle’s description of Myrtlewood. She recounts how the people in Myrtlewood were jealous of her friend’s material assets and then characterised the place as a location where violent crimes occur. Although Michelle did not face these challenges herself, she made her own place-meanings about the area based on what she heard about her friend’s
experiences. In her eyes, Myrtlewood was not a safe place for her daughter and a ‘horrible’ place to live. These examples evidence how territorial stigmatisation, built largely on fear, acts as a barrier limiting young women’s access to, and mobilities within, stigmatised neighbourhoods.

Martha, a resident of Myrtlewood, gave a completely different account of the neighbourhood. Martha said, “I think it’s a community in its own you know, and it’s got quite strong links and bonds” (KAI.013). While several young women and mothers viewed the area as dangerous and the people as troublesome, Martha commented on the positive aspects of the neighbourhood, specifically on the strong sense of community. These examples show the contrasting and contradictory meanings that people may hold about a given place. Martha had lived in Myrtlewood and worked in the community for most of her life, while Michelle, who lived in Thistlevale, did not. It is likely that the meanings that the young women and mothers attached to Myrtlewood were informed by what they heard from others (i.e., individuals or the media) whereas Martha’s and Martin’s experiences living and working in Myrtlewood and with people from Myrtlewood gave them a different perspective.

In some cases, gaining personal experience within a stigmatised area prompted non-residents to change their views of them. Denise, a non-resident of the area, said:

I know what the perception of this area [Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood] is because I’ve grown up in […] Inverness, I came to school in Inverness, so I know like, this is seen as the rough area and where the poorer people come from, and you wouldn't hang around here at night. So, that's the perception. From working with the kids here I know there's quite a good sense of community. Everyone looks out for each other, they're all really nice to each other. So, it's different your perceived views to what is actually happening, and I think that until I started working here, I didn't realise, like I'd gone out and seen a lot of families and they're really lovely people, really lovely people. But before that the perception of it is ‘Oh no, you don't go down there.
= You’ll get the tires stolen off your car.’ - that sort of thing, but it’s not actually the way it is (KAI.006).

In this example, Denise contrasts what she had long heard about Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood to her actual experiences working in the area with families and young people. Until she experienced the area herself, she had not questioned its widely circulated negative reputation.

The prevailing themes of poverty and crime are present in Denise’s account of non-residents’ perception of the area, perceptions she herself shared before she started working there. The theme of crime/violence is firstly captured by her comment, “you wouldn’t want to hang out here at night” (KAI.006). Notorious violent crimes perpetrated in the area in the past contributed to the area’s vague, yet prevailing reputation for violence (KAI.004). This reputation may deter non-residents from venturing into the area, denying them the opportunity to dispel negative place meanings through first-hand experience. The second mention of crime relates to theft (i.e., stealing tires), the implication being theft is more likely in deprived areas. This too is problematic, because while residents of deprived areas are more likely than those living in other parts of Scotland to experience crime (National Statistics, 2018), it is unfair to equate poverty and criminality. Denise’s example, moreover, gives evidence to the existence of territorial stigmatisation in these neighbourhoods over time. Denise points to her childhood growing up in Inverness as evidence of her insider knowledge of the city. It is on this basis that she had established her view of Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood. However, it was her personal experience as an adult of working in the area and getting to know the young people who lived there that caused her to change her mind.

When it comes to (re)producing stigma, perceptions and representations of place are powerful currency. Media portrayals of neighbourhoods as impoverished and hotbeds for crime propagate uninterrogated negative place-representations which function as barriers limiting young women’s access to stigmatised communities and there
Mobilities therein. This is unfortunate because by spending time in stigmatised neighbourhoods, non-residents’ negative perceptions of place are often challenged, and their minds changed. Non-residents’ perceptions play a major role in (re)producing neighbourhood stigma. These perceptions shape the meanings that they give to place which are often informed by hearsay and second-hand accounts rather than personal experiences and relationships with the people who live there. Moreover, institutions associated with stigmatised places are affected by place-based stigma, which in turn, affects the people attending those institutions.

6.1.3 History, social identities and prevailing prejudices

Territorial stigmatisation does not arise overnight. In fact, it is deeply rooted in history (Schultz Larsen and Delica, 2019). Present-day territorial stigmatisation is often based, at least in part, on historic policies and longstanding prejudice attached to poverty, class, race and ethnicity (Kirkness and Tijé-Dra, 2017b). This research gives further evidence to the way that territorial stigma and other forms of prejudice “feed off each other to have major implications for residents of defamed districts” (Slater interviewed by Kirkness and Tijé-Dra, 2017b, p.245).

For example, Bellford and Myrtlewood are areas with historic ties to the Traveller community. In the 1950s-60s Travellers lived in unauthorised camps in and around Inverness (KAI.013). The areas where the camps were located were later developed into housing and commercial real estate. The Council then, according to Martha, “moved a lot of the Travellers into the houses in Myrtlewood” (KAI.013). These historic policies and practices attempting to regulate Travellers’ “mobility and spatial practices” (Maestri, 2017, p.44) have contributed to the territorial stigmatisation of Bellford and Myrtlewood and the people who live there.

Martha shared this example of what young people she worked with told her: “I can, you know, I can see what they’re saying. ‘They just think we’re all Tinks for the Grove!’ you know” (KAI.013). In this quote the
derogatory slang term ‘Tinks’ was used to describe people who live in ‘the Grove’ (Myrtlewood). ‘Tinks’, short for ‘tinkers’, is a disparaging term used to refer to Scottish Travellers, an ethnic minority group. According to the young people Martha worked with, residents of Bellford and Myrtlewood felt the term was indiscriminately applied to them because they lived in the area, regardless of if they actually had familial ties to the Traveller community. The negative perception of the people who live in the area is firmly grounded in place, but it is also inextricably linked to prejudice against Travellers who settled in the area over half a century ago.

The 2015 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey gives evidence to the existence of prejudice attitudes towards Travellers in modern day Scotland (Scottish Government, 2016). Survey participants were asked if they would be happy or unhappy if a relative married or was in a long-term relationship with Gypsy/Travellers, and 31 per cent of participants responded that they would be unhappy (Scottish Government, 2016). Gypsy/Travellers received the third highest percentage of ‘unhappy’ responses out of nine identified groups, and though this percentage decreased from the previous 2010 survey, it evidences the existence of prejudice towards Travellers in Scotland today (Scottish Government, 2016). The (re)production of territorial stigma is thus linked to historic policy interventions which settled Travellers in specific places, as well as current and historic prejudicial views of Travellers. This example is evidence of the strong link between different types of prejudice, in this case, towards ethnic minority groups.

The territorial stigmatisation of a given area is further (re)produced through the way in which poor and working-class communities are perceived in society. Graham described the demographic profiles of Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood:

You've got Thistlevale, for instance, is quite an old, established, working-class community but where more of the people I would say work, and it's very closely knit. You've got Bellford and Myrtlewood that have a lot more transient populations and a lot more social
housing as well so that's where our migrant communities would mainly live. So, they're quite, and I would say Bellford and Myrtlewood is possibly less cohesive than Thistlevale (KAI.012).

Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood are considered predominantly working-class or poor. According to Kirkness and Tijé-Dra (2017a) “place-bound stigma is most often associated to […] working-class dominated neighbourhoods” (p.252). Slater, in an interview with Kirkness and Tijé-Dra (2017b), goes so far as to say that “territorial stigmatisation is an expression of class inequality visited upon cities” (p.250).

The existence of territorial stigma in these areas is unsurprising given that, in the UK, negative representations of poor and working-class communities are commonplace. For example, residents of council housing are “routinely represented as an unruly urban ‘underclass’” (Watt, 2006, p.776) in media and policy discourses. Broad-brush representations such as these propagate monolithic representations which unfairly equate people who live in public housing with “moral decline and criminality” (Watt, 2006, p.779). These stereotypes are also indiscriminately applied to recipients of benefits, and welfare dependency of any kind is viewed by some as “the underlying condition which produces ‘social breakdown’” (Hancock and Mooney, 2013, p.46).

Against this backdrop, Graham went on to describe the challenges that young people from Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood, with whom he works, face. He said:

We have a lot of [young people] whose family backgrounds are – there's a lot of social problems, there's a lot of unemployment, there's a lot of underemployment, and people in low paid, part-time jobs, some of them with two to three jobs. We have a number of young carers in the community. There are drug and alcohol problems. We don't see too many of them in the school it should be said, but we know there are, you know, in certain areas there are high levels of drug use in the community. I mean, all the problems
that you would kind of expect an area of socio-economic deprivation. We know that levels of domestic abuse, of child abuse are higher than you would get in a lot of other places (KAI.012).

In the above quote Graham summed up several of the challenges in the area. When I asked other adult participants to describe the areas in which they lived and/or worked, many cited similar issues. Of the 17 key adults interviewed, eight described the area as ‘deprived’; six commented on the poverty in the area; and eight on the high levels of drug/alcohol abuse.

In these neighbourhoods, “the stigma of poverty and unemployment tend to reinforce territorial stigmatisation and vice versa” (Schultz Larsen and Delica, 2019, p.546). Martha summed up the way in which poverty affected how young people from Bellford were treated:

I know that a lot of the young ones from Bellford, some of them get a hard time, you know, cause we're classed as a poorer area, so they get a wee bit of, and it's not so much. It's like a prejudice against us than anything but I kinda think it builds them a bit and makes them stronger (KAI.013).

In this example, Martha, an area resident (note her use of we), pointed out a ‘prejudice’ that young people face because they are from a poorer area. According to Warr (2005), “poverty tends to be construed as being outside the usual, despite its unrelenting social presence” (p.288); it is thus often considered a “discrediting attribute” (Warr, 2005, p.284). In Martha’s example, the prejudice that young people from Bellford faced was not determined on the basis of the individual, but on where they lived, and the poverty associated with the area.

Territorial stigmatisation and the stigma attached to poverty, class, race and ethnicity are impossible to separate as one builds upon and reinforces the other. In Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood territorial stigmatisation is (re)produced through historical and present-day social policies, as well as through prejudicial attitudes and representations of class
and ethnicity. Stopping the perpetuation of territorial stigmatisation requires an acknowledgment of its historical roots and links to other forms of stigma in combination with a concerted effort to tackle income, and other persistent inequalities.

6.1.4 Section conclusion

Territorial stigmatisation is (re)produced in multiple ways through a number of compounding factors including perceptions of place, history, class, poverty and other social problems. This stigmatisation grows and is propagated “from below” vis-à-vis conversations on the street and “from above” (Wacquant, 2007, p.67) through media, politics and academia. When it comes to territorial stigmatisation, the meanings people attribute to place are central. Place-based stigma grows and spreads on the basis of underlying social inequalities, but also through the propagation of negative place meanings which, in this research, were rarely founded in personal experiences of stigmatised places or personal relationships with the people who lived there. Two central consequences of territorial stigmatisation in relation to the research questions emerged in this section. Firstly, territorial stigmatisation, rooted in stereotypical believes about crime, poverty, class and ethnicity acted as deterrents limiting young women’s mobilities and access to certain neighbourhoods. Secondly, territorial stigmatisation deeply affected the way young women viewed certain neighbourhoods, the spaces and places within neighbourhoods, and the people who lived there.

The next section moves beyond identifying the presence of territorial stigmatisation in the field site and the ways it is (re)produced to consider residents’ various responses to it. In short, the next section looks at how residents “contend with negative discourses regarding their immediate locale” (Stahl and Habib, 2017, p.269).

6.2 Residents’ responses to territorial stigmatisation

Residents of Thistlevale, Belford and Myrtlewood used a range of strategies to cope with stigma in the area. These responses were affected by
factors such as “class position, age/generation, life course stage, type of employment, housing tenure, poverty status, ethnic origin (to name but a few factors)” (Slater, 2018, p.120). Wacquant and colleagues (2014) outline a series of coping mechanisms that residents in stigmatised neighbourhoods use. The two overarching strategies include those of “submission and resistance” (Kirkness and Tijé-Dra, 2017a, p.254; Wacquant, Slater and Pereira, 2014).

Submissive coping responses may take various guises, including:

- Concealing the truth about place of residence from various public officials and private operators; rejecting being in any way like their neighbours and investing energy in spelling out micro-differences; a rejection of the public sphere as an arena for neighbourhood sociability (Slater, 2018, p.111).

Additionally, moving away from the stigmatised neighbourhood entirely is another example of a submissive coping strategy (Wacquant, Slater and Pereira, 2014), among others. According to Wacquant, submission is the most prevalent response among residents of stigmatised communities. Submissive coping mechanisms ‘reproduce’ territorial stigma (Wacquant, Slater and Pereira, 2014). For example, when residents of stigmatised areas move away from the neighbourhood, they validate the worldview that the area is somehow bad, or lesser than others.

However, the aforementioned ‘submissive’ strategies are not the only responses to territorial stigmatisation (Kirkness and Tijé-Dra, 2017, p.18). In fact, examples arose of young women and their families resisting negative place reputation. Resistant, or recalcitrant strategies include “studied indifference; defence of the neighbourhood (individual or collective); [and] stigma inversion (hyperbolic claiming)” (Wacquant, Slater and Pereira, 2014, p.1276), where residents of a stigmatised place celebrate the ‘badness’ of the area and appropriate this as part of their identity.
The language of submission and resistance is powerful, problematic, and highly gendered, and thus necessary to reflect on. ‘Submissiveness’ has historic links to ‘femininity’ (Adams, 2018). Although it is admittedly a simplistic starting point, submissive is commonly defined in the dictionary as, “the act of allowing someone or something to have control over you” (McIntosh, 2013b, para.1). Resistance, conversely, conjures up images of action (traditionally considered a masculine trait – see Mason, 2018), and people ‘taking things into their own hands’ and is defined in the dictionary as “the act of fighting against something that is attacking you, or refusing to accept something” (McIntosh, 2013a, para.1). While these words are used by Wacquant and others to typologize resident responses, in my research, young women and mothers resident in these areas, no matter what response they gave, exhibited the ability to choose how they responded. The language of submission and resistance is thus an inadequate way of framing these responses because ‘submission’ connotes a lack of choice at best, and victimhood at worst. I use the terms in order to link my research with the literature with the recognition that the word choice is problematic.

In this section, I bring examples of the young women’s and their mothers’ responses to place-based stigma. Examples of young women’s coping strategies shared by key adults are also included as they shed light on the experiences of the most disadvantaged young people from the most stigmatised parts of the field site who did not take part in my research. I do this with the caveat that these accounts are inevitably affected by the adults sharing them. Their inclusion is justifiable because their stories bring attention to the wide range of young women’s experiences and responses to territorial stigma not fully captured in interviews with young women participants.

