

Young Women and Alcohol: Issues of Pleasure and Power

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Abstract

This thesis is based upon an ethnographic research project that has examined three groups of working class young women's drinking activities. This work will demonstrate that the young women's drinking is inextricably connected to their attempts to challenge hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations.

Ethnographic research methods have provided the young women with the opportunity to talk about their own interpretations of their lives and their drinking. By asking questions, and by observing and participating in a wide range of their everyday activities, I have been put in the privileged position of being able to comment in great detail about particular aspects of their lives. The young women lived in Central England and were all between twelve and twenty one years of age.

This work is an important and useful endeavour because young women's voices have been entirely absent from 'addictions' research. This work begins, therefore, the process of developing theories that enable young women's voices to be heard. This work should be regarded as a challenge to traditional 'addictions' research because it is a conscious attempt to demonstrate that working class young women's alcohol use should be viewed as a complex social issue, with specific political implications.

INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1970s many aspects of young people's lives have been researched. Recently, however, the situation of young people has changed dramatically. Unemployment has risen and has become an accepted fact of life. A range of policies have been developed to deal with the problem of 'youth unemployment' and there has been substantial sociological research that has concentrated on young people's jobs, the labour market and so forth. However, since the mid 1980s few studies have focused on other more mundane aspects of young people's day to day lives. In an effort to address this gap, this study is an attempt to document and understand the role that alcohol has within the context of working class young women's daily lives. I have chosen to focus on working class young women as opposed to any other group of young people, because I want to be able to illustrate the ways in which working class young women experience a range of situations and circumstances that are unique to their social group.

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that working class young women's alcohol use should be viewed as a complex social issue with specific political implications. Because working class young women experience their everyday worlds as a series of gendered social and economic circumstances, it is important to document and understand drinking activities within their local contexts. This thesis should be regarded, therefore, as both an alternative and a challenge to the traditional 'addictions' research that invariably views women's substance and alcohol use as either an epidemiological concern or as some type of individual failing.

The ethnographic research strategy that I developed during the course of my DPhil studies has provided an opportunity for three groups of working class young women to talk about their own interpretations of their lives and their developing drinking patterns. However, it is important to note that because young women occupy some very different locations across such categories as class, race and sexual orientation, it should not be assumed that all young women do have, or will have, common

experiences with regard to drinking alcohol.

The central aims of the thesis and the core philosophies that these aims are built upon, necessarily dictated an ethnographic study utilizing qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods in a study of this nature have obvious and quite overwhelming advantages. Ethnography allows research participants to speak for themselves; participants are given the opportunity to define the ways in which they conceptualize, and make sense of the social worlds that they live in. By adopting an ethnographic research strategy I am not suggesting that ethnography should be considered as a research method or philosophical position that can guarantee understanding. No one particular research method or philosophical position can guarantee understanding, nor can they prevent it either. It is my intention throughout this thesis to be rigorous, reflexive, explicit and critical about every stage of my research strategy.

This thesis is based on the fieldwork that I carried out with three groups of working class young women during the period April 1991 to July/August 1992. This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 'Review of the Literature' examines the wide and diverse 'addictions' field. Within this chapter, I attempt to evaluate a wide range of addictions literature; identify trends in research activities; define areas of theoretical and empirical weakness; and identify the unique contributions that my thesis should be able to make to the field.

Chapter 2, 'Feminist Ethnography and Encounters in the Field' has been based on the assumption that feminist ethnography is an identifiable research methodology that is concerned about producing knowledge about women, as well as addressing wider epistemological questions and concerns. There are two central purposes to this chapter. First I provide a detailed reflexive account of the ethnographic research strategy that I developed and implemented with three groups of working class young women. Second, I discuss the many ways in which the practicalities of 'doing ethnography' are related inextricably to more broadly based epistemological questions and concerns.

Chapter 3, 'Locating the Young Women in their Homes' is the first of four chapters which are based on the findings of my empirical research. All four chapters have been constructed by using as many of the young women's own words as possible. This provides an important opportunity for them to speak as real experiencing persons. Chapter 3 demonstrates the way in which the home based activities of working class young women continue to be restricted and controlled by hegemonic notions of 'femininity' and gender relations. It is important that I examine the young women's home based activities, because it is in these settings that young women and young men first 'learn' what it is like to be female or male within society. It is also the setting in which most young people are first introduced to alcohol.

Chapter 4, 'Organized Worlds' provides a detailed account of the young women's activities in the organized settings of their schools, youth centres and in a range of leisure settings. This chapter demonstrates that it is not only at home that they 'learn' about 'feminine scripts' and traditional gender relations. The young women experience difficulties when trying to find 'spaces' in organized settings. These 'spaces' are all subject to oppressive gender relations. Chapter 3, 'Locating the Young Women in their Homes' and Chapter 4, 'Organized Worlds', demonstrate very clearly that the young women have very little power in the social worlds that they inhabit. These chapters also demonstrate that they have few opportunities to become involved in activities that are pleasurable.

Chapter 5, 'Creating Free Spaces' provides a detailed account of the ways in which the young women create 'spaces' for themselves. This chapter demonstrates that they are trying very hard not to be confined to a bedroom culture. They join in with a range of activities at their local recreation grounds/playing fields ('recs'). The young women's 'rec' activities form a crucial part in the development of their interpersonal and social skills, as well as their drinking-and-drug-taking activities. This chapter will also demonstrate that it is in the context of the 'recs' that the young women generally first discover the power and pleasure that drinking alcohol can provide them.

Chapter 6, 'Going Out on the 'Raz' and 'Escaping' examines the ways in which the

young women's drinking careers continue to develop after they have left behind the 'free space' of their 'recs'. In this chapter I demonstrate that alcohol is both a 'mood setter', 'confidence booster' and disinhibitor for young women who are visiting a range of public licensed leisure settings. I identify the ways in which the young women develop a range of drinking 'rituals' to prepare them for their nights out. I also demonstrate the ways in which their complex drinking rituals enable them to behave in ways which challenge and subvert hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations.

In Chapter 7, 'The Meanings of the Young Women's Drinking', I focus on specific dimensions and themes in their lives that appear to play a significant role in the development of their drinking. I examine the lack of confidence they have in their feminine identities; the limited opportunities they have for sanctioned 'time out' behaviour; and the few opportunities they have to become involved in 'pleasurable' activities. I then explore the young women's drinking practices in the context of Foucault's (1978) 'games' or 'perpetual spirals of power and pleasure' which provides an appropriate theoretical framework for understanding the subtlety of their drinking activities. The general purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the ways in which the young women's drinking activities can be interpreted as a facet of their more general grass roots struggle against the social position in which they find themselves.

Finally, the last chapter of this thesis, 'Conclusions', summarizes the main findings, and attempts to weave together some of the key issues and themes raised. It suggests that the thesis has been successful in demonstrating that the young women's alcohol use is a complex social issue with specific political implications. This provides a challenge to traditional 'addictions' researchers. The findings also provide a challenge to a range of feminist researchers who are working with different groups of women. This is because feminist researchers need to continue exploring ways in which working class young women (and women in general) can develop ways to exert their power to challenge hegemonic ideas of femininity and gender relations. Furthermore, it is important that feminist researchers continue to communicate with each other, and with other women outside the academy, about the ways in which women can experience power and

pleasure in ways that are not necessary dependent on the use of alcohol.