Place reputation was a theme that arose in this research, rather than a concept I specifically asked the young women about. Therefore, the data only contains insights on the subject when participants brought it up. As a result,
not all young women shared about this. Responses to place reputation arose more frequently in interviews with mothers and key adults. This may be because adults have more life experience to draw from, including time spent living outside these neighbourhoods, thus enabling reflective comparison.

This section explores the diverse ways in which young women and mothers responded to territorial stigmatisation in their neighbourhoods.

6.2.1 Geographic (im)mobility

One way in which residents respond to territorial stigma is through (im)mobilities. Graham described one mobile response families used to cope with territorial stigma:

And then you've got quite an affluent area around the school, where some of the pupils go to [other schools], they don't go to this school. They place requests and they go to [other schools], but we still have a few of the more affluent pupils come to the school as well (KAI.012).

In this quote, Graham observes that many of the wealthier families who live near Thistlevale Secondary School send their children to schools outside of the school’s catchment area. Choosing to attend a different school may be one way that young people and their families cope with place-based stigma (Warr 2005). Though the young people still live in the area, they disassociate themselves from ‘tainted’ institutions thereby “exiting the neighbourhood as soon as possible” (Slater, 2018, p.111). For young people, moving away from the area may not be a viable option as they are dependent on the care and provision of parents, but attending a different school may be an option for some families. Through their daily movement outside of the area, young people thus disassociate themselves from place-based stigma through “geographic mobility” (Maestri, 2017, p.44).

While geographic mobility and disassociation with Thistlevale Secondary School was one way of coping with area stigma, others chose to resist the dominate narratives which suggested that Thistlevale, Bellford and
Myrtlewood are tainted by choosing to put down roots there against the advice of others. Hannah’s mother Claire, for example, moved from another part of Scotland to Thistlevale and now works in Bellford. She said:

I know that when we first were looking for somewhere to live in Inverness, we were trying to move so that Hannah would be in the catchment area for [a different school], so over the other side of town. We were told, ‘Well don't go over to Thistlevale and Bellford area’, but we really struggled to find somewhere to live, and then we found our house and I really like it. I really like Thistlevale […] there are beautiful walks for the dogs, and you know, Hannah has gotten on okay. I mean, there have been some issues, but I think there would be some issues growing up anywhere (PCI.001).

In this example, Claire shares how she was advised not to live in Thistlevale and Bellford, and though she did not elaborate on the reasons why in the interview, the implication was that there was something undesirable about those neighbourhoods. In spite of this advice, Claire settled her family in Thistlevale, and she and her daughter have both had a generally positive experience living there. As an outsider moving to Inverness for the first time, neither Claire nor her daughter were immersed in local place meanings, and it is likely they held fewer preconceptions. They were, therefore, more open to letting their own experiences of place inform their opinions of it. Wacquant (2007) argues that one strategy for shaking off the ‘taint of place’ is moving out of a stigmatised area. He said, “[territorial stigma] can be quite easily dissimulated and attenuated – even annulled – through geographic mobility” (Wacquant, 2007, p.67). However, in the above example Claire and Hannah were satisfied living in the area and did not feel it necessary to move.

6.2.2 Redrawing boundaries

Young women who attended Thistlevale Secondary School, a school affected by the reputation of certain parts of its catchment area, pointed out “micro-geographies of difference” (Reay and Lucey, 2000, p.413), drawing nuanced distinctions based on neighbourhoods, streets, and even certain parts of streets. This geographical “borderwork” (Thorne, 1993, p.64) is a
strategy that Wacquant and colleagues (2014) describe as the “elaboration of micro-differences” (p.1276). Through pointing out these differences, young women separated themselves from the stigma attached to the school, and the wider area, differentiating between the acceptable ‘us’ and the problematic ‘them’.

Eve and Morgan’s conversation exemplified this phenomenon and builds on previous findings related to intergenerational relations and perceptions of people abusing drugs and alcohol:

Eve: Well, people in the school [Thistlevale Secondary School] describe our area as the *posh* place.

Interviewer: Thistlevale?

Eve: Yeah, but it's not. It's only because there's old people that live there and it's quiet.

Morgan: And hardly any druggies.

Eve: Compared to like, the Grove, where loads of people in the school live where there's more druggies.

Morgan: Loads of druggies yeah [...] the Grove's a really bad area.

Eve: Yeah, the Grove's bad (YWI.010.011).

When asked how she would describe the area where she lives, Eve highlighted that the perception of her peers was that she lives in the ‘posh’ part of Thistlevale. Eve is at once dismissive of this characterisation, while at the same time not so dismissive that she did not think it worth mentioning. She clarifies that ‘posh’, in the case of her street, does not mean the usual implications of the word (i.e., well off, fancy or upper class) but instead is used because the street is quiet and home to an older demographic. Morgan adds the absence of people taking drugs in the area is another sign that it is a ‘posh’ place. Eve compares Thistlevale and the Grove (Myrtlewood). Both young women view the Grove as inherently *bad* in comparison and, though
they attend school with young people from Myrtlewood, they disassociate themselves from that neighbourhood. These findings confirm literature that suggests residents’ perceptions of their neighbourhoods are more nuanced than that of outsiders. According to Schultz Larsen and Delica (2019):

[Residents] often perceive the place according to a highly sophisticated conception of micro differences which makes the place meaningful to them, but also enables them to pinpoint potentially troublesome persons or groups (p.552).

In the case of Eve, the ‘posh’ street where she lived stood in stark contrast to the troublesome ‘druggies’ found in the Grove. Eve and Morgan viewed their school’s catchment area as a complex patchwork of ‘posh’ and bad places.

Eve and Morgan were not the only young women to demarcate between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ parts of their neighbourhoods. When Leah was asked how she would describe Thistlevale, she said, “Like, it's okay in some parts but if you go into the wrong area, it will become dodgy” (YWI.008). The language used by young women, including ‘dodgy parts’, speak to a complex and intimate knowledge of their local area and exemplifies the subtle way in which young people use this knowledge in the creation of boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The examples from Eve, Morgan and Leah highlight the way in which territorial stigmatisation and its (re)production creates immobilities by reifying micro-differences and boundaries within and between neighbourhoods.

Mothers also elaborated on micro-differences as a way of distancing themselves from place-based stigma. Eve’s mother Angela identified the street on which she and her family lived as ‘posh’. She described it as follows:

Where I'm in, people call it the posh area cause it's quiet. The only thing you can hear is the noise of the cars going up and down. But now and again you hear a drunk going up the road, but it's not that bad.
Thistlevale is a nice area. It's just some parts are not good areas (PCI.005).

From these examples, both Eve and her mother Angela describe the area that they live as posh and in so doing imply that it is somehow less troubled by noisy ‘social problems’ (domestic disputes, crime, drunks or young people on the street) than other areas. Their shared use of the term ‘posh’ moreover alludes to a collective understanding of the micro-geographies of place which are shared within families, and possibly within streets, and neighbourhoods.

The street was a spatial unit that some young women used to demarcate between themselves and others. Hannah, a young woman living in Thistlevale, drew distinctions between her street and other parts of the neighbourhood:

My street, like everyone says it's the nice street of Thistlevale. But, as you get more into Thistlevale I'd say it's like council houses and stuff so it's obviously, the people there are so nice like it's nothing to do with the people, it's just like quite like, not run down but there's like certain [pause] like it's not well kept, like looked after I guess (YWI.004).

In the above quote, Hannah positions her ‘nice’ street as the antithesis to council housing. In part this distinction was an aesthetic one also made by Eve, who commented on the “the flats that doesn't look nice. Like the big blocky ones that look very dirty” (YWI.010), but is also likely rooted in negative perceptions of public housing (Watt, 2006). Pinkster and colleagues (2020) similarly found, in their research exploring territorial stigma in Amsterdam, that the materiality of place was used to mark identity, negotiate stigma and draw boundaries. Yet, Hannah attempts to counteract the stigma associated with the council flats by highlighting that just because the area was not aesthetically pleasing, this was not a reflection of the area’s residents.

Young women and their mothers drew micro-geographies of difference between their neighbourhoods, and others, but also within sections of their
own neighbourhoods thereby creating a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In so doing, they separated themselves, and the place they live, be it a street or a section of a neighbourhood, from undifferentiated and monolithic negative place reputations. The micro-geographies of difference and the boundaries that young women and their mothers created within and between neighbourhoods in response to territorial stigmatisation produced immobilities as some places were labelled as impassable, unsafe or undesirable.

### 6.2.3 Blaming others

Lateral denigration is a strategy by which “residents living in stigmatised spaces internalize the stigma and try to avoid it by blaming certain neighbors” (Contreras, 2017, p.658). In other words, “the diversion of public opprobrium onto scapegoats, such as notorious ‘problem families’ and foreigners, or drug dealers and single mothers” (Wacquant, 2008, p.183). In the following example, Angela, a mother, establishes her position as ‘legitimate’ resident through her family’s long history of residence in the area and identifies the alleged source of her neighbourhoods’ recent decline:

Angela: I'm living in Thistlevale now. [...] The area is nice, [...] the people are nice, you just get some areas are not so good. Basically, that's the way it is. But Thistlevale's always used to be a very nice place, and in the last five years it's gone downhill.

Interviewer: What's made it go downhill?

Angela: They're taking people in that aren't from the area, and that's what's causing trouble.

Interviewer: Okay, where are they from?

Angela: We got some from the Grove, yeah, Bellford. Now, don't get me wrong; most of the people from Bellford are really nice people but a lot of people don't like them because they're from Bellford.

Interviewer: Okay
Angela: But they are nice people, you know. But you just get bad apples everywhere, as my granny used to say (PCI.005).

In this example, Angela employs lateral denigration, and differentiates between people who are from Thistlevale and those who have moved from Bellford/Myrtlewood (she counts them as one area) to Thistlevale. This distinction is notable because she cites people moving from Bellford to Thistlevale as the reason for the area going ‘downhill’. Bellford residents are thus cast as troublemakers that do not belong. Later in the interview Angela shared how she lived for a time in Bellford. Her previous residence in Bellford mattered little as she still identified herself as from Thistlevale due to her family ties to the neighbourhood.

In this example, Angela “locat[ed] people with reference to place” (McEwan, 2020, p.129). She saw people from Bellford as not belonging in Thistlevale, and even identified them as the source of what she perceived as Thistlevale’s growing problems. Bellford and Thistlevale are two small neighbourhoods situated next to each other that share many local institutions and infrastructure. However, Angela differentiated herself and her family from those who she perceived as the ‘the problem’, that is, former Bellford residents. Angela, having lived in Thistlevale for years, drew on her experiences of what the neighbourhood used to be like, and attributed the negative change to the community’s newest residents.

Young women had less life experience living in one place to draw from compared to their mothers. They did, however, also employ lateral degradation to some extent, and pointed out a group of ‘problem’ residents in the context of discussions around feeling safe. As previously discussed, for young women, problem residents were people abusing drugs and alcohol (see Chapter 5). Young women identified the ‘junkies’, ‘druggies’ and ‘alcoholics’ as the source of their neighbourhoods’ problems, and an undesirable and uncomfortable presence.
As a way of coping with the stigma of place, both young women and their mothers employed lateral degradation, a submissive coping strategy in which they blamed ‘problem’ others for their neighbourhood’s problems.

6.2.4 Defying expectations

Another way in which young people reportedly responded to territorial stigmatisation was through defying the stereotypical expectations that society had for them. Denise explained:

Denise: [whispers this answer so we are not overheard]
Like their [young people who attend Thistlevale Secondary School] clothing – really important. [...] And like, it sounds really bad, but we’ve got children who are from free school meals and from deprivation but yet, they’ll come into school with a £200 jumper on. So, it's very important for these kids to be wearing expensive brands. Definitely more than I find in my son's school which has got less deprivation. It's a smaller rate of free school meals and things like that. But it's more here. Definitely than it is, like my kids, a lot of his friends, they're quite happy they all walk in in their school uniform, nobody's bothered but in here they don't wear their school uniform. Like, they have made the school uniform to have like the labels and that.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Denise: I don't know. I think it's maybe just trying to fight the stigma that's attached to this school. So, if they've got the expensive brands then they don't have to be from [Thistlevale Secondary School] (KAI.006).

In this example, Denise explains how young people (she did not make a gender distinction) try to ‘fight’ the stigma of the place where they are from, and where they attend school by wearing expensive, branded clothing. Piacentini and Mailer (2004) assert young people “use products and brands as materials with which to cultivate and preserve their identities” (p.251). Similarly, Hopkins (2010) argues that bodies are “locations where social identities are marked out and practised”, and as such are “key locations for understanding the complexities of young people, place and identity” (p.75). In
light of Denise’s views, it is possible in the above example that young people used branded clothing to signify wealth, rather than deprivation. This is plausible as it is in keeping with findings from Piacentini and Mailer’s (2004) research with young people in Glasgow. They found that for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, “buying branded clothes was important to demonstrate that they were not poor” (Piacentini and Mailer, 2004, p.257). It is possible that young people in the above example sought to separate themselves from the poverty and stigma tied to the place that they lived, and the school they attended through the way they dressed.

In her study of residents in a stigmatised community in Melbourne, Australia, Warr (2005) highlights the way participants sought to hide the visible signs of poverty apparent in the way they dressed and their appearance, thereby “disguising discrediting information” (p.303) about themselves. Whereas Warr (2005) frames this phenomenon as hiding, or disguising poverty, Denise’s interpretation framed the choice to wear branded and expensive clothing as an act of defiance. The way that these actions are framed matters.

Could it be that, as in Warr’s (2005) study, the young people in this example are not fighting stigma, an act of resistance, but are instead hiding poverty? The answer to this query is unclear from the available data. However, it is possible that young people are doing both – hiding their association with deprivation and poverty while simultaneously reinventing what it means to be a young person from that area by identifying with symbols of wealth and power. Denise’s example is not representative of all young people in the area, and the young women who participated in this research did not talk about ‘£200 jumpers’, or branded clothing during data collection, and instead cited H&M, New Look and Primark as their favourite clothing stores which have relatively low prices compared to branded alternatives. More research is needed into young people’s consumer practices in Inverness if broader conclusions are to be drawn.
This is an example of the way in which young people’s coping strategies to deal with stigma may simultaneously submit to and resist territorial stigma. On the one hand, they may be disguising poverty to avoid negative associations made based on postcode which could result in further negative outcomes, like bullying, and, at the same time, defying other’s expectations for them by fighting against stereotypical representations of area residents. This example thus calls into question the submission-resistance dichotomy found in literature on territorial stigmatisation, or indeed, its usefulness to begin with.