CHAPTER ONE

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I SETTING THE SCENE: ALCOHOL STUDIES IN AMERICA AND BRITAIN

The purpose of this chapter is to review a range of 'addictions' literature. I will examine trends, define any areas of theoretical weakness, and identify the contributions that my research project will make to an already established field. To achieve this task, this chapter is divided into four main sections. Section I 'Setting the Scene: Alcohol Studies in America and Britain' is divided into three sections: The emergence of a 'scientific approach' to the study of alcohol; Locating women within alcohol studies, and; Introducing the new public health alliance. Section II 'Defining alcohol and its consumption as cultural matters' examines the contribution that anthropology has made in the field of alcohol studies, and demonstrates that there is plenty of scope to broaden the debate in the area of women and drinking. Section III Alcohol and Youth: Conceptual Considerations is divided into two sections: Monitoring young people and their substance use, and; Conceptualizing young people's drinking as a social and cultural practice. Finally, Section IV 'Developing a feminist interpretative framework to put working class young women's drinking into context' examines the unique contributions that my research will bring to the field of 'addictions studies'.

I(i) The emergence of a 'scientific approach' to the study of alcohol

From reviewing the literature on alcohol it is clear that while the act of drinking is present in almost every society, the uses of alcohol and the meanings attached to it vary enormously. Although alcohol can have a highly toxic effect in large quantities, it is probably the oldest and most widely available drug in the world. Alcohol has been used as a stimulant, a tranquilliser, an anaesthetic, a medicine, a social lubricant, a religious symbol, and as a food. Dwight Heath (1987) suggests that drinking alcohol is surrounded by paradoxes:

"It is recognized as a stimulant and a depressant; a food and a poison; and its use symbolizes an enormous range of both positively and negatively valued things and feelings" (Heath, 1987a, p100).

Alcohol is, therefore, a feature of many people's lives throughout the world.

Between the end of the Second World War and 1979, per capital alcohol consumption in the United Kingdom virtually doubled (Plant and Plant, 1992). Only the USA has a larger alcohol market than Britain - with a population almost five times as large (Whitbread, 1995). Over 90% of adults in Britain drink alcohol, if only occasionally (Plant et al, 1985, p3). Since the 1970s the consumption of alcohol has increased steadily (Brewers' Society, 1992). There is also a huge worldwide industry involved in the production, marketing, and sale of alcoholic drinks. As the Royal College of Psychiatrists noted in 1986, 'alcohol is our favourite drug' (Plant and Plant, 1992, p13). Britain's favourite drink is beer, but Britain is unlike most other European countries in that the majority of beer is consumed in a pub, club or restaurant, rather than at home. Furthermore, in terms of total consumption the UK is the fifth largest beer market in the world (Whitbread, 1995).

The psychoactive and motor effects of alcohol have been interpreted in folk wisdom, mythology, art and other traditions throughout the world at various times in history (Heath, 1987, p100). However, it was the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that witnessed a more 'scientific approach' to the study of alcohol in Britain and America. The idea that alcohol was a problem arose, therefore, in specific circumstances. In both America and in Britain the wider availability and increased consumption of spirits in the late 19th century, together with the new social relations accompanying increased industrialization, meant that drunkenness, which was not considered to be a problem previously, became perceived as a serious threat to the economic and moral order (McDonald, 1994, p2). Abstinence, therefore, became a 'ticket of admission into respectability' and was associated with self-control, industriousness and thrift.

It was also during this period that drunkenness was being reappraised. It was now suggested drunkenness was in fact a disease. Individuals who became drunk did so, because they could not do otherwise, they had an illness called 'alcoholism'.

Alcoholics and other addicts were supposed to have a disease of the will, unable to

control themselves, experiencing a constant 'craving' for alcohol (McDonald, 1994). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century America and Britain saw the development of professional groups that began to study the disease 'alcoholism' and the associated notion of 'addiction'. In Britain, for example, the 'Society for the Study and Cure of Inebriety' (founded in 1884) began to "investigate the various causes of inebriety, and to educate the professional and public mind to a recognition of the physical aspect of habitual intemperance" (Berridge, 1990, p991). Three main themes appeared to dominate the Society's early work: the crusading advocacy of a disease theory of inebriety as the scientific alternative to what was seen as an outmoded moralistic approach; the certainty that medical concepts and treatment were the humane alternative to the penal approach; and the belief that the State and the medical profession should form an alliance to achieve these ends (Berridge, 1990). I suggest that the establishment of the Society for the Study and Cure of Inebriety marks the beginning of the 'disease model of addiction' which became very influential in this country, and others, for determining how the 'disease' of addiction should be treated. I further suggest that the disease model of addiction maintained its influence in this country for the next 80 years.

However well intentioned and humanitarian in ambition at the time, such medicalisation is now deemed to have served not only the interests of churchmen and the state, but also the expansionist ambitions and interests of the medical profession (McDonald, 1994). Berridge in her review of the Society of the Study of Addiction (1990) suggests that the 'apparently objective and value-free rationale of science provided a legitimisation of contemporary social and economic relationships' (Berridge, 1990, p999). Alcoholism, along with venereal disease and tuberculosis, was discussed with more general concerns about racial degeneracy and national decline. This was the beginning of what many theorists have since referred to as the 'medical imperialism' that dominated studies on alcohol and other drugs (Heather and Robertson, 1989, p146). McDonald suggests that:

"the natural science formulation of social problems was an important feature of the professionalising strategies of a range of middle-class groupings at the time, and the education and reform of the lower classes, through various eugenicist means, were serious concerns for nation and Empire alike" (McDonald, 1994,

p4).

McDonald is describing the public health model of the early twentieth century. The model focused on issues such as: the mother and child, the school health service, health education, mental health services, dental health, and care of the family. Under the public health model relationships and social groups became a legitimate concern. Health could be promoted, and concepts of positive health justified interventions aimed at the population as a whole - not just at the ill. Furthermore, 'at risk groups' could be identified by epidemiologists and singled out for action (Bunton, 1990).

I(ii) Locating women within alcohol studies

Within this new model women's drinking became a prominent area for concern because it was inextricably linked with the major concerns of that era - a declining rate of population growth, high infant mortality and an unhealthy working class, all of which were believed to threaten the supremacy of the Empire. Betsy Thom (1994) suggests that: "women's drinking habits, along with a whole range of female behaviours and working-class life styles, became an object of reforming zeal among the emerging groups of health professionals, charitable societies and ladies' organizations" (Thom, 1994, p35).

However, by the beginning of the 1920s women's drinking had ceased to be a social or political concern and faded from public consciousness. This was because the post world war changing social circumstances had forced a fall in the rate of men's and women's alcohol consumption (Berridge, 1990, p1023).