6.2.5 Section conclusion

Young women and their mothers residing in stigmatised areas responded to place-based stigma in different ways. Some adopted coping strategies that employed geographic mobility, while others rejected the stigma of place and enjoyed living in a neighbourhood others considered tainted. Another way residents dealt with place-based stigma was through drawing micro-geographies of difference within the overall stigmatised area, differentiating where they lived from the really ‘bad’ places. Through pointing out micro-differences and boundaries within and between communities, young women and their mothers facilitated their own immobilities as some areas were thus labelled not fit to enter or pass through. Lateral denigration was yet another strategy employed to tackle the effects of stigma. Lastly, some young people responded to territorial stigma by defying the expectations that they felt that non-residents had for them. While some literature suggests that residents’ responses to stigma fall within two categories – submission and resistance (and certainly several of the examples given in this section clearly do) – other coping strategies are far less clearly categorised. Residents’ responses at times blurred the lines between acts of resistance, where stigma was rejected, and acts of submission where stigma was internalised, thus disrupting the dichotomous view of resident responses to territorial stigmatisation.
The next section moves beyond residents’ responses and examines if and how residents’ sense of place belonging (or not) in stigmatised neighbourhoods influences their (im)mobilities and use of the public realm.

6.3 Place belonging in stigmatised places

This section considers the relationship between territorial stigmatisation, place belonging, and young women’s (im)mobilities. Young women who live in stigmatised areas and internalise that territorial stigma do not necessarily lack a sense of place belonging. In the same way, young women who reject territorial stigmatisation do not always enjoy a strong sense of place belonging. The reality is much more complex and has implications for young women’s (im)mobilities at different scales now and in the future.

Antonsich (2010) identifies five overarching factors from the literature which contribute to developing a sense of belonging in place. Firstly, autobiographical factors include personal memories and experiences that link a specific person to a place. Secondly, he identifies relational factors, by which he is referring to the “social ties that enrich the life of an individual in a given place” (Antonsich, 2010, p.647). Thirdly, cultural factors including language and other “codes, signs, and gestures” (Antonsich, 2010, p.648) shared among people. Fourthly, economic factors like available income facilitate the creation of “safe and stable material condition[s]” (Antonsich, 2010, p.648) which contribute to a sense of place belonging. Lastly, legal factors, such as citizenship are a significant dimension of place belonging, but in the case of this research, are less central to the findings (Antonsich, 2010). This section thus considers if and how place belonging, built over time by young women and their mothers on the basis of the aforementioned factors, is affected by pervasive negative perceptions of place and what implications this has for their (im)mobilities (see, Stahl and Habib, 2017).

This section explores if and how residents of stigmatised neighbourhoods develop a sense of place belonging or, if place belonging is more evident, or important, at different geographical scales. This section also
touched on research question one and looks at if and how place belonging in stigmatised neighbourhoods influences residents’ (im)mobilities. It also addresses research question two and examines the ways in which young women’s social connections, particularly to family, create strong ties to place which may bolster feelings of neighbourhood pride, and discourage mobilities beyond the neighbourhood. Lastly, this section looks at how place belonging and territorial stigmatisation effect young women’s aspirations, and the implications this has for their future (im)mobilities.

6.3.1 Belonging in the neighbourhood

Place belonging in neighbourhoods has “long been considered as important in promoting personal well-being and local social cooperation” (Warr, 2015, p.665). This section considers young women’s sense of place belonging in their (stigmatised) neighbourhoods and if and how this relates to their (im)mobilities at different scales. This section looks both at young women’s experiences of moving away, and/or desire to move away from their neighbourhoods (macro-mobilities) but also considers their day-to-day movements within their neighbourhoods (micro-mobilities).

Young women expressed a variety of feelings about their neighbourhoods. Interviews with young women contained a question where they were asked to provide hypothetical advice to a new girl who moved to their neighbourhood. When asked if there was anywhere she would tell a new girl to avoid, Emma replied, “This neighbourhood [Thistlevale]. The whole thing. She may as well move somewhere else” (YWI.001). Emma went on to describe her neighbourhood as “boring” (YWI.001). Emma’s view of Thistlevale was not positive or, at least, not very enthusiastic, and in calling her neighbourhood boring she appeared to disassociate herself from it. Similarly, Lauren described Thistlevale as “Dull. It's very boring. Not like I'd do anything if there was anything, but I'd like to have the option [laughs]” (YWI.005). For Emma and Lauren, Thistlevale was not a place that they expressed having a strong bond to, or a strong sense of belonging in, however, this ambivalence about their neighbourhoods did not appear to be
obviously connected to an attempt to shed the burden of negative place reputation, nor did it keep them from accessing or being involved in the public realm.

Young women’s ambivalent sense of place belonging in their neighbourhoods contrasts with the sentiments expressed by some of the mothers. Emma’s mother Michelle, for example, expressed a strong sense of belonging in Inverness. She said:

When I travelled up here on the train, I just sort of packed my bags and came up here with nothing, [...] But as soon as I come here, I thought, I know I’m home. (PPI.003)

Michelle’s effusive description of her arrival in Inverness exemplifies her strong sense of belonging in the city that she chose to move to as a young adult. Similarly, Sharon, a mother, chose to move to Inverness as an adult. She explained, “when I came to Inverness it was like coming home” (PCI.002). Contrasting the way in which young women and their mothers describe how they felt about where they live, it is possible that place belonging is more strongly felt when one chooses to live in a certain city, or neighbourhood, as several mothers in the research did. It may also be that place belonging is weaker among young women compared to their mothers because young women face particular challenges based on both their age and gender accessing and moving through the public realm, for example, poor public transportation, constrained mobilities and a profusion of adult-oriented spaces (see Chapters 4 and 5).

That being said, several young women did express more positive perceptions of their neighbourhoods than Emma and Lauren. For example, one feature young women valued was the quiet. When asked what she liked about her neighbourhood (Thistlevale) Katie replied:

Um, I’m not sure most people would say this but it's quite quiet most of the time. I mean, I never see many people out. Especially on [one street] where the flats
are. It's really quiet round the flats because there's also, there's a lot of dogs and cats, so that's cool. I love animals (YWI.002).

Katie’s positive feelings specifically about the area surrounding her home, centred around the comparative calm and the presence of animals, which she liked. Similarly, Lucy from Bellford said her neighbourhood was “fantastic!” (W1) and “nice, quiet, [and] peaceful” (YWI.003). Leah also said that where she lived (Thistlevale) is quiet, and that this was something she liked about the area (YWI.008). Sarah also described Thistlevale as “um, quiet” (YWI.009). The theme of ‘quiet places’ in the research was used by residents interchangeably with the descriptor ‘posh’ and was synonymous with areas associated with less noisy ‘social disorder’ (i.e., domestic disputes, drunk people, groups of young people) compared to other ‘problem’ areas.

Young women’s ambivalence toward their neighbourhoods is, moreover, partially explained by the fact that eight out of the 12 young women who took part in the research had moved house at least once in their lives; a small minority had moved to Inverness from other countries, or cities, and most had moved within Inverness to different neighbourhoods. Of those eight young women, five had moved two or more times. The longer one lives in a particular place, the more time one has to create place-based memories, build local social connections, and thereby grow a sense of place belonging (Fenster, 2007). It is therefore unsurprising that young women were often ambivalent about their neighbourhoods.

Young women’s ambivalent responses stand in contrast to the way in which key adults suggested that young people felt about their neighbourhoods. Gillian, who worked with young people in the area, but did not live there, brought an example of young people’s desire to stay in their neighbourhoods long-term. She said:

I get the funny feeling that really some [young people] have stayed in their area and even if they had all the
money in the world they wouldn't move from their area, because that's their area. They're very, sort of, territorial [laughs] they like Thistlevale or they like Bellford. [...] They've got a strong kind of bond with the place, you know, so a strong affinity with certain [school] staff who also probably taught their parents and that kind of thing, so it's gone through generations (KAI.014).

Gillian said that young people from Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood had a strong sense of belonging grounded in their neighbourhoods and, as such, they expected them to stay in the area they grew up, and where their parents grew up. She suggests that rather than feeling ashamed of the place that they live, young people are proud of their neighbourhoods, and have no intention of leaving. This is unsurprising because “territorial stigma may not necessarily undermine residents’ attachment to place” (Pinkster, Ferier and Hoekstra, 2020, p.527), in fact, in stigmatised areas, place attachment is often very strong (Kirkness and Tijé-Dra, 2017b). In this way, a strong sense of place belonging in a stigmatised neighbourhood may deter young people’s future macro-mobilities outside of the neighbourhood (i.e., moving away for education or work), though more research is needed to make this point conclusively.

Gillian goes so far as to say that “they have got a strong kind of bond with the place” (KAI.014). According to Gillian’s assessment this bond is not attached to the city, or to the country, but rather to a specific neighbourhood. It is likely the young people, and their families, to whom Gillian was referring had a longer history of residence in their neighbourhoods than the young women who participated in the research. Gillian also commented on the importance of social connectivity to developing a bond with the place. Specifically, she commented on teachers who taught multiple generations of the same family. This example is evidence that young people do not always internalise place-based stigma, but rather dense networks of social connections in a neighbourhood contribute to a sense of belonging in place, of emotional attachment, and feeling at home there. Strong place belonging
may therefore keep young people from moving out of their neighbourhoods regardless of territorial stigma.

A strong sense of place belonging in one’s neighbourhood is not a given, and many young women in the research did not express a strong sense of place belonging. The reasons for this are complex and are not all related to territorial stigma, though it may well be an influencing factor. The young people who did have a strong sense of place belonging in these areas, according to key adults, usually also had strong family networks in the place that they lived. Strong place belonging built on social connections may prevent young people’s permanent macro-mobilities outside of their neighbourhood, and in some cases, encourage them to remain living in the community where they grew up regardless of area stigma.

6.3.2 Social connections and place belonging

The link between social connections and a feeling of place belonging is well established in the literature (Antonsich, 2010; May, 2013). Wyn and colleagues (2019) assert, “interpersonal connections mediate one’s sense of belonging and attachment to place” (p.20). Social connections act as a conduit for building a sense of place belonging locally. These social connections may be “emotionally dense”, such as relationships with friends and family, or “weak ties” (Antonsich, 2010, p.647) such as bumping into acquaintances on the street. While some assert that in the age of globalisation and increasing online connectivity, “social connections with family and friends are detaching from local neighborhood settings and becoming more spatially dispersed” (Warr, 2015, p.666), others argue that this is not the case, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods, where limited resources may curtail the scale of young people’s mobilities, thereby increasing the importance of local social connections (Miranda and Arancibia, 2019).

In Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood, large families lived within the same small neighbourhoods. Martin, who lived and worked in Bellford, said,
“There’s a lot of very close family relationships and ties” (KAI.004). Young women also evidenced that this was indeed the case. For example, Morgan shared how her grandmother lives within walking distance of her home, and she visits her several times a week. In this way, social connections locally increased young women’s mobilities within their neighbourhoods as they travelled between extended family members’ homes. Similarly, the reason Megan and her family live where they do is to be close to her grandmother. The presence of family networks bolstered young women’s sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods. The sense of belonging that was built through social connections within families was often physically grounded in the neighbourhoods they lived in, and place belonging was thus passed down from generation to generation (Frost and Catney, 2019). This was the case even in stigmatised areas, as Frost and Catney (2019) discovered in their research in an inner-city neighbourhood in Liverpool, where residents’ personal and familial experiences of stigmatisation “strengthened pride of place and greater attachment to neighbourhood as ‘home’” (p.2841).

Key adult Jodie observed that in Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood:

Generations and generations have grown up in this area and are really proud of the fact that they've grown up in this area, and, as I say, you've got that really nice community feel where they actually all look out for each other and support each other (KAI.017).

Jodie’s example highlights a view held by several key adults in the research that, though Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood suffer from stigmatisation, to varying degrees, within these areas strong social networks built on familial ties are often a positive force in the lives of young people. The existence of a strong sense of community built on family relationships was cited as a foil to deprivation and other social problems in the area. According to Warr (2015):

Home neighbourhoods become a refuge through the ways in which families and local networks cushion young people from the effects of poverty, racism, and stigmatization (p.199).
When one’s social network is largely made up of family members who all live in one neighbourhood, the strength of these ties may act as a counterbalance, or, as Warr writes, a ‘cushion’ to some of the negative effects of territorial stigma. However, it is important to note that not all family relationships are positive, and some may be “oppressive and even violent, and thereby act to hinder a sense of belonging” (May, 2013, p.130).

Key adults, including Jodie and Shona, said young people with family ties in Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood are proud of the area in which they live. This sense of pride did not, however, insulate them from the negative effects of stigma. Shona said:

A lot of them [young people] really are proud of their area, and the area they come from as well, but I think that a lot of them do feel judged, and that's a shame (KAI.005).

From this example, Shona highlights how young people are torn between feeling a sense of pride and belonging in their community, while also feeling the effects of living in a stigmatised place, in this case, feeling judged. Strong family ties do not make young people impervious to the effects of territorial stigma. They do, however, contribute to their sense of belonging and pride in their neighbourhoods.

Auto-biographical factors, such as memories of specific important people also facilitated a strong connection and sense of belonging to place (Antonsich, 2010), regardless of the degree of stigma attached to the neighbourhood. For example, Emma shared that while she now lives in Thistlevale, prior to that, she lived in Bellford. Bellford was considered by most participants to have a stronger degree of stigma associated with it than Thistlevale. However, Emma said, “I liked it a bit better there [Bellford] to be fair” (YWI.001). When asked why this was the case she said, “because that's where, like most of my memories of my dad were there. I've basically lost everything of him now” (YWI.001). Here, Emma expresses a longing for the place she lived with her father before he died. This is an example of how
auto-biographical factors, such as memories of important people, can forge strong ties to place. Moreover, Emma’s mother said that because of the connection between Emma’s memories of her father and their previous Bellford home, the family would never move away from Inverness entirely. Emma’s memories of her father, tied to the area, deterred the family from moving out of Inverness, at least until Emma was ready.

Social connections, particularly emotionally dense ties, facilitated a sense of belonging not only in the neighbourhoods that young women lived, but at different scales regardless of how stigmatised the neighbourhood was. In fact, place-based stigma functioned to create stronger social networks and ties to place. Moreover, these social connections were not necessarily predicated on the physical presence of a person but could be even stronger in their absence.

6.3.3 Aspirations, territorial stigma and place belonging

A strong sense of place belonging among young people from neighbourhoods with negative reputations that are labelled as dangerous, or otherwise problematic, can impact their ideas about who they are and what they might do in the future. This, in turn, may influence if young women will remain in their neighbourhoods long-term, or move away to pursue work or education. Ruth brought a rather extreme example from her experience as a youth worker in the area many years ago. While the example is dated, she felt that it was still relevant to share. Ruth said:

[This young woman] was saying that she wanted to be a high-profile prostitute. And it was dead pan serious. And I was saying, okay, I know you’re joking. And she was saying, ‘No, I’m serious.’ And I said, ‘But why?’ And she was saying, ‘What else am I going to be? I’m from the Grove.’ And that was really, really shocking. I think because it’s always the stories you believe that people think, but actually hearing a young person say, ‘I want to be a high-class prostitute’ and she was saying ‘Well I’m going to be shagging people anyway I could just get paid for it’ (KAI.016).
Though the quote does not capture a frequently occurring phenomenon in the research, it does stand out as an example illustrating how a strong sense of place belonging to a ‘discredited’ neighbourhood affected a young woman’s future aspirations. The limiting effects of territorial stigmatisation on career aspirations are also empirically evidenced in the literature (Purdy, 2003). This young woman’s aspirations for her future career were, according to Ruth’s recollections, inextricably linked to where she was from, the Grove, and also highly gendered. She thus ascribed unquestioningly to negative portrayals of her neighbourhood which narrowly defined her as a product of the place where she lived.

Being from the Grove implied certain qualities and characteristics, as the above quote by Ruth suggests. In this example, being from the Grove was synonymous with having limited choice and opportunity. From this example, it appears that this young woman did not see herself as possessing the resources to, for example, move from the area and leave behind ‘the Grove’ identity. Instead, her strong sense of place-belonging limited any ideas about future mobilities. This example illustrates a seemingly contradictory phenomenon: a strong sense of belonging in a place accompanied by internalised stigma.

Ruth’s retelling of the conversation portrayed the young woman’s intention to be a prostitute not as a choice, but as an inevitability because of where she was from. The young woman did not aspire to achieve more than what she thought others expect young women from that neighbourhood to achieve. This example shows how strong belonging in a given place is not always positive, empowering and emancipatory. However, it should be recognised that some have argued that sex work can be an empowering profession (see Huang, 2015), though this was not Ruth’s position. Additionally, prostitution is a highly gendered profession, and it is unlikely young men from the Grove would feel prostitution was their only career option. This finding, furthermore, stands in contrast to Wacquant’s assertion that internalising stigma causes residents to develop coping mechanisms to
distance themselves from the neighbourhood resulting in “non-belonging” (Jensen and Christensen, 2012, p.75). Instead, this example evidences how a strong sense of place belonging can co-exist with internalised stigma in a ‘discredited’ neighbourhood. However, internalising stigma is potentially detrimental to young people in particular, as it limits choice, “undermines confidence and reins in aspiration” (Warr, 2005, p.303).

Moreover, Ruth’s reflections on this young woman’s comments are telling. She said, “it’s always the stories you believe that people think” (KAI.016). In this one line, Ruth reveals her belief in the existence of territorial stigma towards people who live in the area, the assumption that people from Myrtlewood do not have ‘respectable’ aspirations or prospects for their futures (prostitution is a stigmatised profession, see Huang, 2015). While Ruth said she was shocked to hear it, it was not wholly unexpected because of the stigma attached to Myrtlewood. This illustrates the way in which stigma is subtly reproduced through individual’s own passive acceptance of it. From this example, the powerful impact of territorial stigma on young women’s attitudes towards themselves, their future aspirations and mobilities is undeniable.

The young women’s aspirations relayed by Ruth stand in contrast to the aspirations expressed by young women participants who felt they had a choice in what they could do in the future. For example, young women participants expressed desires to go on to study to be primary school teachers, doctors and librarians in places such as England, Aberdeen and Glasgow. The differences between the aspirations of the young woman in the example Ruth gave and the young women who participated in the research are marked; namely, the young woman in Ruth’s example saw her future job prospects as limited and tied to where she was from, whereas the young women participants did not.

A number of factors may help explain the variation in their future life goals. Firstly, there is a gap in time between the example Ruth gave, and the present day. Stigmatisation of place may fluctuate over time (Power et al.,
2013), and it could be that the area stigma has lessened in recent years. Another explanation is that the young women who took part in the research did not have a strong sense of neighbourhood belonging, and perhaps were less affected by territorial stigma. Pinkster and colleagues (2020) suggests that territorial stigma is not a “generalised experience for all residents” (p.524); therefore, some young women may experience its affects more strongly than others.

Lastly, it could be that the young women who experience the most significant negative effects of territorial stigma did not participate in the research. Only one young woman who took part in the research lived in Myrtlewood, and she had only recently moved there. While this chapter has shown that the whole area of Thistlevale, Bellford and Myrtlewood experienced the ill effects of territorial stigmatisation to various degrees, Myrtlewood was by far the most stigmatised neighbourhood in the field site. According to key adults, it was also a neighbourhood where young people had a strong sense of place belonging. The intensity of territorial stigma in Myrtlewood compared to Bellford and Thistlevale may account for the discrepancy between young women participants’ experiences and the stories of young women that key adults shared.

Moreover, Pinkster and colleagues (2020) highlight the fact that “lived experiences of territorial stigmatisation may diverge due to different degrees in which people ‘fit’ negative stereotypes associated with place” (p.524). It is therefore not a given that young women in stigmatised areas are all equally affected by it. Nor is it a given that territorial stigma affects all people in an area in the same way. In the example Ruth shared, the young woman involved was deeply affected by the stigma of the place that she lived; in fact, it carried with it such weightiness that she saw it as defining her future. Conversely, the young women participants in my research, while not unaware of the ‘taint of place’ affecting their school, the areas they lived or attended extracurricular activities, were less affected by it.
6.3.4 Section conclusion

Young women had a variety of feelings about the neighbourhoods in which they lived. These feelings ranged from love and pride to ambivalence and even fear. How young women feel in their neighbourhoods, and the ease by which they are able to move within them has implications for their sense of belonging in that place. Moreover, some young women can and do experience a sense of place belonging in stigmatised neighbourhoods. Family relationships, particularly family networks in a neighbourhood, may increase their micro-mobilities within the neighbourhood as they visit family members and contribute to building young women’s sense of belonging there. However, such ties do not make them immune to the effects of territorial stigma and young women with strong family ties in the places that they live still told the key adults in their lives that they felt judged by non-residents. Additionally, strong place belonging may deter young women from moving outside of the neighbourhood in future, limiting their macro-mobilities.

Empirically, a complex picture arose which aligns with the argument that the internalisation of stigma and a sense of place belonging are not mutually exclusive (Schultz Larsen and Delica, 2019). This research revealed a diversity of responses among young women who “both ascribe[d] to narratives and construct[ed] counter-narratives” (Stahl and Habib, 2017, p.280) of the places in which they live, often in complex and contradictory ways. Key adults shared examples of when young women said they identified with their place of residence strongly, but this sense of belonging to a place at times also limited what they saw as achievable for their futures. Territorial stigma affected young women to varying extents and this, in turn, influenced what they saw as possible for their futures.

6.4 Conclusion

Territorial stigmatisation has far-reaching implications for residents who live in neighbourhoods plagued by the “blemish of place” (Wacquant, 2007, p.67). Not only do the residents in these communities face challenges such as poverty and crime that led to the stigmatisation of the area to begin
with, but they also face judgement from non-residents who may deny them access to opportunities and treat them as a product of the place where they live. This chapter considered the various ways young women and their mothers experienced and navigated territorial stigma and the implications this had for their current and future (im)mobilities.

Section one investigated the (re)production of territorial stigma in the field site, and firstly established the presence of territorial stigma, and then identified several of the ways in which the stigma was reproduced. This section shed light on research question four and revealed that territorial stigmatisation deeply influenced how young women perceived their school, neighbourhood, and the surrounding area. Many young women were sensitive to the fact that non-residents looked down on them because of the areas’ reputation for poverty and crime. Moreover, this section addressed research question one and showed that territorial stigmatisation reproduced ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ spread the belief that some areas are dangerous. Perceptions of danger, crime and social disorder limited young women’s access to these areas and their mobilities therein, especially after dark and at night.

Section two outlined young women’s and their mothers’ responses to territorial stigma in their neighbourhoods. Though far from an exhaustive list, the strategies they adopted to cope with the stigma included geographical mobility, identifying micro-geographies of difference, lateral denigration and defying expectations. Two of these responses are inextricably linked to young women’s (im)mobilities. Firstly, territorial stigmatisation acted as a force which prompted some young women to employ geographic mobility as a coping strategy. By physically leaving the stigmatised area behind, either permanently by moving house or by attending a different school, young women attempted to shake off place-based stigma. However, this was not always successful. Secondly, territorial stigmatisation prompted some young women to draw boundaries and point out differences between themselves and ‘problematic’ others. This boundary making was often place-based and
created impassable, or undesirable places young women were not willing to go. This geographical borderwork was thus a response which created immobilities and limited young women’s access to certain parts of the public realm.

The final section addressed research questions one and two and explored the intersection of young women’s sense of place belonging in stigmatised neighbourhoods and their (im)mobilities. Not all young women had a strong sense of place belonging, regardless of neighbourhood stigma. The reasons for this may be related to the barriers and challenges young women face moving through and accessing the public realm, and the duration of their residency in their neighbourhoods. Furthermore, social connections to family who lived close by facilitated a strong sense of place belonging for some young people which at times limited macro-mobilities and also encouraged their micro-mobilities. Young women who lived near their extended families often visited their homes, increasing their mobilities within the area. However, strong place belonging may also limit young people’s desire to live outside of the neighbourhood where they grew up in the future, enforcing immobilities, although, more research is needed to make this point definitively. In and of itself, a sense of place belonging which inspires a young person to remain in their neighbourhood is not inherently positive or negative. The exception to this was when a young woman internalised place-based stigma and simultaneously had a strong sense of place belonging. In this case, the young woman negatively viewed herself as a product of the place she lived, which according to one key adult, caused her to feel she had limited future career choices and constrained her aspirations and future mobilities.

Research exploring young women’s sense of place belonging and their (im)mobilities is necessary as it “brings into focus the nature and quality of connections between young people and their worlds” (Cuervo and Wyn, 2014, p.905), particularly in areas where stigmatisation exists. This is an
important goal in its own right, as young women are a demographic group traditionally underrepresented in social policy research.
Chapter 7 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the everyday (im)mobilities of young women in Inverness and the implications these have for their involvement in, and access to, the public realm.

To address this aim, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors limit young women’s mobilities, and what factors encourage young women’s mobilities?
2. If and how are young women’s social connections related to their (im)mobilities?
3. Where do young women meet [everyday and exceptionally] and how do they get there?
4. What are young women’s perceptions of these spaces and journeys, and their access to them?

Over the course of eight months, I conducted qualitative research with young women, their mothers, key adults and policy professionals in Inverness, Scotland to address the research questions. To do this, I carried out semi-structured interviews and participatory methods which resulted in the collection of a rich and nuanced data set.

In this final chapter, I summarise the most salient headline-findings according to the research questions. I then consider the implications my research has for the furtherment of academic literature, for policy and practice and lastly, for future research.

7.1 Summary of research findings

In this section, I demonstrate how my research findings thoroughly answer each of the research questions.
7.1.1 Question 1: What factors limit young women’s mobilities, and what factors encourage young women’s mobilities?

Young women’s mobilities are not just a product of their personal preferences. Instead, young women’s movements through the public realm are both limited and enabled by a web of interconnecting variables at the individual, interactional and macro levels of analysis, all of which have gender dimensions. At the individual level, young women’s mobilities are shaped, in part, by their abilities, personal preferences and understandings of their identity as ‘young women’, in combination with their other social identities.

At the interactional level, parents and carers, as well as peers and other community members, have the power to both limit and encourage young women’s mobilities without an adult (Nansen et al., 2014). Young women are socialised from childhood to believe that they are more likely to experience violence in the public realm than young men because of the widely held association of femininity with victimisation and masculinity with crime perpetration (Hollander, 2001; Callanan and Rosenberger, 2015). This is reinforced by representations of women as victims in the media (Ndangam et al., 2015). This, in combination with other variables, limited young women’s mobilities, or at the very least, caused them to feel nervous when taking public transportation, particularly alone, on an unfamiliar route, or when traveling outside of Inverness.

Parental mobility regulations also greatly affected young women’s mobilities. These regulations are informed by parents’ and carers’ own personal experiences, their interpretation of the environment as risky or safe, and their perceptions of if/how social identities heighten young women’s risk of experiencing harm (Gordon, 2008; Matthews and Tucker, 2006; Pain, 2006). Gender was only overtly mentioned by one mother, who identified as a Scottish Traveller, as a factor she considered when regulating her daughter’s mobilities. Gender and cultural norms in the Traveller community restrict young women’s mobilities without an accompanying adult in order to
preserve their chastity, reputations and future marriage prospects (Marcus, 2019). However, gender also affected the mobility regulations other mothers had, but often in more subtle ways. For example, gender stereotypes, including a belief in young women’s inherent vulnerability while moving through the public realm, especially in the dark or at night, emerged empirically. Gender stereotypes informed participants’ beliefs about the risks young women faced. These beliefs to greater and lesser extents affected parental and young women’s approach to mobilities, though not always in an overt way that participants recognised. Rather, the vulnerability of young women was taken as a given that of course meant more caution, planning, and protection was needed when they moved through the public realm.

Young women also play a part in negotiating, and often extending their mobilities through accompaniment by diverse companions. Young women were able to extend their mobilities by carrying a mobile phone and traveling with other young people (Matthews, Limb and Taylor, 2000; Pain et al., 2005). Mobile phones allowed young women a greater degree of flexibility when making plans and reassured both young women and their parents/carers that they could get in contact with each other if trouble arose (Pain et al., 2005). Traveling with other young people, for the most part, also extended young women’s mobilities as long as the young person was perceived to be trustworthy by parents/carers and young women. Moreover, traveling with peers increased young women’s feeling of safety, thereby extending the places and times they felt comfortable going (Matthews, Limb and Taylor, 2000; Skelton, 2000), even in unfamiliar, or disreputable locations.

Youth organisations sought to enable young women’s mobilities by providing them with transportation support and provision. Through providing transportation to events and activities, young women’s mobilities were extended and they had more opportunities for building social connections outside of their immediate neighbourhoods. In other instances, transportation support helped alleviate financial and logistical burdens from young women
and their families, and further extended their mobilities. Apart from transport provision, youth organisations sought to enable young women’s mobilities without an adult through teaching them how to use local public transport, as well as by reassuring nervous young passengers during their journeys. However, transport support and provision did not guarantee an extension of young women’s mobilities or an increase in their participation in activities/events in the public realm.