By the late 1950s, women were barely visible within the treatment services or research studies (Thom, 1994, p37). The emphasis of alcohol studies instead focused on the 'alcoholic' male. It was not until the mid-1970s that the 'female alcoholic' was rediscovered in the UK (Berridge, 1990). Betsy Thom suggests that there were many factors that contributed to the renewal of interest in women's drinking, including the influence of the women's movement (Thom, 1994). Earlier feminist and suffrage movements had not been centrally concerned with issues of women's health or experiences of health care. By contrast, the new feminism of the 1960s and 1970s challenged existing orthodoxies on women's health status and the quality of health care they received. Women's groups criticized medical practices and placed women's health

issues in a political and economic context, campaigning for control over their bodies and over the processes of medical care (Randall, 1987).

By the mid-1970s changes had also taken place in the field of alcohol studies. It was becoming clear that the model of the diseased 'alcoholic' drinker was becoming increasingly inadequate for a range of people whose alcohol use had previously gone unnoticed. In the 1970s addiction specialists were beginning to acknowledge that large numbers of so called 'ordinary' people could also experience drink problems (Baggott, 1990). Theorists began to suggest, therefore, that it was no longer appropriate to identify alcoholism as a 'disease'. However, these changes did not take place overnight. Even in the 1980s a wide range of specialist agencies still referred to their customers as 'alcoholics'. (In the 1990s it is only Alcoholics Anonymous who insist that alcoholism is an individual 'disease'). During the 1980s and 1990s there was a very rapid increase in agencies and organizations talking about 'alcohol problems'. Examples of this change of emphasis can be seen in a range of 'policy documents' and reports. The 1990 World Health Organization report on alcohol refers to 'alcohol-related problems' (WHO, 1990), while other addiction specialists now investigate 'problem drinking', see for example, (Heather and Robertson, 1989; Plant, Goos, Keup and Osterberg, 1990; Tether and Robinson, 1986; The Health Education Authority 1993).

During my review of the alcohol literature I discovered that a very useful way to chart the changes of emphasis within the 'addictions field' is to examine the ways in which specialist societies reinvent themselves by changing their names. An example of this phenomenon is that members of The Society for the Study and Cure of Inebriety have changed the name of their society on five occasions during the last 100 years. From 1884-1887 it was known as The Society for the Study and Cure of Inebriety. In 1887 it became The Society for the Study of Inebriety and this name stayed until 1934 when it became The Society for the Study of Inebriety (Alcoholism and Drug Addiction). In 1961 The Society became The Society for the Study of Addiction to Alcohol and Other Drugs, and this title continued until 1988 when it became The Society for the Study of Addiction. The title of the journal that the society has published throughout

its life has changed its name even more frequently. A recent history of the society (Berridge, 1990) demonstrates very clearly the ways in which it has reflected the different interests, tensions and alliances within the addictions field.

I(iii) Introducing the new 'public health alliance'

In the 1990s the science and temperance model of treating alcohol problems has become obsolete. It has been replaced by a 'new public health' alliance that has been developed by epidemiologists, health planners, economists, psychologists, psychiatrists, social scientists, and the drinks industry. Since the late 1980s the drinks' industry has played an important part in alcohol research and policy. The Portman Group is a drinks' industry initiative against alcohol misuse. It was launched in 1989 by eight of the UK's leading drinks companies - Bass, Allied Domeq, Courage, Guinness, International Distillers and Vintners, Seagram, Scottish and Newcastle and Whitbread. The Group explains its objectives as threefold:

"to reduce the incidence of alcohol misuse through educational programmes and practical initiatives; to promote sensible drinking; and to foster a better understanding of the complex reasons behind alcohol misuse. The Portman Group's 'official' goal is to minimise problem drinking and its consequences. The group believes that this can be achieved by reducing the consumption of those at greatest risk and by preventing others from developing drinking habits that may be harmful, not only to themselves, but also to others" (The Portman Group with the Health Education Authority, 1992).

In 1994 these 'official' goals were challenged when an internal drinking industry memorandum was leaked to the press stating that the Portman Group was set up with the aim of dominating research into alcohol policy (*'Pro-alcohol academics paid by drinks lobby', The Independent on Sunday Dec 4 1994; 'Drinks industry picks up bill for researchers', The Independent, Dec 5 1994*).

The Portman group has been very successful in recent years in getting a variety of its publications into schools. Since 1994 'A Guide to Alcohol Education Materials' - PC-based materials (Portman Group, 1994); 'Finding Out About Drinking Alcohol' GCSE handbook (Portman Group, 1994); and 'Discussing Drinking with your Children' (Portman Group, 1996) have been promoted vigorously (all Portman Group educational materials are free of charge). In 'Discussing Drinking with your Children',

the Portman Group urge parents to teach their children to drink in the continental way, by introducing wine mixed with water from the age of five, the legal limit at which a child can be given alcohol. The Group has also sponsored numerous alcohol reports, conferences, school competitions and projects. All these activities have taken place under the group's 'Informing Individual Choice' Initiative' (The Portman Group, 1996).

Most recently, the Department of Health acted upon advice generated by the Edinburgh Alcohol Research Group and the Portman Group in December 1995 by officially raising the limits on the amount of alcohol men and women should consume to remain within 'sensible limits'. Men's 'sensible drinking limits' were increased from 21 units to 28, and women's limits were increased from 14 units to 21. Most controversially, however, the Portman Group also pays the salaries and expenses of the Edinburgh University's Alcohol Research Group who have for the last decade dominated alcohol research (Plant, M.A., 1987; Plant, M.A., Bagnall and Foster, 1990; Plant, M.A., Bagnall, Foster and Sales, 1990; Plant, M.A., and Foster 1991; Plant, M.A., Goos, Keup and Osterberg, 1990; Plant, M.A., Grant and Williams, 1981; Plant, M.L., 1985; Plant, M.L., 1990; Plant, M.L., 1991).

Players that have key roles within the 'new public health alliance' clearly shape our perceptions of alcohol use within society. We are encouraged to believe in the 'sensible drinking messages' promoted by various organizations and government departments (Department of Health, 1989; The Department of Health and Social Services, 1981; The Health Education Authority 1993; The Home Office, 1987). The Health Education Authority (a central government funded quango) states that their 'sensible drinking messages' "recognizes that drinking can be a pleasurable social activity but encourages people to drink within limits which will not harm themselves or others" (The Health Education Authority, 1993, p4). Within the new public health alliance individuals are, therefore, urged to make choices and to demonstrate 'self control'.

In the last two decades the value of self-control as an indicator of health has emerged in many guises. The value of health and self-control as a virtue is characterised by a

cultural movement which Crawford (1980) calls 'healthism'. In both America and Britain health promotion and prevention strategies have encouraged individuals to adopt certain health promotion behaviours: eat less fat; exercise regularly; do not smoke; cut out sugars; and drink sensibly. Crawford (1984) suggests that health is used as a metaphor for self-control. Healthy behaviour has become a moral duty and illness is perceived as an individual failing. In Crawford's view (1980) individuals are encouraged to pursue 'healthism' by adopting healthy behaviours which are advocated by health policies which promote 'lifestyle choices'. This highly individualistic approach to health and illness overlooks the idea that individuals make choices about their lifestyles and health within a material framework that often constrains and limits the choices available to them. In other words, 'the new public health alliance' overlooks the fact that class, gender, age and ethnicity all play a major role in structuring our abilities to influence our 'lifestyles' and 'health choices' (Abbott and Payne, 1990, p6).