At the macro level, young women’s mobilities were both limited and enabled by transport systems, policies, structures and widely held place meanings. Firstly, young women’s mobilities were limited because young women’s travel patterns historically have not been considered by transportation planners. This may be, in part, because there are fewer women working in the transportation sector, and also because there is a lack of gender and age disaggregated data from community consultations on transport and urban design; thus, young women’s perspectives are not taken into account. Moreover, in the face of competing priorities, issues of equality on the basis of intersecting social identities are not prioritised by transportation professionals. The gender-blind approach the transportation sector takes in practice perpetuates inequalities and fails to address systemic issues of inequality.

Available financial resources may also limit young women’s mobilities at the macro level. Families who did not have a car, for example, were limited in where, how far and when they could travel. This also applied to young women’s access to macro-geographies, as car travel outside of Inverness was often cheaper than train travel for families. Cost also precluded many young women from traveling internationally. The cost of public transportation was a factor that also sometimes limited young women’s mobilities within Inverness. However, at other times the cost of transport did not limit young women’s mobilities, but instead changed their mode of transport; for example, it prompted them to walk (which is free) to meet friends. Faster and more reliable forms of transportation were usually more expensive. Young
women with limited financial resources thus navigated the issue of cost by walking, which took more time, but was considered enjoyable by many.

The accessibility, reliability and frequency of available transportation options also affected young women’s use of certain modes of transportation, thereby either limiting or enabling their mobilities. When transportation options ran on time, and transport infrastructure was in place close to young women’s homes, this enabled their mobilities and allowed them to travel further, and faster, to their desired destinations. However, insufficient transportation infrastructure made public transportation options less accessible, thereby increasing the time and effort involved in getting where they wanted to go. Young women’s limited access to available and affordable transportation curtailed their mobilities and limited the opportunities they had for building social connections in-person outside of their neighbourhoods.

Chapter 6, moreover revealed several factors limiting and encouraging young women’s mobilities in the context of stigmatised neighbourhoods. Territorial stigmatisation arose as an unanticipated theme in the research which shaped the attitudes, choices, and (im)mobilities of young women and adults alike in the field site. Territorial stigmatisation is rooted in stereotypical beliefs about crime, poverty, class and ethnicity. The negative place meanings at the heart of territorial stigma grow and spread ‘from above’ by the media, academics and politicians and ‘from below’ through individuals’ negative accounts of place (Wacquant, 2007, p.67). Portrayals of some neighbourhoods as dangerous and disorderly propagated these uninterrogated negative place-meanings, which limited young women’s mobilities by deterring them from traveling to certain neighbourhoods at certain times.

Young women who lived in stigmatised communities, or attended institutions affected by the “taint of place” (Wacquant, 2008, p.238), coped with the stigma in a number of ways. Some of these coping strategies involved (im)mobilities; for example, some parents/carers sent their daughters to schools outside the stigmatised area to escape its effects (Warr,
2005). However, this was not true of all young women and mothers, and for some, the stigmatisation of place did not impact their choice to live in areas plagued by territorial stigmatisation. Another way young women coped with territorial stigmatisation was by drawing micro-geographies of difference within the overall stigmatised area, differentiating where they lived from other comparatively ‘worse’ places. Through establishing micro-differences and boundaries within and between communities, young women and their mothers imposed immobilities on themselves.

From this, it is clear that young women’s (im)mobilities are affected by a number of variables, at the individual, interactional and macro levels of analysis, many of which have gender dimensions.

7.1.2 Question 2: If and how are young women’s social connections related to their (im)mobilities?

Young women’s social connections are interrelated with their (im)mobilities, that is, how far, how fast, at what times and where they move in their communities. Peer relationships proved particularly important as young women extended their mobilities through accompaniment by peers both through walking and, for one young woman, through the development of an informal ridesharing scheme. Young women felt more comfortable traveling farther, and in unfamiliar or disreputable areas, if they were accompanied by other young people (usually young women). Young women and their parents/carers also felt more confident allowing young women to be out later if accompanied by trustworthy peers. In this way, social connections with other young people extended and encouraged young women’s mobilities.

The time that young women spent with their peers ‘on the move’ contributed to strengthening their friendships and fostering closer relationships with them. Shared mobilities also created opportunities for relationship building with family members, for example, through car travel. At the same time, car travel facilitated young women’s mobilities. Young women’s mobilities, therefore, created opportunities for the development of
social connections both within and outside of their immediate neighbourhood, and, at the same time, social connections with peers and others enabled young women’s mobilities.

Young women with more restricted mobilities did not have as many opportunities to build in-person relationships with friends and other adults outside of their immediate neighbourhoods. In these cases, social connections with family and immediate neighbours were even more important to young women. Local social connections, however, are by no means negative, or less than others. Antonsich (2010) argues that social connections in a given locality facilitate place belonging. These connections may be strong, such as those with family and friends, or weak, such as those with acquaintances. The presence of large social networks, particularly family networks, in a neighbourhood may contribute to a sense of belonging in place, of emotional attachment and feeling at home there.

Where young women’s social connections lived influenced the scale and frequency of young women’s mobilities. Young women with dense social networks within their neighbourhoods often visited the homes of their family and friends, which increased their mobilities within the immediate area. For those young women with friends and family who lived further afield, the scale of their mobilities was often larger as they travelled outside of Inverness to visit them, but these trips were usually less frequently made and often accompanied by relatives, friends or other adults. Additionally, some evidence arose suggesting that young people with locally based social connections had a strong sense of place belonging in their neighbourhoods, which produced a desire to live in the neighbourhood in the future. Though strong place belonging in one’s neighbourhood is not inherently positive or negative, it may have implications for young women’s aspirations, opportunities and future mobilities. In one extreme case, a young woman’s strong sense of place belonging in her stigmatised neighbourhood caused her to view herself as a product of the place she lived, which limited her aspirations and future macro-mobility prospects.
Furthermore, the strong influence of social connections on (im)mobilities on place belonging is not necessarily reliant on the physical presence of a person, but can, in fact, remain strong in their absence. The death of a loved one, for example, may deter young women and families from moving outside of a specific neighbourhood, or city, to preserve the memories of being with that person in that place.

In sum, young women’s social connections are inextricably linked with their (im)mobilities, affecting where, when, how far, how often and at what times they move through their communities.

7.1.3 Question 3: Where do young women meet [everyday and exceptionally] and how do they get there?

The spaces and places that young women meet, and ‘hang out’ in the public realm served different social purposes for them. Young women sought out places of retreat to get away from their peers and family, and places of social interaction where they could encounter a large number of other young people (Lieberg, 1995). The city centre, or ‘town’, often served as an ideal place for social interaction. Town provided a central meeting point for young women from different parts of the city. Within town, McDonald’s was a prime place for meeting with friends. While McDonald’s is a commercial space, young women valued it as a social venue in its own right. In fact, young women frequently repurposed commercial venues, such as McDonalds and East Gate, the indoor shopping centre, as social spaces. Young women did not always use the space as adults intended, and did not always purchase goods, services and food, but walked or sat in the space and socialised with friends. In this way, young women gave these spaces new meaning through their presence there.

Green spaces were also used frequently by young women often as places of retreat to get away from watchful adults and other young people. Beyond places of retreat, green spaces were also used by young women as places to break rules and test adult-imposed boundaries of appropriate behaviour. Apart from town and green spaces, young women also met at
formal youth spaces, including youth clubs, community centres and church halls where extracurricular activities, clubs and sports were held. However, time in these spaces was less frequently considered ‘hanging out’ due to the structured nature of activities. Young women also created places for themselves ‘on the move’ as they walked together through the public realm. Young women’s spatial practices were often not sedentary. These moving spaces provided young women with opportunities to foster their friendships outside of the home.

Valentine (1996b) argues that young people are often expected to acquiesce to adult standards of acceptable behaviour and rarely have the opportunity to shape behavioural standards. For this reason, young women sought out places to hang out where there was less adult supervision and control, for example, the local Tesco. Young women also valued having places to spend time together away from unsupervised younger children (Skelton, 2000). In fact, young women made age distinctions about where younger children should and should not be. For example, young women participants felt that they had more of a right to be in McDonald’s without adults accompanying them than younger children and viewed younger children who went to McDonald’s without an adult as out of place in that space.

Although young women actively avoided spending time in places where their behaviour was regulated by adults and where younger children frequented, this was not the case when sharing space with young men. Young women used the same social spaces as young men; however, they often kept to single-sex groups within those spaces. Furthermore, while young women were aware of the widespread beliefs about what kinds of activities young men and young women should or typically take part in, some young women chose to participate in traditionally ‘masculine’ activities anyway. When young women participated in male-dominated activities and spaces, they responded in a variety of ways, including with apathy, frustration or nervousness. What was clear is that, to young women, while they were
confident in their ability to do what young men do, gender was still a social structure that affected their daily lives.

The second half of research question three ‘how do they get there?’ was addressed in Chapter 4 through an exploration of the modes of transportation that young women use and prefer. Young women moved through their communities in a number of different ways, including active travel and motorised transportation. Young women’s transportation choices were often influenced by gender, in combination with other variables. For example, walking was an important mode of transportation for young women. Walking allowed young women to socialise with their friends, which was important to them. Walking thus functioned as both a mode of transport and a leisure activity. Cycling, however, was not a preferred mode of transportation by most young women. Some literature suggests a gendered divide in young people’s cycling behaviour (Frater and Kingham, 2018). This gender divide may exist in Inverness.

Car travel was also a frequently used form of transportation for young women because of its convenience. Young women also used buses and taxis, though less often, and with less enthusiasm. In fact, several adults in the research pointed out young women’s unwillingness to take public transportation which one key adult attributed to a fear of publicly making a mistake. Buses were used most often by young women who had somewhere specific they needed to get to (for education), and when the ride was paid for by someone else (an educational organisation). However, buses were not a preferred or enjoyed mode of transport among most young women. Several reasons for this were suggested by participants in the research and included the crowded atmosphere of the bus, the infrequency of the bus service, the unreliability of bus timetables and the cost associated with having to purchase multiple tickets. Adult participants also suggested young women were more nervous bus users than young men, and young women themselves confirmed feeling nervous when taking public transportation on their own. In the literature on women’s use of transportation, discomfort
taking public transportation is often connected to a fear of sexual harassment or violence in transit spaces (see, for example, Ceccato, 2017; Vanier and d’Arbois de Jubainville, 2018; Ceccato, Näsman and Langefors, 2020), although more research is needed to confirm if this is one reason behind young women’s nervousness while taking the bus in Inverness. Additionally, taxis were also infrequently used by young women, except for when they were provided by the Council for school transport. Available transportation options such as buses and taxis did not always meet young women’s transportation needs. One example arose in the research of young women who created their own transportation arrangements via Snapchat to provide a more suitable transport system.

To summarise, young women sought out spaces and places in the public realm for social interaction and for retreat, but also for boundary testing. Young women valued hanging out with their friends away from adults and younger children but did not mind sharing spaces with young men except when the activity and space were male dominated, which caused a variety of reactions among young women. Young women moved through their communities using a number of different modes of transportation, including active and motorised transportation. The transportation that young women used was not based on personal preferences alone but influenced by multiple different variables outside of their control.

7.1.4 Question 4: What are young women’s perceptions of these spaces and journeys, and their access to them?

Young women’s perceptions of the spaces they used differed considerably, though some commonalities were evident. Young women’s perceptions of the spaces they moved through, and spent time in, were shaped by their own personal experiences, but also by what they had heard about the area from others. Chapter 6 revealed how young women’s perceptions of their neighbourhoods included a full range of positive and negative associations, ranging from feelings of being at home, to ambivalence, to fear based on perceived dangers. Most young women did
not express strong ties to their neighbourhoods. Young women’s mothers, however, expressed far more positive views of the places that they lived, and stronger ties to place. It is possible that mothers’ stronger expression of positive place belonging is attributable to the fact that most of them chose to live in Inverness and had moved from other areas. It may be that young women’s perceptions of where they live are more ambivalent than their mothers because of the challenges that they face moving through and accessing the public realm. These challenges include poor transportation, parental limits on mobilities and difficulties navigating an adult-centric and controlled public realm, among others.

That being said, some young women perceived their neighbourhoods positively, and several commented on the quiet and peaceful atmosphere there. The theme of ‘quiet’ in the research was used interchangeably with the place descriptor ‘posh’ and implied limited, or no social disorder compared to other nearby spaces and places. Young women’s familiarity with the neighbourhood, or area in question, that is, if they were a resident there, or not, appeared to influence their perceptions of it. Unknown spaces and places were perceived as more dangerous than those that were more familiar. Other young women perceived the spaces and places where they lived, attended school or other activities negatively. This was particularly true of stigmatised areas. Territorial stigmatisation deeply affected the way young women viewed certain places and the people who lived there. Negative perceptions of place propagated from ‘above’ and ‘below’ influenced the meanings young women gave to neighbourhoods and institutions. In many cases, these negative perceptions were not based on personal experiences, but on hearsay and second-hand accounts.

Lived experiences and relationships with people who resided in stigmatised areas sometimes changed people’s negative perceptions of them. By getting to know the people living in places suffering from territorial stigmatisation, adults and young people alike disproved prevailing damaging narratives and disrupted unproblematised negative place meanings. Building
relationships with people from stigmatised areas and spending time in stigmatised places caused some non-residents to question and scrutinise widely circulated and taken for granted negative place meanings.

However, for residents of areas affected by stigma this was not always the case. Wacquant and colleagues (2014) assert some residents of stigmatised areas cope with stigma by elaborating on micro-differences, thereby differentiating themselves from problematic ‘others’. Young women had complex mental maps of the areas in and around where they lived, and they knew the areas deemed ‘posh’, that is, free of troublesome groups or individuals, and those that had reputations for more disorder. In fact, many young women demarcated between the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ parts of their neighbourhoods and, in subtle ways, they used this knowledge to create boundaries. Young women and their mothers drew micro-geographies of difference between themselves and others in the area where they lived and separated themselves and the place they lived from problematic ‘others’ and monolithic negative place reputations. For example, people abusing drugs and alcohol were often identified as a problem, and the source of social disorder, and these people were sometimes associated with particular parts of the neighbourhood and times of day.

Young women had less access to spaces where alcohol and illegal drug abuse were reputed to take place. They also perceived these spaces and places more negatively. In fact, young women generally had less access to places deemed unsafe by themselves and parents/carers. Fear of crime and the reputation of certain neighbourhoods, laneways, and parks as dangerous affected their access to these parts of the public realm. However, it was rare that places were deemed unsafe all the time, and young women’s fears were often contingent on time, if it was still light, and the likelihood of encountering risky people. Young women’s access to the public realm was also affected by visible and invisible spatial constraints including physical aspects of the built environment such as the positioning of infrastructure like roads and bridges, as well as the aesthetic appearance of certain spaces.
The access young women had to the public realm was dependent on a number of personal and familial factors, including parental safety concerns, ill health, a lack of transportation and disability. Therefore, some young women had more access to the public realm than others. Young women’s access to the public realm was also dependent on their own desire to frequent these spaces which was influenced by their perception of the area as risky or safe for young women, and if it were a place they would be welcomed or excluded, watched or tolerated by adults. Even when young women used the same spaces, the meanings they each attributed to them often varied, thus highlighting the fact that young women are not a homogenous group.

Young women’s access to space was hampered by adults who viewed the public realm as their own (Woolley, 2003). Young people’s presence in the public realm evoked a variety of often negative responses from the largely adult public which impacted young women’s ability, or desire to access these spaces. Matthews and colleagues (2000), Skelton (2000) and Pain (2003) have all written about intergenerational conflicts which arise when young people and adults share the public realm. The competing spatial practices of young people and adults can be a source of tension which results in the surveillance and subsequent exclusion of young people (Sibley, 1995). For example, young people who used the shopping centre as a place to gather with friends and socialise were followed by the shopping centre’s security staff. The surveillance of young people in the shopping centre based on where they lived (a stigmatised area) was considered problematic; however, when it was revealed that all young people were being watched and followed, the surveillance was normalised. Although young people are frequent users of the public realm, because they often use the space differently than adults do (i.e., they spent less money), they were treated with suspicion.

Young people were also excluded from the public realm through rules and regulations that are not young people friendly. In shared spaces, such as
community centres and transit spaces, for example, adults had more power and influence to redefine the rules governing behaviour in the space. The tightening of rules consequently made these spaces less attractive and accessible to young people. The idea that young people require a ‘home’ or somewhere specifically designated for them further emphasises the view that young people are out of place in ‘adult’ spaces. Young women often used the public realm in ways that did not align with how the space was designed. This is one reason that young people’s presence in the public realm was viewed by adults as problematic and undesirable. In response to this, adults sometimes sought to take action to deter young people from using parts of the public realm.

Young women’s perceptions and their access to their journeys varied, but some common themes arose, including cost, accessibility, reliability and frequency which were already expanded upon as factors limiting young women’s mobilities under the heading of the first research question. Additionally, the atmosphere of transport and transit spaces shaped by the people with whom the space or journey was shared affected young women’s experiences of their journeys. In transport spaces, the behaviour of other passengers, at times, made young women uncomfortable, but at other times young women themselves were the source of others’ discomfort. Young women all perceived atmosphere differently. Journeys made alone, at night, or after dark were often deemed riskier than those made during the day.

Lastly, young women’s perceptions of their neighbourhoods varied. Some expressed negative views about the place they lived and claimed it was boring. Others appreciated the quiet and calm of their streets and neighbourhoods compared to those surrounding them. Young women participants felt varying degrees of place belonging regardless of neighbourhood stigma. The reasons for this may be unconnected to place-based stigma and instead, influenced more by the duration of time spent living in the neighbourhood, or their lack of strong feelings of place belonging.
could be linked to the barriers and challenges young women face moving through and accessing the public realm.

7.1.5 Section conclusion

This section provided a summary of the research questions and relevant findings. Section one outlined the ways in which young women’s mobilities are encouraged or limited based on numerous factors at different levels of analysis. Section two evidenced the close relationship between young women’s (im)mobilities and their social connections with family, peers and important adults in their lives. Section three chronicled where young women met and the modes of transportation that they used to get there. Lastly, section four highlighted young women’s perceptions of the spaces they used and their journeys there, as well as their access to them.

In the next section, I move beyond the research questions to consider the implications the research has for academic literature, policy and practice and future research.

7.2 Research implications

7.2.1 Implications for academic literature

My research provides several contributions to academic literature. Prior to my research, there was, to my knowledge, little research considering the effects of gender on the (im)mobilities of young women in their teenage years in Scotland where gender is conceptualised as a force acting at the individual, interactional and macro levels of analysis (for research related to women in Scotland including their use of transportation and public spaces see Engender, 2017, 2020). Much of the existing academic research exploring the effects of gender on young women’s lives focuses on gender as an identity at the individual level, and is concerned with the various ways gender is done and undone (Nayak and Kehily, 2013), or focuses on how gender is learned and shaped in childhood through interactions with others (Thorne, 1993; Blum, Mmari and Moreau, 2017). Comparatively less academic research with young women considers the influences of gender at
the individual, interactional and macro levels of analysis (and the interaction between these levels), particularly in relation to their (im)mobilities and access and involvement in the public realm. This multidimensional approach to gender within childhood and youth studies research is useful in expanding our understanding of the complexity of its effects on young women’s lives. My research begins to address this gap by taking a holistic and multi-scalar approach to researching gender in childhood.

This research contribution is also unique because of where it was conducted: the research was situated in Inverness, an area which receives little academic research attention within the social sciences, with some exceptions (for academic examples see Lloyd and Peel, 2007; Salnikova and D’Arcus, 2019 and for examples in the grey literature see HIE, 2015; HIE, 2018). Research in Inverness is important because it adds to the small but growing body of gendered mobilities literature examining how gender shapes women’s (im)mobilities and the meanings given to them in different socio-cultural contexts (Clarsen, 2014). Furthermore, the research provides new conceptual insights into the literature on young people’s (im)mobilities by highlighting the particular challenges inherent in small northern urban areas. Inverness is a small city, and it does not have the same degree of transport and infrastructure as larger urban localities in Scotland. For example, Inverness has limited street lighting and public transportation between the city centre and surrounding residential neighbourhoods. Specifically, the research revealed that the infrequency and unreliability of buses, a typical challenge in less densely populated localities, affected where and when young women travelled.

Moreover, Inverness is located in the north of Scotland, meaning daylight hours fluctuate significantly based on the time of year. My findings evidenced that the variable hours of daylight in Inverness influenced young women’s mobilities. Namely, dark and night were cited by participants in the research as factors limiting young women’s mobilities, meaning mobilities may be more difficult, or even curtailed, in winter months. The challenge of
limited daylight hours in combination with the insufficient infrastructure and transportation available in Inverness both affected young women’s mobilities. These findings therefore illustrate that young women’s (im)mobilities are highly contextual.

Additionally, my research contributes to the small body of work exploring young people’s use of different modes of transportation (see, Currie, Delbosc and Mahmoud, 2013; Lagerqvist, 2019; Mindell *et al.*, 2021). My research found that the atmosphere felt by young women while taking different modes of transportation in Inverness affected their perceptions and experiences of the journey. Atmosphere was shaped by the physical and material aspects of the transit space, but also by the people sharing those spaces, including young women themselves, who contributed to shaping the journeys of others. The findings moreover evidenced that even when young women shared the same journey, they often experienced it differently. This may be because mobilities are experienced differently by people with various social identities (i.e., age, gender, race and ethnicity). Indeed, these findings fit with conceptualisations of mobilities (see Chapter 2) as “bodily, social, and material” (Christensen and Cortes-Morales, 2017, p.14). Moreover, the findings confirm the profound influence that “being with others whilst on the move” (Bissell, 2010, p.271) has on perceptions of atmosphere and overall experience. Going beyond this, my findings specifically point out that it is not only overcrowding that caused young women concern (a lack of personal space), but the absence of other passengers in transit spaces also made some young women uncomfortable. My findings evidenced that atmosphere sometimes, but not always, affected young women’s transportation choices. This was particularly true when the transportation was provided for a required activity, for example, taxis to get to school.

My findings also contribute to the literature on young people’s geographies, specifically their use of the public realm. My findings add to Lieberg’s (1995) two-fold typology of young people’s use of space. Lieberg (1995) asserts that young people appropriate urban space for 1) social
interaction to encounter their friends and peers, and 2) to retreat/withdraw from the busyness of daily life by themselves or with a select few friends (see Chapter 4). My findings confirmed Lieberg’s (1995) typology and added to it. Young women participants in my research often found places of social interaction within the city centre and places of retreat in green spaces. Additionally, to add a third category to Lieberg’s (1995) typology, young women appropriated places to test the boundaries of acceptable spatial practices and behaviour together, usually in green spaces where there was less adult oversight.

The research focus on young women also addresses a gap in the literature. Young people are too often forgotten in urban studies research (Nairn and Kraftl, 2015; Skelton and Gough, 2013b), and likewise, women have historically been underrepresented as both participants in, and authors of, academic work (Harding, 1987; Wright, Thompson and Channer, 2007; Bagilhole, 1995). To counteract this, my research brings young women to the fore of scholarship. Far from simply “adding women” (Harding, 1987, p.3) to check an inclusivity box, this research has highlighted the importance of meaningfully focusing on young women’s differential experiences of social life in research. This research thus sought to, in a small way, redress this inequity through the prioritisation of young women’s accounts, thereby disrupting historically adult male versions of social life (McPherson, 2010; Wall, 2019). The research promotes a less partial representation of social life by focusing on young women’s experiences (Harding, 1987).

Moreover, my thesis contributes to research exploring young people’s gendered mobilities (see, for example, Skelton, 2000; Brown et al., 2008; Rodó-de-Zárate, 2013; Guliani et al., 2015; Porter, Spark and de Kleyn, 2020). This eclectic body of work includes research exploring the gendered daily movements of young people for work, school and leisure (see, Langevvang and Gough, 2009; Porter et al., 2010, 2011) and at the macro-scale, studies with young people focusing on gender and migration, particularly in the Global South (Lesclingand and Hertrich, 2017; Beazley and
Ross, 2017; Huijsmans, 2014; Hertrich and Lesclingand, 2013). My research moves away from questions of *with whom* young women move around their communities and *how far* they travel from home to add to literature exploring young women’s perceptions and experiences of their everyday interdependent movements in the public realm, as well as the meanings they and others give to their mobilities, which are highly gendered (see, Porter *et al.*, 2017). In this way, my research findings lay bare the all too often hidden influences of gender inequalities on young women’s daily lives in the Scottish context.

Territorial stigmatisation was a theme that arose empirically in my research, and I found that participants’ attitudes were profoundly influenced by the negative reputation of the surrounding area. Territorial stigmatisation is a concept very seldom deployed in research with young people, and rarely is gender considered (with some exceptions - see Adekunle, 2017). Using Wacquant’s conceptualisation of ‘territorial stigmatisation’ in my research, I sought to bring this concept into conversation with childhood and youth studies research. I moreover contributed to the canon of territorial stigma research by chronicling the existence and effects of place-based stigma in a small Scottish city.

I additionally added to the debate surrounding residents’ responses to territorial stigmatisation by firstly questioning the categorisation of residents’ responses as ‘submissive and ‘resistant’, suggesting these terms are gendered and inadequate ways of framing residents’ responses. Young women and their mothers living in stigmatised communities in my research exhibited the ability to choose how they responded to stigma, for example, through leveraging their mobilities to physically escape from the ‘taint of place’ and through drawing micro-differences within neighbourhoods to draw imaginary lines between themselves and others. However, the language of submission and resistance is unhelpful because ‘submission’ connotes a lack of choice at best, and victimhood, at worst. I furthermore add to the literature problematising the dichotomisation of residents’ responses as *either*
'submissive' or 'resistant' by providing empirical evidence that the lines between coping strategies are rarely clear cut.

My findings moreover provided empirical evidence to support the argument that internalisation of stigma and place belonging are not mutually exclusive (Schultz Larsen and Delica, 2019).

This thesis as a whole adds to conceptual understandings of young women’s (im)mobilities found in the literature by integrating concepts that are rarely considered together, including mobility, gender, space/pace, place belonging and territorial stigmatisation (see Chapter 2). Bringing together these concepts furthers theoretical understandings of mobilities by asserting that young women’s mobilities are highly relational, contextual and gendered.

Firstly, young women’s (im)mobilities are relational in the sense that they are greatly influenced by their social connections with family, friends, and other important adults in their lives. In addition, young women’s mobilities are relational in that they are shaped by young women’s relationships to the places they move in and through. In this thesis, I employ the concept of place belonging to help capture and explain young women’s relationship to place. My thesis illustrates that if, where and to what extent young women have a sense of place belonging impacts their micro and macro mobilities in the present and long term. In addition, young women’s mobilities can either enable or act as barriers to place belonging (see Chapter 2).

Secondly, this thesis adds to conceptual understandings of young women’s mobilities by insisting on considering them in context, specifically, with references to young women’s own place meanings and the widely held collective place meanings. To do this I use the concept territorial stigmatisation. Territorial stigmatisation in this particular field site explained many young women’s (im)mobile spatial practices. For example, young women used their mobility to escape the taint of place in some instances, and at other times they drew micro-geographies of differences and created
boundaries between their own streets and those parts of the community they saw as problematic, essentially creating their own immobilities.

Lastly, this thesis as a whole adds to conceptualisations of mobilities by asserting that they are deeply gendered, and these gendered influences span the individual, interpersonal and macro levels of analysis. This multidimensional, structural view of gender provokes the consideration of the multiple subtle, but pervasive, gendered factors shaping young women’s journeys and movements.

Through the integration of concepts that are not often considered with reference to each other, this thesis adds to our conceptual understanding of young women’s (im)mobilities at different scales. This thesis is hopefully just the start of a more integrated approach to research on young women’s (im)mobilities, which takes into account the persistent and often hidden effects of gender at different levels of analysis and the need to consider young women’s (im)mobilities as highly relational and contextual.

7.2.2 Implications for policy and practice

The findings from my research have several implications for policy and practice in Scotland and beyond, specifically in the transportation sector, urban planning/design and youth work. My findings are also relevant beyond the Scottish context because the research was designed in such a way that recognised the specificity and importance of locality, but also the interconnectivity of the field site with other virtual and geographical places. In this way, while the research was carried out in Inverness, learning from this research may be applied in diverse locations in the UK and beyond.

In the realm of transportation, my thesis highlights that young women are overlooked in transportation design, services, and policies in Scotland. Specifically, young women did not enjoy, and faced challenges, taking the bus in Inverness and more could be done to address the underlying reasons for this. The transportation sector is traditionally male-dominated, and as a result there are few women in leadership positions (Engender, 2020). Those involved in hiring in traditionally male-dominated workplaces should therefore
more intentionally recruit women to work in the sector. The transportation industry could also improve through ensuring inclusive, flexible working options and that opportunities for promotion are available for women.