Within the 'new public health alliance' a range of different groups are being encouraged to influence 'sensible' drinking patterns. Bunton (1990) suggests that:

"to effect a coordinated response new and previously unthought of groups are being encouraged to form new alliances" (Bunton, 1990, p 111).

The result of this is that epidemiologists, sociologists, psychologists and a range of other professionals interested in alcohol have been encouraged to dissect, map and differentiate a variety of different drinking groups. These groups are then identified as subject to varying risk factors. Recently young people and women have emerged as groups who are 'at risk', along with other groups such as young men and particular occupations. Young people and women drinkers have, therefore, found themselves the target of intensive scrutiny. A good illustration of this is the recent Royal College of General Practitioners' book based on the Women and Alcohol (1992) Conference Papers and the Royal College of Physicians' recent report Alcohol and the Young (1995).

The 'new public health alliance' attempts, therefore, to 'regulate' the drinking activities of specific groups. Particular stress is placed upon the gathering of more detailed

information to build a complete picture and more systematic records of the different manifestations of the problem. Furthermore, 'co-ordinated action on alcohol' is called for in a great many of the recommendations typical of public health literature on alcohol use, see for example, (DHSS/Welsh Office, 1989; Tether and Robinson, 1986).

The Government circular, in particular, calls for the arrangement of local action built on a local assessment of the nature of the problems and the range of resources available to counter them. It calls for a wide range of statutory and voluntary bodies to combine with the private sector in concerted action on all fronts to build a complete picture of the different manifestations of the problem (DHSS/Welsh Office, 1989).

Bunton (1990, p116) suggests that:

"the post-addiction period of alcohol misuse analysis is significantly more pervasive than its predecessors".

He then adds:

"this recent transformation has received little critical attention from policy analysts or sociologists. In fact, to the contrary, sociologists have in the main worked to enhance and develop both the new paradigm and the development of its recommendations" (Bunton, 1990, p116).

From this brief synopsis, it is clear that our understanding of alcohol changes according to the social and cultural context in which it takes place. Yet because most alcohol research studies have been conducted in the UK by social scientists who have 'special interests' in specific 'at risk' groups, there has been very little research conducted on the everyday meanings of drinking in the late twentieth century. Most British alcohol researchers have failed, therefore, to examine an extensive range of anthropological alcohol studies from across the world. Many of these studies underline the wide range of cross-cultural realities involved in alcohol and its consumption in the context of daily life. Yet alcohol research funders in the UK do not appear to be interested in this type of research. They instead prefer to sponsor quantitative studies so that they can quantify the extent of any possible problems. Most alcohol researchers in the UK have, therefore, neglected a very important method in the field of alcohol studies.

II DEFINING ALCOHOL AND ITS CONSUMPTION AS CULTURAL MATTERS

Unlike most other alcohol researchers anthropologists are not interested in studying 'at risk' groups. As Dwight Heath comments:

"anthropologists are able to examine alcohol as it is used in the normal course of workaday affairs in integral communities" (Heath, 1987, p105).

Heath (1987) provides a very useful summary of recent trends within anthropological alcohol studies. Anthropological studies have been very useful in my developing discourse on young women and alcohol, because they demonstrate very clearly that our perceptions of the world and the things that we do within it vary across different times and spaces. They also attempt to draw boundaries where people draw them themselves, taking account of the contextual subtleties of everyday life (McDonald, 1994, p13). Anthropological studies have demonstrated, therefore, that alcohol and its consumption are inherently cultural matters. In other words, the meaning or social reality of drinking can be found imbedded within the cultural contexts in which drinking takes place.

Anthropologists have also drawn our attention to the ways in which there are a variety of benefits associated with drinking for a variety of social groups (See for example Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology, edited by Mary Douglas, [1987]). However, despite the fact that anthropological texts have become very useful in furthering the discussions on alcohol use, abuse, conspicuous consumption, abstinence, and so forth, Dimitra Gefou-Madianou (1992) suggests that they still need to develop further concepts and analytical tools to grasp more fully the meanings of alcohol use in a range of societies.

I concur that the continuing development of these concepts and analytical tools is essential if we are interested in developing an understanding of the different meanings that drinking has for a wide range of social groups. This is particularly pertinent in the study of women's drinking. Since the forms and meanings of drinking are culturally defined, we must ask what these meanings are; and how they are linked to the broader society and culture in which women's drinking takes place. Unfortunately, most

studies that have focused on women's drinking have failed to do this. This is because most drinking studies both in the UK and in other countries continue to focus on the perceived 'high-risk' drinking activities of women. This has resulted in a plethora of studies around the issues of HIV, prostitution, foetal alcohol syndrome and other health matters. In the past decade the Edinburgh Alcohol Research Group and others have produced many studies scrutinizing these areas (Plant, M.,A., 1990; Plant, Plant and Morgan Thomas, 1990; Plant, M.,L., 1985; Plant, M.,L., 1992; Robertson and Plant, 1988). There are only a few notable exceptions where women's drinking has been explored within the broader cultural context of women's roles and expectations within the society of which they are part (Defou-Madianou 1992; Ettore, 1989;1992; MacDonald, 1994; Papagaroufali, 1992). Most of the studies of women's alcohol consumption that have taken place over the last hundred years have shared very similar concerns, and these are inextricably related to women's political, social and economic positions within society.

II(i) Alcohol, femininity and gender relations

Even after a cursory look at the literature on women and alcohol it becomes immediately clear why it is important for policy makers to ensure that women become 'sensible drinkers' who are aware of the health and social implications of their drinking. Women's drinking is seen as a social policy issue in the 1990s for the same reason as in the late 19th and early 20th century. Women who drink alcohol, especially those who become drunk, compromise, contradict and undermine the roles that women are supposed to play within patriarchal society. In other words, daughters, wives and mothers should be seen to be 'sober' responsible people who can exercise good judgement and self-control. These notions are no better illustrated than in John Macgreagor's recent (1992) keynote speech to a National Conference arranged jointly by the Department of Health and the Royal College of General Practitioners. John Macgreagor, who is the Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons¹, stated:

¹ The Lord President is responsible for co-ordinating the Government's alcohol policies and is Chairman of the group of Ministers from all the Departments with an interest in the use of alcohol.

"It is clear that women play a key role in moderating people's drinking habits, and in encouraging people to drink sensibly. They do this by their example and by expressing concern, both in their families and also in all the various communities of which they are a part: where they live and also where they work. I would not want to lay this as a *responsibility* on women, it is just something that women actually do. We value this and we are grateful for it, and we want to help women do it. The clearer women are about the *sensible drinking* messages, and the better informed they are, the more good they will be able to do. This is an important area where *women take the lead*" (Royal College of General Practitioners, 1992, pvii).