Moreover, my research evidenced that there is a definite need to provide young women with opportunities to learn about careers in transport through increased awareness raising in schools, career fairs and opportunities for work experience. To make jobs in traditionally male-dominated sectors, such as transportation, more appealing to young women, concerted efforts also must be made to challenge gendered thinking about employment. This could include collaboration between employers, schools, and the youth work sector to challenge gendered preconceptions that assume some industries are not suitable employers for women (HIE, 2018).

Additionally, although transportation organisations, bodies and partnerships in Scotland have an equalities duty (Equality Act, 2010), my findings evidenced a gender-blind approach to programme design and implementation in practice. The reasons behind the discrepancy between policy and practice within the sector is two-fold. Firstly, individuals within the transportation sector felt unable to consider the specific transportation needs of particular demographic groups while simultaneously providing transportation throughout the Highlands, a large and complex region. Secondly, there was a lack of knowledge about why programmes targeting particular demographic groups, such as young women, actually do not create a less equitable transportation system, but in fact, a better system for all. To address these challenges and create a more inclusive, and equitable system of transportation in Scotland there is a need for prioritising the allocation of resources and personnel within the transport sector to focus on equality. There is, moreover, a need for more comprehensive training on the societal benefits of prioritising gender equality.

Furthermore, my research findings evidenced considerable challenges when multiple generations share space in the public realm. Therefore, those responsible for urban planning and design should give more attention to
understanding generational differences in social and spatial practices. This includes consideration of where young women go and where they avoid in the public realm, as well as the aspects and characteristics of space which are appealing to them, and factors which may deter their use of space.

The need to provide young women with adequate, safe and accessible spaces in the public realm is also evidenced in Article 31 of the UNCRC which states:

States Parties recognize 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 the arts (UN General Assembly, 1989).

However, my research revealed that too often young women feel that they lack appropriate spaces to spend time with their friends with limited adult supervision, away from younger children, where they felt some sense of spatial ownership. Somewhat paradoxically, this was not because of a lack of youth clubs in the area, but because young women desired an alternative to the formality of these spaces, somewhere that they may come and go as they please, which is open late into the evening and does not cost money.

Additionally, my research findings revealed that adults often viewed young people as out of place in the public realm, and sometimes take action to change young people’s behaviour, or deter them from using certain spaces, particularly in large groups. Therefore, there is a need to challenge the normative view held by adults in society that holds young people are out of place in these settings. This could be achieved through training for Council workers responsible for managing and designing the public realm. Moreover, awareness-raising campaigns could help start a productive dialogue about how different generations use the public realm, fostering greater societal understanding.

The only way in which urban planners and designers will ascertain the views of young women is by including them in consultations about the use
and designation of the public realm. Moreover, Article 12 of the UNCRC asserts that young people have the right to be heard. That is, they “have the right to express their views on all matters of concern to them” (UN General Assembly, 1989). The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment 17 clarifies that this includes giving young people opportunities to voice their opinions about, for example, green spaces such as parks, as well as other aspects of the built environment within the public realm (CRC/C/GC/17, 2013).

Additionally, my research has implications for youth work. In recent years, youth work budgets have suffered significant cuts (Mason, 2015). According to key adults in the research, as a result of insufficient funding, activities and programmes for young people are now often held in shared premises (KAI.004; KAI.016). My research revealed that young women value having a sense of ownership over the spaces that they use and like to contribute to setting behaviour expectations in a space. These findings can be used to inform the way in which venues are chosen for weekly youth work and could also be used to argue that attendance and participation may be higher if young people feel a sense of belonging and ownership in the space. Moreover, given my research findings that show young women value places where they can come and go, without a lot of regulation from adults, some youth organisations may want to implement training for staff members on how to involve young people in setting the behaviour expectations of youth clubs, if they do not do this already.

The gradual exclusion of young people from the community centre revealed a need for more sensitisation among the general population about the spatial needs and rights of young people. Furthermore, intergenerational spaces such as community centres would benefit from including young people in decision-making processes. Additionally, there is also a need to foster more understanding about the way different generations use spaces, particularly commercial spaces which young people value not just as places for consuming, but for ‘hanging out’.
Lastly, negative place reputation affects both the people and institutions in stigmatised areas. First and foremost, to address this there is a need to tackle the underlying issues of inequality which contribute to the stigmatisation of place. Additionally, territorial stigma is (re)produced from ‘above’. Therefore, journalists, policymakers, politicians and academics have a role to play in combating the propagation of harmful discourses and negative place meanings through the careful consideration of how neighbourhoods are represented in the media, policymaking and academia. Moreover, at the grassroots level, youth workers, teachers, social workers, police and other professionals responsible for the day-to-day health and wellbeing of communities could contribute to the problematisation of negative place meanings through conversations and relationship building.

7.2.3 Implications for future research

My research findings highlighted areas where more research is needed. Firstly, this research specifically considered the experiences of young women and found that very little research exists exploring the influence of gender on young women’s (im)mobilities and their access to, and involvement in, the public realm. While my research addresses this gap, more larger-scale research is needed, analysing the multidimensional influences of gender on young women’s (im)mobilities, to further establish the validity of the findings from this exploratory study.

Future research could, moreover, replicate this work with more young women, but also go beyond this and include young people with different genders to add an element of comparison. In this research, insights into young men’s mobilities were captured from the perspectives of parents/carers and key adults, but not from young men themselves, and not from young people who identified as nonbinary or trans. Additionally, future research into these themes would benefit from including more young people who experience the most significant negative effects of territorial stigma and who may be harder to reach. To do this, researchers may need to adopt a different methodology, for example, through an ethnographic approach with a
longer period of relationship building with gatekeepers and possible future participants in the field, alternatively (or in addition) through working with peer researchers, or by relying more on snowball sampling (Emmel, 2017).

Carrying out the research with a greater number of young people, in a variety of locations, with different genders would provide a larger evidence base on which to claim the validity of the findings. In the same way, future research would benefit from the inclusion of a great number of parents and carers, specifically, both fathers and mothers. While some mothers’ perspectives were captured in the research, and some young women referred to their fathers during data collection, fathers’ contributions would provide another perspective on young women’s lives.

Additionally, my findings suggested a possible gendered element to young people’s cycling behaviour in Inverness. This possible finding was also evidenced in the adult population in other parts of the UK (Sustrans, 2018) and with young people in New Zealand (Frater and Kingham, 2018). More research is needed to understand if and how cycling is gendered in Inverness. Moreover, this research also brought to the fore a surprising finding: young women are nervous and/or reluctant to take public transportation in Inverness, particularly buses. The nuanced and complex reasons for this are worth further investigation and research in Inverness, and beyond, as reluctance to use public transportation has significant implications for young women’s access to opportunities. Furthermore, my research focused on the physical spaces where young women met and moved through, and future research could extend this work by considering if and how young women’s virtual (im)mobilities and use of online spaces are also influenced by gender.

Negative place reputation was a theme that arose in this research, rather than a concept I specifically asked young women about. Significantly more research is needed to further explore how territorial stigmatisation affects young women’s lives. For example, further research needs to examine more closely the way in which young women’s experiences of
inequality based on gender, class, ethnicity, and other social identities and their experiences of territorial stigmatisation affect their sense of place belonging and their future aspirations. Namely, exploring the way in which young women develop, maintain and negotiate a sense of place belonging in stigmatised communities would lend valuable insight into the emerging intersecting fields of territorial stigmatisation research, and research with young people (Habib and Ward, 2020b). Moreover, future research could take this ever further and explore the intergenerational differences between residents’ responses to place-based stigma, and if and how it is dealt with differently by young women and their parents. Given that territorial stigma emerged as an important theme during data collection, my research could only scratch the surface of this rich research area, and more conceptual and empirical work is needed.

7.2.4 Section conclusion

This section first outlined the implications that my doctoral research has for the literature across several academic subject areas. I then demonstrated the way in which my research findings might support changes in policy and practice in the transportation sector, urban planning and design, and youth work in Scotland and further afield. Lastly, I provided a series of recommendations for how these findings may be extended, deepened and expanded by future researchers.

7.3 Concluding thoughts

This research explored young women’s access to, and involvement in, the public realm in Inverness by considering young women’s (im)mobilities using a gender lens. This thesis contributes to the academy by showing the ways that gender, at the individual, interactional, and macro levels of analysis, influenced young women’s daily lives. In Scotland, the pervasive influence of gender, in combination with other social identities, on young women’s (im)mobilities often goes unnoticed and unproblematised. However, how young women feel moving through their communities, with whom, and the meanings they and others give to their movements have significant
implications for their access to, and involvement in, the public realm and the social connections that they build. In particular, my research revealed that young women’s (im)mobilities are not a mere reflection of personal preferences. Instead, they are influenced, controlled, and affected by a complex set of variables, many of which are gendered. That being said, young women themselves are active in negotiating their mobilities and chose to, at times, extend their mobilities, or limit them. This research also has highlighted the importance of understanding how place-based stigma, which stems from and reproduces inequalities affects the lives of young women residents.

It is my hope that this research will bring attention to the importance of understanding the way in which gender influences the daily lives of young women in Inverness and inspire future researchers to spotlight young women’s experiences of social life in their research.
## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant code</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Interview (one-to-one)</th>
<th>Interview (paired)</th>
<th>Interview Location</th>
<th>Workshops</th>
<th>Workshop Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YWI.001</td>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Community centre</td>
<td>x x x x</td>
<td>Youth centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWI.002</td>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>Community centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>YWI.003</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Youth centre</td>
<td>x x x x</td>
<td>Youth centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>YWI.004</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWI.005</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>YWI.006</td>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gatekeeper’s office</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWI.007</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>YWI.008</td>
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<tr>
<td>YWI.009</td>
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<td>Youth centre</td>
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<td>YWI.010</td>
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### Group 2: Parents / carers

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<th>Interview location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PCI.001</td>
<td>Claire</td>
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<td>Participant’s workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCI.002</td>
<td>Sharon</td>
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<td>Hotel restaurant</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCI.003</td>
<td>Michelle</td>
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<td>Participant’s home</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCI.004</td>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Gatekeeper’s office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCI.005</td>
<td>Angela</td>
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<td>Cafe</td>
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### Group 3: Key adults

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<th>Interview (one-to-one)</th>
<th>Interview location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KAI.001</td>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Cafe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAI.002</td>
<td>Kayla</td>
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<td>Cafe</td>
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<tr>
<td>KAI.003</td>
<td>Zoe</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAI.004</td>
<td>Martin</td>
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<tr>
<td>KAI.005</td>
<td>Shona</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Participant’s workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAI.006</td>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Participant’s workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAI.007</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Participant’s workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Code</td>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Interview (one-to-one)</td>
<td>Interview (paired)</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAI.008</td>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAI.009</td>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAI.010</td>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAI.011</td>
<td>Wendy</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>KAI.012</td>
<td>Graham</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAI.013</td>
<td>Martha</td>
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<td>KAI.014</td>
<td>Gillian</td>
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<td>KAI.015</td>
<td>Robyn</td>
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<tr>
<td>KAI.016</td>
<td>Ruth</td>
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<td>KAI.017</td>
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**Group 4: Policy professionals**

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<td>Participant’s workplace</td>
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<td>PPI.003</td>
<td>Lynne</td>
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<td>Participant’s workplace</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPI.004</td>
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<td>Participant’s workplace</td>
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<td>PPI.005</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>Phone interview</td>
</tr>
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<td>Cafe</td>
</tr>
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<td>Cafe</td>
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## Appendix 2: Workshops and Activities by Research Question

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<th>Workshop 1 – Place Maps</th>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
<th>Research Question 2</th>
<th>Research Question 3</th>
<th>Research Question 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Map</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop 2 – Social Connections</th>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
<th>Research Question 2</th>
<th>Research Question 3</th>
<th>Research Question 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vignette</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Chart</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River of Life Activity</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop 3 – Journeys</th>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
<th>Research Question 2</th>
<th>Research Question 3</th>
<th>Research Question 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Activity Calendar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>‘My choices’ Brainstorm</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport listing and ranking</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop 4: Wrapping up</th>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
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<th>Research Question 3</th>
<th>Research Question 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photo Diary</td>
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</table>
Appendix 3: Consent forms

Research Consent Form for Young Person

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research title</th>
<th>Young women’s experiences of life in Inverness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of researcher</td>
<td>Bekkah Bernheim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for thinking about taking part in this research. Please see the Information Sheet to learn more about the research.

To take part in the research please read and sign and returned to Bekkah. If you are 13 years old or younger you will also need to have a parent/carer read and sign the '13 or younger' Research Consent Form.

Feel free to contact Bekkah at s1500591@sms.ed.ac.uk with any questions.

Please initial each box to confirm you agree:

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have read and understood the Information Sheet for Bekkah’s research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been given the opportunity to think about taking part, ask questions and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have had these questions answered in a way I understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that participation is voluntary and that I can ask to withdraw at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>any time without giving a reason and without my services, rights, or status in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this country being affected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that what I say will be securely stored for a minimum of 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and may be used in future ethically approved research but that my real name will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not be used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree to take part in this study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please print and sign your name to show you understand and agree to all of the above terms.

_________________________________________   ___________________________   ________
Name of Young Person                      Signature                      Date

_________________________________________   ___________________________   ________
Name of Researcher                        Signature                      Date
Research Consent Form for Young Person (13 or younger)

Parents/Carers must sign/fill in this form to give permission for a young person 13-years-old or younger to take part in the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research title</th>
<th>Young Women’s experiences of life in Inverness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of researcher</td>
<td>Bekkah Bernheim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for thinking about allowing your young person to take part in the research. Please see the Information Sheet for more on this research. Please read, initial, sign, and have your young person return this form to Bekkah. Feel free to contact Bekkah at s1500591@sms.ed.ac.uk with any questions.

Please initial each box to confirm you agree:

**Parent/Carer**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have read and understood the Information Sheet for Bekkah’s research.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been given the opportunity to think about my young person taking part, ask questions and have had these questions answered in a way I understand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that participation is voluntary and that I can ask to withdraw my young person at any time without giving a reason and without our services, rights, or status in this country being affected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand that what my young person says will be securely stored for a minimum of 5 years and may be used in future ethically approved research but that my real name/ the name of my young person will not be used.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree to allow my young person to take part in this study.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young Person’s Name: ________________________________

Young Person’s Age: ________________________________

Please print and sign your name to show you understand and agree to all of the above terms.

____________________________________________________________________________________

Name Parent/Carer  Parent/Carer Signature  Date

____________________________________________________________________________________

Name of Researcher  Research Signature  Date
Research Consent Form (General)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research title</th>
<th>Young women’s experiences of life in Inverness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of researcher</td>
<td>Bekkah Bernheim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. Please see the Information Sheet for details on the proposed research. Feel free to contact Bekkah at @sms.ed.ac.uk with any further questions.

Please initial each box to confirm you agree:

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study.
- I have been given the opportunity to consider the information provided, ask questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can ask to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without my services, rights, or status in this country being affected.
- I understand that my anonymised data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years and may be used in future ethically approved research.
- I agree to take part in this study.

Please print and sign your name to indicate you understand and agree to all of the above terms.

_________________________ ________________ __________
Name of Participant       Signature       Date

_________________________ ________________ __________
Name of Researcher        Signature       Date
Research Consent Form for Interview with Parents/Carers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research title</th>
<th>Young women's experiences of life in Inverness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of researcher</td>
<td>Bekkah Bernheim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. Please see the Information Sheet for details on the proposed research. Fill, sign, and return this form to Bekkah. Feel free to contact Bekkah at s1500591@sms.ed.ac.uk with any questions.

Please initial each box to confirm you agree:

| I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the above study. |
| I have been given the opportunity to consider the information provided, ask questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction |
| I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can ask to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without my services, rights, or status in this country being affected. |
| I understand that my anonymised data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years and may be used in future ethically approved research. |
| I agree to take part in this study. |

Please print and sign your name to indicate you understand and agree to all of the above terms.

______________________________  __________________________  _____
Name of Participant  Signature  Date

______________________________  __________________________  _____
Name of Researcher  Signature  Date

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Appendix 4: Information Sheets

Information Sheet for Young Women

Young Women’s Experiences of Life in Inverness

Invitation

You are invited to take part in this research because of your experience living in Inverness. The stories you share with me will be included in the write-up of my research. There are no right or wrong answers, in fact, as you will be sharing your experiences, that makes you the expert! Please read the Information Pamphlet to learn more about the research.

What will we do?

I will learn about your experiences through different activities. [this section was edited as research evolved and after first round of workshops, it only included the interview and guided tour options]

Workshops

I will run workshops for you and your friends. These workshops will include creative activities in which you will talk about your friendships and where you spend your time. Workshops will run weekly in a central location and take about one hour each. I will audio record your responses (and I will ask your permission for this).

Interviews

I will ask you questions about your experiences of life in Inverness. Again, there are no right or wrong answers, I'm interested in your thoughts and experiences. With your permission, I will audio record your responses.

I will also interview your parents/carers, and other adults in the community who work with young people (teachers, youth workers etc.) separately to hear their views, but I will not share your responses with them or their responses with you. However, if I find out you or another young person is currently at risk of getting hurt, I will need to tell another adult for safety reasons.

Guided Tour:

You will also have the opportunity to give a ‘walking tour’ as part of the research. A walking tour is an opportunity for you (or you and a friend) to show me around your neighbourhood. We will meet at a time and location convenient for you and you will have the opportunity to show me around. Along the way, I will ask questions as I did in the interview, and with your
permission, record our conversation. For example, you could show me the way you walk to school, your favourite park, shops, or other places you go to. Walks should take up to 1 hour and take place while it is still light out. The walk does not have to end the same place it starts.

Do I have to take part?

No – it is entirely up to you. If you do decide to take part, please keep this Information Sheet and complete the Consent Form to show that you are happy to take part. If you are under 13-years-old your parents must also fill in a consent form to give you permission to take part. If you agree to take part in this research it is also okay to change your mind later and choose not to take part at any time without giving a reason, just let me know. Deciding not to take part will in no way impact your status in this country or any of the services you receive.

Are there any risks of taking part?

Inverness is a small city, and people often know each other. There is a risk that some people may figure out who is taking part in the research based on how small and connected the community is. There are no significant foreseeable risks to taking part in this research.

Are there any benefits of taking part?

By sharing your experience with us, you will be helping me, and the University of Edinburgh better understand young women’s daily experiences of life in Inverness.

What if I want to withdraw from the study?

If, at any stage, you no longer want to be part of the study, tell me. Your responses may be used in different research outputs (e.g. journal articles, conference papers, theses and reports) before you decide to withdraw. Tell me as soon as possible if you do not want to take part anymore. On specific request we will destroy all your identifiable answers, but we will need to use the data collected prior to your withdrawal, and to maintain our records of your consenting participation.

Further Information

If you have any questions or want more information, please contact me, Bekkah Bernheim, at: s1500591@sms.ed.ac.uk
If you wish to make a complaint about this study, please contact Bekkah’s supervisor Kay Tisdall at: @ed.ac.uk

For general information on how we use your data go to:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/privacy-notice-research

You will be given a copy of this Information Sheet to keep and refer to at any time. Thank you for considering taking part in this research.
Information Sheet for Policy Professionals/Key Adults

Young Women’s Experiences of Life in Inverness

Invitation to Interview [for policy professionals]

You are invited to participate in an interview based on your experience working in the transport and/or urban planning sector in the city of Inverness. Interview questions will focus on general transportation/urban design challenges and opportunities in the local area, and then focus specifically on young women’s use of public transportation/public space. Interviews will take about one hour each in a quiet location at a time that is convenient for you. With your permission, I will audio record all responses. All responses will be anonymised in research outputs (see information pamphlet for more on data protection and confidentiality). The stories and insights you share with me will be included in my thesis – a book-length write-up of my research. Please firstly read the Information Pamphlet to learn more about the research.

Invitation to Interview [for key adults]

You are invited to participate in an interview based on your experience working with young people in the city of Inverness. Interview questions will focus on challenges and opportunities facing young people in the local area. Interviews will take about one hour each in a quiet location at a time that is convenient for you. With your permission, I will audio record all responses. All responses will be anonymised in research outputs (see information pamphlet for more on data protection and confidentiality). The stories and insights you share with me will be included in my thesis – a book-length write-up of my research. Please firstly read the Information Pamphlet to learn more about the research.

Do I have to take part?

No – it is entirely up to you. If you do decide to take part, please keep this Information Sheet and complete the Consent Form to show that you are happy to participate. If you agree to take part in this research it is also okay to change your mind and choose not to take part at any time without giving a reason, just let me know. Deciding not to take part will have no negative impact on the organisation/institution you work for, nor will it affect the services you receive or your status in this country.

Are there any risks of taking part?
Inverness is a small city, and people often know each other. There is a risk that some people familiar with the research setting may figure out who is taking part in the research based on how small and connected the community is. To protect anonymity the names of all participants will be anonymized. There are no significant foreseeable risks to taking part in this research.

**Are there any benefits of taking part?**

By sharing your experience with us, you will be helping me, and the University of Edinburgh better understand young women’s daily experiences of life in Inverness, Scotland.

**What if I want to withdraw from the study?**

If, at any stage, you no longer want to be part of the study, please tell me. You should note that your data may be used in different research outputs (e.g. journal articles, conference papers, theses and reports) before you decide not to take part. Contact me as soon as possible if you wish to withdraw from the study. On specific request I will destroy all your identifiable answers, but we will need to use the data collected prior to your withdrawal, and to maintain our records of your consenting participation.

**Further Information**

If you have any questions or want more information, please contact me, Bekkah Bernheim, at: `s1500591@sms.ed.ac.uk`

If you wish to make a complaint about this study, please contact Bekkah’s supervisor

Kay Tisdall at: `K.Tisdall@ed.ac.uk`

For general information on how we use your data go to:

[https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/privacy-notice-research](https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/privacy-notice-research)

You will be given a copy of this Information Sheet to keep and refer to at any time. Thank you for considering taking part in this research.
Information Sheet for Parents and Carers

Young Women’s Experiences in Inverness

Invitation

You and your young person are invited to take part in this research based on your experiences living in Inverness. The stories and insights shared with me will be included in my thesis – a book-length write-up of my research as part of my PhD programme at the University of Edinburgh.

How can my young person get involved?

With support from [insert partner org name], research workshops will start [insert date] and run from [insert time] at the [insert location]. Workshops will include creative and interactive activities in which young people will reflect on their neighbourhoods, communities, and social connections. I will also interview young people one-to-one to ask about their experiences and views. Young people will also have the opportunity to give ‘guided tours’ in small groups with the researcher of their communities. Details of this activity will be provided at a later date.

Interview with parents and carers

I would also like to interview parents/carers one-to-one separately at a different time. Interview questions will focus on your family’s experiences of life in Inverness, as well as the expectations, rules, and responsibilities you have for your young person. Interviews will take about one hour in a quiet location of your choosing at a time that is convenient for you. With your permission, I will audio record all responses. All responses will be anonymised in research outputs, that means I will not use your real name (see Information Pamphlet for more on data protection and confidentiality).

NOTE: You do not need to take part in a parent/carer interview for your child to participate.

Do I have to take part?

No – it is entirely up to you. If you do decide to take part, please keep this Information Sheet and complete a Consent Form for your young person (if they are 13 years old or younger) and/or yourself to show that you are happy to take part and happy for them to take part. If you agree to take part in this research it is also okay to change your mind later and choose not to take part at any time without giving a reason, just let me know. Deciding not to take part
part will in no way impact your status in this country or any of the services you receive.

**Are there any risks of taking part?**

Inverness is a small city, and people often know each other. There is a risk that some people may figure out who is taking part in the research based on how small and connected the community is.

There are no significant foreseeable risks to taking part in this research.

**Are there any benefits of taking part?**

By sharing your experience with us, you will be helping me, and the University of Edinburgh better understand young women’s daily experiences of life in Inverness, Scotland. Also, this research will provide your young person with an opportunity for community learning through participation in a diverse cultural and educational experience.

**What if I want to withdraw from the study?**

If, at any stage, you no longer want to be part of the study, please tell me. You should note that your data may be used in different research outputs (e.g. journal articles, conference papers, theses and reports) before you decide not to take part. Contact me as soon as possible if you wish to withdraw from the study. On specific request I will destroy all your identifiable answers, but we will need to use the data collected prior to your withdrawal, and to maintain our records of your consenting participation.

**Further Information**

If you have any questions or want more information, please contact me, Bekkah Bernheim, at: s1500591@sms.ed.ac.uk

If you wish to make a complaint about this study, please contact Bekkah’s supervisor Kay Tisdall at: k.tisdall@ed.ac.uk

For general information on how we use your data go to:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/privacy-notice-research

You will be given a copy of this Information Sheet to keep and refer to at any time. Thank you for considering taking part in this research.
Appendix 5: Research Pamphlet

DATA PROTECTION

With the permission of those involved, I will audio record interviews and workshops. I will then listen to the recordings and write down the conversations so that I remember exactly what is said. These are called transcripts. I will make these anonymous. That means I will not include anyone’s real name in my notes and transcripts, but rather give everyone a different name to protect their privacy. The transcripts and notes will only be viewed by me and my supervisors.

All recordings and photos where people are identifiable will be kept securely stored for 6 months after I complete my project. I will then destroy recordings and audio files and throw away any photos or other identifiable visual material.

I will keep anonymized transcripts for 5 years on a password protected personal computer, and then delete them. All paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to learn about young women’s experiences of daily life in Inverness. Specifically, the research will focus on young women’s decisions about where they go, how they get there, and who they go with, and the effect this may have on the social connections they form and their use of community spaces.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

My name is Bekkah Bernheim and I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Edinburgh. A Ph.D. is a 3-year research project where you 1) get to choose a topic, 2) learn about that topic by reading a lot and asking questions, and 3) write a book about what you find out.

I have 5 years of experience running and facilitating youth programmes in the UK and abroad. I am interested in learning more about the daily lives of young women from different migrant backgrounds to inform local service provision and policy.

RESEARCH TIMELINE

Data Collection
February-March 2019
- Run workshops for young people
- Interview parents/carers, young people, service providers, and other key community informants

Follow Up
April-May 2019
- Finish data collection
- Check back with workshop groups on findings
- Follow up with participants

DATA COLLECTION

Interviews: I will interview young women, their parents, and other adults who interact with young people regularly, for example, teachers and youth workers.

Workshops: I will conduct workshops with young women and their friends. These workshops will include activities in which they will reflect on their use of community spaces and their social connections. Workshops will take place in May 2019.

CONFBIDENTIALITY

As a researcher, I will adhere to the UK Data Protection Law. This means to protect privacy, what is shared with me during the research is confidential. I will not write about or share what is said to me with anyone using participants’ actual names. The exception to this is if I believe a young person or someone they know is currently at risk of significant harm. I will then need to tell another adult for safety reasons.

RESEARCH INFORMATION PAMPHLET

YOUNG WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES IN INVERNESS

The University of Edinburgh
School of Social and Political Science

CONTACT

If you have any questions or want more information, please contact me:
Bekkah Bernheim, Ph.D. Student
Email: s1500591@sms.ed.ac.uk

If you wish to make a complaint about this study, please contact Bekkah’s supervisor Kay Tisdall.
Email: K.Tisdall@ed.ac.uk

For general information on how I will use your data go to:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/privacy-notice-research

You will be given a copy of this Research Information Pamphlet to keep and refer to at any time.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research.
Appendix 6: About You Handouts

About You Handout for Young Women

Please fill in the sheet below with information you feel comfortable sharing about yourself. If there is a question you rather not answer, leave it blank. This information will help me to better include and support your participation in the research activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First name:</th>
<th>Last name:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>Gender:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birthday:</td>
<td>Country of birth:</td>
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<tr>
<td>School:</td>
<td>What year are you in at school?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race:</td>
<td>Ethnicity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion:</td>
<td>What countries have you lived in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What languages do you speak?</td>
<td>What is your favourite food?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have any additional support needs? (i.e., ADHD, dyslexia, hearing impairments, etc.)

I would like to contact you about the research schedule and activities. Please write in the best way to do this:

About Parents/Carers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent/Carer Name:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s/Carer’s Preferred Language:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/Carers Contact Phone Number:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About You Handout for Parents/Carers

Please fill in the sheet below with information you feel comfortable sharing about yourself. If there is a question you rather not answer, leave it blank. This information will help me to better include and support your participation in the research activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Name:</th>
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<th>Age:</th>
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<th>Email:</th>
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<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Country of birth:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion:</th>
<th>What countries have you lived in?</th>
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</table>

What languages do you speak?

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Do you have any additional support needs? (i.e., ADHD, dyslexia, hearing impairments, etc.)

I would like to keep you up to date you about the research findings. Please check the box next to your preferred way to find our more (check as many of the boxes as you like)

Email  Mobile  Blog  Newsletter  Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young person’s name:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</table>
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