From John Macgreagor's speech it is clear that he (like the government that he represents), perceives women's drinking as being linked to them having a central role in securing the health of the nation. Throughout the twentieth century there has been a strong ideology of womanhood and motherhood which has reinforced the notion that women have the major responsibility for all aspects of their families' development. This ideology has continued to remain fairly intact despite the continuing development of women's full time employment patterns (Brannen and Moss, 1993, p210).

Betsy Thom suggests that concern over women's drinking appears to emerge most forcefully from social and political circumstances which include changes in, or attempts to change, women's social status (Thom, 1994, p48). Looking at women's social position over the last century this would certainly seem to be the case. Women's drinking first became a topical concern at the turn of the century when questions of women's rights to property, to employment and to political participation appeared to those who opposed reform, to threaten the foundations of society. In the 1990s women's social positions are still perceived by many as a threat to the foundations of society - patriarchal society - where women have fulfilled a vital and necessary role within the private domain of the family.

There is no doubt that there are definitely marked differences between male and female drinking patterns. Females are more likely to be abstainers than males (Plant and Plant, 1992). Furthermore, females who drink consume markedly lower quantities than do males (Dight, 1976; Foster, Wilmot and Dobbs, 1990; Wilson, 1980).

Goddard (1991) concluded that the mean alcohol consumption amongst females aged

16 and above who had drunk in the past week was only 4.5 units, compared with 14.3 units amongst males (Goddard, 1991). However, I suggest that instead of merely quantifying women's drinking patterns in relation to those of men, we should instead be attempting to develop a critical framework to help us understand how women's drinking patterns develop and what they say about women's general status and specific roles within contemporary society. Ettore and Riska (1995) suggest we need to review critically the previous work in the field to make visible the "invisible paradigm" of male oriented work. Ettore's work (1992;1995) demonstrates very clearly that gender differentials in psychotropic drug use are concrete manifestations of the institution of gender in society. Her work not only makes gender visible but it also problematises existing gender relations. I intend to utilize and develop Ettore's critical framework in my examination of working class young women's developing drinking patterns. But before I can do this it is necessary to examine the ways in which young people have also been targeted as an alcohol 'at risk group'.

III 'ALCOHOL AND YOUTH': CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

'Young people' is a category which is used throughout the drugs and alcohol field. This category invariably appears to include all individuals who are between the ages of 6-23 years of age (Bagnall, 1991; Ghodsian and Power, 1987; Health Education Authority (HEA), 1992a; 1992b; Jahoda and Cramond, 1972; Plant, Peck and Samuel, 1979). Simon Frith suggests that:

"because to be young is mostly related to a set of legal definitions, when the law changes (with the raising of school leaving age or the lowering of the voting age) so does the meaning of youth' (Frith, 1986, p4).

While Janet Finch adds:

"the question 'when does a young person become an adult?' has quite different answers in a variety of different social contexts" (Finch, 1986, p18).

These are issues which do not appear to be addressed within alcohol studies. It is my intention in this section of the chapter to demonstrate how treating 'young people' as a single or undifferentiated category results in practical as well as theoretical difficulties.

Most attempts within the alcohol literature to break down the category 'youth' or

'young people' appear to be confined to categorizing young people into age groups. A consequence of this, is that, there appears to be an absence of debate regarding any possible social significance that these age groupings might have in the real world. Within alcohol studies, therefore, there appears to be little consideration given to the notion that age groups may not have any lasting significance outside the particular social and economic contexts which give them meaning. Throughout this thesis I will address this omission by making very explicit my assumptions about the age categories that I will be utilizing. I will expand upon this in chapter 2, Feminist Ethnography and Encounters in the Field, and in Chapter 3, Locating the Young Women in their Homes. My work will demonstrate the ways in which social and cultural expectations of groups of young people are often more important than age when considering drinking patterns. Alcohol studies have failed to address 'youth' as a social category. This may be because many adult researchers regard young people as asocial - or perhaps pre-social - beings (Buckingham, 1993). As Hudson (1984) suggests:

"The *problem* of adolescence as defined by adult society is that it is a time of uncontrolled appetites, a time when teenagers need protecting against themselves if they are not to damage their chances of reaching respectable adulthood; the problem of adolescence for teenagers is that they must demonstrate maturity and responsibility if they are to move out of this stigmatised status, and yet because adolescence is conceived as a time of irresponsibility and lack of maturity, they are given few opportunities to demonstrate these qualities which are essential for their admission as adults" (Hudson, 1984, p36).

The result of this emphasis is that the focus of most alcohol studies with young people is on the prohibition, regulation or control of their risk taking activities (HEA, 1992; Home Office, 1987; Mid Glamorgan Social Crime Unit, 1993). Even those initiatives (for example, The Trent Regional Health Authority, Health Gain Investment Programme 'Older Children and Young People', [1994]) which alert health professionals to the inherent problems of classifying and categorizing young people only according to their age, still state that:

"It [youth] is a time of life distinguished in some cases by exploration, rebellion and risk taking behaviour. Health workers and others have, therefore, to address such behaviour in order to minimise harm to individuals both in 'adolescence' and later life" (Trent Regional Health Authority, 1994, p3).

The practical and theoretical consequences of this type of approach is that young

people's individual lived experiences, their voices and their own particular perspectives on drinking and other so called 'risk' behaviours remain obscured by statistical generalizations. These generalizations then encourage adults to develop a range of educational and social strategies that are designed to help young people 'to cope', see for example, The 1992 Addictions Forum Conference, Alcohol and Young People Learning to Cope, (Addictions Forum, 1992).

Alcohol specialists appear to have remained impervious to studies produced by a range of sociologists demonstrating that many supposedly universal theories and models are not necessarily relevant to all young people (Banks et al, 1992; Gillespie et al, 1992; Griffin, 1985; 1993; McRobbie, 1991; McRobbie and Garber, 1993; Mirza, 1992). Consequently, alcohol research studies are developed on the assumption that young people are in fact a uniform category. There appears to be little critical debate regarding the notion that young people's material conditions and lived experiences are by no means identical. In my thesis I intend, therefore, to make very clear that working class young women develop a range of complex drinking patterns that are different from those of young men and other adults. I will further explain the ways in which young women's developing drinking patterns are inextricably enmeshed with their perceptions and experience of living within a very specific social, cultural and political world.

III(i) Monitoring young people and their substance use: a popular research strategy

Collecting detailed information about young people and alcohol is a fairly recent activity in Britain. Davies and Stacey's (1972) study marks the beginning of drugs and alcohol research activities in this country. Since then there has been a wide range of research projects investigating alcohol and drug consumption levels amongst young people (Aitken, 1978; Bagnall, 1991; Bean et al 1988; Cohen, 1989; Hawker, 1978; HEA, 1992a; 1992b; Home Office, 1987; Jahoda and Cramond, 1972; Marsh et al, 1986; McC Miller and Plant, 1996; MORI, 1990; Plant, Peck and Stuart, 1982; Plant and Plant, 1992; Power and Godsian, 1985). In the last three decades collecting detailed information about young people's drug and alcohol consumption has become a

very popular activity amongst a wide range of 'addictions' researchers. The research indicates that the range of substances used by young people has increased enormously. Davies and Coggans (1991) suggest that in terms of hard evidence, there is no doubt that drugs are now more readily available than ever before, and in greater variety.

They also say that:

"the range of substances used by young people has expanded radically from the 'traditional' drugs of protest such as cannabis and LSD [lysergic acid diethylamide], and now includes all the feared substances previously held to have attraction only to ageing jazz musicians and other marginal groups" (Davies and Coggans, 1991, p3).

There have also been distinct trends of young people's substance use over the last three decades, but it is very difficult to get an accurate picture of specific use at any particular time. This is because the major source of national drug patterns and trends is the Home Office, and their information provides only a partial picture. The Home Office information is partial because it excludes alcohol and solvents. Also their information is collected from notification of addicts, seizure of drugs, offences and information supplied to them by workers in the field whose information is based upon people who have 'problems' with their drug use. However, most recreational drug users do not perceive themselves as having problems, so they do not come into contact with drugs agencies. This is especially so in the case of young people.

Despite the obvious shortcomings of the Home Office data, the Home Office statistics do illustrate that fashions in drug use can change very rapidly (Home Office, 1988).

Tackling Drug Misuse: A Summary of the Government's Strategy, states that:

"there is little doubt that the misuse of drugs increased substantially during the first half of the 1980s. This followed a period of relative stability in the mid 1970s, which itself followed an upsurge in the mid and late 1960s and early 1970s (Home Office, 1988, p5).

Trends of substances popular with young people, for example, ecstasy, acid, solvents and alcohol are very difficult to identify. The Institute for the Study of Drug Dependency produces regular Press Digests which collect national newspaper cuttings mentioning drugs, but the collected cuttings tend to reflect perceived 'public concern', as opposed to any identifiable trends or changes of use. The Institute for the Study of Drug Dependency does not collect information on alcohol or solvents. Young people's

use, and misuse of alcohol is reflected, therefore, by public order offences, drunken driving, and in some localities, an increase in young men and young women developing chronic alcohol problems (Bagnall, 1991, pix). Information on solvent use has only been collected since 1981, having emerged as a problem in the late 1970s (Ives, 1991). Deaths from solvent use has increased over the years; in 1980 there were approximately 31 deaths, and in 1989 there were 113 deaths (Ives, 1991).

Young people's drug and alcohol use is, therefore, a highly variable and largely unquantified activity. Accordingly, research activities focus on young people's perceived patterns of drug and alcohol use (HEA, 1992a; 1992b; McC Miller and Plant, 1996; Marsh et al, 1986; Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1986; Plant, 1992). These studies have in turn perpetuated the idea that young people are both likely to 'mis-use' drugs and alcohol, and that they are also vulnerable to their potential ill effects. This situation has arisen because most of the research that has been carried out focuses on young people's responses to the specific substances under investigation. There are very few studies which explore the links between the broader social contexts and the day to day situations in which young people are exploring substances and developing their drinking patterns.

Even fewer researchers have explored young people's sex/gender roles and drinking. Even where there has been some sort of acknowledgment that there may be differences between the drinking and the drug taking behaviours of young men and young women, no further sense of the empirical findings are made, for example Cohen (1989); O'Connor (1978). Sex Roles and Adolescent Drinking, (Wilsnack and Wilsnack, 1979) seems to be a unique investigation. In this study the importance of understanding the sex-role performance within drinking behaviours is emphasised, for example, boys' attempts to display traditional masculinity and girls' attempts to disregard traditional femininity. The Wilsnacks (Wilsnack and Wilsnack, 1979) have interpreted young female drinking to be an attempt at 'disregarding traditional femininity'. Interestingly, this notion of young women rejecting traditional femininity seems opposite to the findings regarding young women and smoking, where Revill (1979) perceives young women's smoking to be a feminine act of sophistication.

Many investigations that look into young people's drinking practice, also consider their drug and smoking behaviours (Denscombe and Aubrook, 1990; HEA, 1992a; 1992b Bagnall, 1988; Bean et al, 1988; Plant et al, 1985), as well as sexual activities (Balding, 1989; Plant and Plant, 1992). This is because these areas are perceived to 'naturally interlink' (Balding, 1989). In some studies there is a complete dismissal of the need to separate out specific categories of drug use, see for example Cohen (1989, p6). Cohen uses the word 'drug' to refer to the whole range of mood altering substances that include tobacco, alcohol, solvents and other illegal substances (Cohen, 1989).

Most of the research that examines young people's drinking behaviour takes place, therefore, within a broadly similar conceptual framework. Researchers tend to hypothesize about the possible sequences between young people's knowledge, behaviours and attitudes towards alcohol. The result of this is that data tend to be organized in the form of statements from individuals about their attitudes and behaviours towards alcohol. This approach is a product which is specific to the conceptual framework encouraged by the new public health alliance. The alliance encourages alcohol researchers to develop positivistic social psychological approaches regarding influences on the individual as opposed to any other consideration of cultural or material circumstances. This is because the role of the researcher within the 'new public health alliance' is to gather detailed and specific information on young people's drinking patterns in order to advise policy makers on the best way of regulating and controlling such behaviour.

This approach is very explicit in the well known work of Davies and Stacey (1972). Davies and Stacey's research discovered that, although an informational approach can be beneficial, group pressures also have a major part of play in the instruction of adolescent drinking. They concluded that a purely informational approach, which does not attempt to deal with group dynamics, would be neglecting a very important area (Davies and Stacey, 1972). Their work legitimated policy makers' concern regarding the significance of 'peer pressure' and to this day, this concern continues to guide much mainstream government-funded research into young people's drinking and drug taking behaviours. An example is Harith Swadi's work (Stoker and Swadi, 1990; Swadi and

Zeitlin, 1988). Furthermore, researchers such as Plant and his colleagues at the Edinburgh Alcohol Research Group, see for example, (Plant, Bagnall and Foster, 1990; Plant, Bagnall, Foster and Sales, 1990; Plant and Plant, 1992) continue to demonstrate that young people "do a lot of drinking" (Plant, Peck and Samuel, 1985, p5). This justifies the continuing development of alcohol health education packages to assist health educators such as Dyson and Dawson (1988) to encourage young people to behave in a more enlightened, rational, safe and healthy way.

I do not wish to deny that individuals do influence each other (intentionally and unintentionally). Indeed, I suggest that all of us are influenced in different ways by those with whom we spend time and identify. But this is not a phenomenon which is restricted to young people, or to a particular social practice associated with young people. Drinking alcohol occupies a variety of highly symbolic roles in a range of different cultures. When people drink alcohol they are often expressing a very complex range of thoughts and feelings. In this country alcohol has a presence in most of the anniversaries, rituals and ceremonies that take place in our lives, but these elements are entirely lacking within the research literature focusing on young people. Most research studies regarding young people and alcohol are merely based on quantitative surveys focusing on the questions: where? when? how much? who with? and how often? Little effort has been put into trying to understand the complex social worlds in which young people live and how the material circumstances in their lives may be related to their developing drinking patterns. Furthermore, even where there is some sort of acknowledgement that young people's lives are complex and complicated, no further comment or analysis is made (Bagnall, 1991; Plant and Plant, 1992).

Nevertheless, as a result of the numerous quantitative surveys that have taken place over the last thirty years we do have a great quantity of 'data' about young people's drinking behaviour. For over a decade the Health Education Authority Schools Health Education Unit at Exeter University has been providing a survey service for upper middle and secondary schools in the United Kingdom. The findings of the latest survey The Tenth Annual Young People Report (Balding, 1996) has just been published. The purpose of the annual surveys and reports produced by the Schools

Health Education Unit is to enable schools to develop appropriate health and social education programmes. John Balding (Director of the Unit) has access to a plethora of information about young people's lifestyles. His research tells us at what age young people begin to drink, how many times a week they drink or go out to the pub, and what they do in their leisure time and so forth (Balding, 1996).

Although the work of the Exeter Health Education Unit and the Edinburgh Alcohol Research Group has gained a very high profile within the 'young people and alcohol field' during the last two decades, there are also a variety of other agencies and individuals who have been engaged in a variety of research projects: The Young Drinkers: A Cross-National Study of Social and Cultural Influences (O'Connor, 1978); 10-14 year olds and Alcohol: A developmental Study in the Central Region of Scotland (Aitken, 1978); Adolescents and Alcohol (Hawker, 1978); A National Longitudinal Study of Drinking Patterns (Power and Godsian, 1985); Adolescent Drinking (Marsh et al 1986); Knowledge of Drugs and Consumption of Alcohol among Nottingham 15 year olds (Bean et al 1988); Knowledge and Attitudes about Alcohol in 17 and 18 year olds (Black and Weare 1989); '16-up' Health Survey of 16 year old Pupils in Central Nottinghamshire (Gillies and Zamorski, 1989); Drug Use Amongst Young People in Tameside (Cohen, 1989); Young Adults' Health and Lifestyles: Alcohol (MORI, 1990); A Cohort Study of 15 year olds Health Related Behaviours (Gillies, 1988); and Drugs and Risk Taking (Denscombe, and Aubrook 1990). All of these studies appear to be large-scale or small-scale surveys, so they provide very similar data. MORI (1990) for example, tells us that "alcohol consumption amongst young people is widespread and occurs in a variety of settings" (MORI, 1990) (pages not numbered). We are also told that "drinking increases with ages, and is higher in the north and Yorkshire and Humberside". "Lager/beer and cider are the most popular drinks among young men and women, and young people drink alcohol to socialise, increase their confidence, to relax and for the enjoyment and taste" (MORI, 1990). Meanwhile, other researchers, for example Denscombe and Aubrook, inform us that "34.7% of young people had tried alcohol before the age of 10, 33.7% had done so before the age of 13, and a further 16.8% had done so before their 16th birthday" (Denscombe and Aubrook, 1990a, p2). We also learn that "98% of 5th

formers had consumed alcohol on at least one occasion, 61% said they had drunk alcohol in the past week, while 40% said that they were regular drinkers, drinking once a week or more" (Cohen, 1989, p8). Most alcohol research studies merely 'count' the frequency of young peoples drinking. Although this is important it does not help us to *understand* the role of alcohol within the more general context of how young people live their lives. Furthermore, I suggest that few researchers have been interested in addressing this omission.

Drugs and Risk Taking (Denscombe and Aubrook, 1990a), and Drug Use Amongst Young People in Tameside (Cohen, 1989), appear to be the only two studies worthy of further mention, and this is not because of their findings, but more to do with their original 'broader aims'. Drugs and Risk Taking combined questionnaires and in-depth interviews as methods chosen to investigate the culture of alcohol and drug use among 14-18 year olds, particularly focusing on the way young people perceive risks to personal health involved in the use of alcohol and drugs (Denscombe and Aubrook, 1990). Another area of interest within this study is the disposable incomes of young people and the consumption of alcohol. The authors have tried to understand alcohol consumption in the context of cultural variations surrounding the use of alcohol and the social life of young people (Denscombe and Aubrook, 1991). They do find that extra spending power is associated with higher rates of alcohol consumption among 15 to 16 year olds, but they also acknowledge that consideration also needs to be given to the intervening variable, the developing social life of young people (Denscombe and Aubrook, 1991, p20). Within the drugs-and-risk-taking studies, therefore, there has been an attempt to set young people's drinking and drug taking within a broader social context, but I suggest that their success in doing so has been limited by the choice to use predominantly quantitative research methods.

Cohen's study whilst purporting to be different is similarly limited. In the forward to the report, the Director of Education Tameside Metropolitan Borough writes that Cohen has provided "a clearer picture of what young people are doing and thinking" (Cohen, 1989). Yet Cohen has actually presented us with very similar findings to all the other quantitative studies. Information on alcohol consumption patterns, reasons

for drinking, drinking venues, and types of drinks consumed, can all be found in a range of other studies, see for example (Balding, 1989; Denscombe and Aubrook, 1990; Gillies, 1991; MORI, 1990; Plant, Beck and Samuel, 1985). Furthermore, the flavour of Cohen's Study, as is the case with most of the other research cited in this review so far, is very male orientated. The statistics that are quoted throughout his report refer to the total sample group even though he states that there are differences between male and female drinking patterns. These differences merit only one small paragraph:

"Both surveys compared male and female patterns of drinking. It was found that males tend to drink more per drinking session, and are more likely to choose beer or lager as their usual drink and attend pubs more regularly. However, females were as likely as males to have experienced the four drunken states" (Cohen, 1989, p9-10).

The four drunken states to which Cohen refers were: doing or saying embarrassing things which were later regretted; being unable to walk or talk properly; being sick; and waking up with a hangover (Cohen, 1989, p9). Like O'Connor (1978) who also discovered differences between male and female drinking, Cohen unfortunately fails to make any further sense of his empirical findings. The differences between young men's and young women's drinking patterns have been lost behind the general statistics for the total sample group. This is definitely a shortcoming of the study in view of the rather ambitious claims made by the Director of Education in the Foreword of the Report.

In general, most of the recommendations that develop from the research projects cited in this section are invariably as predictable as their findings. It would appear that most alcohol researchers regard 'more alcohol and drug education in schools' to be the panacea to address young people's perceived drug and alcohol problems. Even the more innovative projects, for example Flint (1974) who manages to identify a wide range of social and economic influences on young people's drinking patterns including the inadequate social alternatives for young people, still recommends the usual comprehensive alcohol educational programme for youth and appropriate professionals involved. The only exception from this plethora of predictable recommendations is Cohen (1989) who suggests that there is not a very good dialogue between young

people and adults concerning drug use, and that a much better dialogue between them should be established based upon honesty and the reality of young people's drug use.

Cohen (1989) also suggests that educators should pay more attention to young people's friendship networks. He demonstrates that friendship or peer groups tend to form around substance use; users of a particular drug are far more likely than non-users to have close friends who also use. Although Cohen does not tell us which comes first; the friendship groups or the drug use, he does reinforce the idea that young people are much more likely to seek help and advice from their peers rather than from teachers, parents or other adults, thus alerting us to the inappropriateness of relying on teachers and other adults to 'teach' young people about alcohol and drugs. (See Appendix 1 for a brief review of a range of drugs and alcohol initiatives targeted at young people).

None of the above research studies regarding young people and their alcohol use provides us with any real 'feeling' of the social worlds in which young people live. I suggest that this has happened because 'addiction specialists' have chosen to utilize surveys as their main investigative tool. The emphasis of such studies have been limited, therefore, to statistical generalizations. The dimension that is missing from all of these studies is any inclusion of what young people consider to be important in relation to their actual drinking patterns. This element is absent because surveys are unable to obtain such in-depth qualitative information. The result is that young people have been portrayed as rather homogeneous 'research subjects' as opposed to being active human beings who are interacting within a broader economic, social and cultural context. Any notion that young people may be developing highly complex and symbolic drinking behaviours that are similar to, but different from, those of their parents and other adults has been omitted. This is because examination of the contexts in which people live and do their drinking would require in-depth participant-observation studies and this sort of research is almost entirely lacking in the field of young people's consumption of alcohol and drugs.

III(ii) Conceptualizing young people's drinking as a social and cultural practice

There are very few studies that attempt to make sense of young people's drinking as a social practice that makes sense within the more general cultural context in which young people live their daily lives. The only study that I have located that has been conducted within a broader qualitative sociological tradition is the American Drugs in Adolescents' Worlds - Burnouts to Straights, (Glassner and Loughlin, 1987). This work took place in a North Eastern American city - 'Yule City', and is based upon extensive interviews with one hundred 12-20 year old residents, and on observations of their interactions with each other in school and in their neighbourhood. On the whole Glassner and Loughlin's findings are commensurate with many of the observations in the standard drug abuse literature, but they do conflict with many of the conclusions there. First, they do not see adolescent drug users as 'dysfunctional adolescents', 'poorly adjusted' or having 'inadequate personalities' (Glassner and Loughlin, 1987, p235). They are also very critical of the traditional methodological and ideological assumptions of much of the drug and alcohol literature, pointing out that "drug taking is simply too widespread among American adolescents for it to be reasonable to expect that drug taking grows out of individual pathology" (Glassner and Loughlin, 1987, p243). Their study reinforces the view that 'drug use' is merely one element in the on-going negotiations over when, how, where and in what ways an adolescent is an independent adult or dependent child. Their chosen methodology also enables the researchers to view young people's behaviours within the context of the different groups and events within school and social environments. This stimulates them to stress that young people, like adults, often use psychological concepts to describe sociological phenomenon, and this individual usage of psychological concepts should not mislead us into thinking that drug use is best understood by means of a psychological explanation (Glassner, Loughlin, 1987).

Another American study (Jessor and Jessor, 1977) has attempted to conceptualize young peoples' drinking within the context of a differentiated economic and social structure. The Jessors have attempted to describe three linked social systems - society, family and personality - and teenage drinking is then explained as resulting from strains within each of these systems. The model the Jessors develop focuses on the relations

between social class background, the ways in which the state manages the socialisation of working class youth, and the youth cultures that arise as a collective response to shared circumstances. This type of approach is entirely lacking within the available British literature, the only exception being Nick Dorn's work (Dorn, 1983).

In Dorn's work, Alcohol, Youth and the State, drinking practices are conceptualized, as social practices that make sense within the context of the cultures that young men and women collectively construct in response to their experience of social class and the sexual divisions in society, not as the result of individual or collective belief systems (Dorn, 1983, p21). His study in Servicetown (so called because of the importance of the service sector in the local economy) concentrated "on the prospects, culture and leisure (including drinking styles) of specific groups of young people" (Dorn, 1983, p21). The young people had all just obtained employment in the service sector, or expected to after leaving school. All the young people's drinking centred on pubs, and Dorn's chief concern was to try and explain the drinking norm of buying a round within the context of youth cultures. Dorn concludes:

"the mixed-sex round in service sector youth culture may be understood as an integral feature of that culture, and that this form of drinking practice does not generally occur in some other youthful social class and ethnic minority groups in the same locality" (Dorn, 1983, p195).

His work emphasises the crucial role ethnographic research should play in understanding young people's cultures and drinking practices. By considering social class and regional differences his work develops a general model for understanding drinking practices in the diverse strata of youth, while drawing out implications for health and social education (Dorn, 1983).

The shortcoming of Dorn's work is that, although young women are included in his sample group, the emphasis of his analysis appear to be on young men's activities. 'Alcohol and young people' research, like most 'youth studies' work until the late 1970s and early 1980s, obscures the fact that half of all young people are actually female! Drug and alcohol research work appears, therefore, to be oblivious to the suggestion that growing up male and growing up female involve very different activities, constraints, and patterns of socialization. Within most alcohol studies to

date Hudson's observation that "adolescence is a 'masculine' construct" (Hudson, 1984, p35) is still an accurate and relevant comment. To gain a more accurate picture of the ways in which young women live their lives, it is necessary, therefore, to engage with the findings of a range of feminist youth texts which have been developed to address the general absence of young women in main 'youth culture' texts.

IV DEVELOPING A FEMINIST INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORK TO PUT WORKING CLASS YOUNG WOMEN'S DRINKING INTO A CULTURAL CONTEXT

All feminists are concerned with how knowledge which is helpful to women can best be produced and with what such knowledge should be like (Cain, 1993, p73). These are epistemological questions. Liz Stanley suggests:

"feminism is not merely a perspective, a way of seeing; nor even this plus an epistemology, a way of knowing; it is also an ontology, or a way of being in the world" (Stanley, 1990, p14).

A common factor among feminist researchers is, therefore, a feminist commitment to a political position in which 'knowledge' is not simply defined as 'knowledge *what*' but also as 'knowledge *for*' (Stanley, 1990, p15). Feminist youth researchers began, therefore, in the late 1970s and early 1980s to develop a wide range of research methods that would provide young women with the opportunity to begin talking about their lives. Christine Griffin suggests that the development of feminist ethnography is 'a resistance to women's oppression' because women's experiences, usually unspoken and unacknowledged, are expressed and exchanged in the research process (Griffin, 1980, p5). She also suggests that such a methodology allows theory to be generated in the research process (Griffin, 1980, p3). This idea of theory as an everyday practice, arising from experience, is central to my own ethnographic work with young women. This will be explored more fully in the next chapter - 'Feminist Ethnography and Encounters in the Field'.

Feminist youth studies initially developed, therefore, in response to three main areas of concern. The first that youth culture studies had previously been focused on male samples for the purpose of drawing generalizable conclusions about 'youth'. The

second was that youth culture studies celebrated male sub-cultures and depicted young men's action as 'resistant' to the dominant social relations, even though such practices reproduced sexism and racism. The third was that such studies excluded any reference to feminine discourse. Authoritative texts such as Subculture: The Meaning of Style, (Hebdige, 1979), Learning to Labour, (Willis, 1978) and more recently, Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young, (Willis, 1990), vividly describe in rich detail, the multi-faceted leisure and cultural pursuits of young people, but young women's activities and interests have been marginalized or subsumed by the presence and voices of young men.

It was not until researchers such as (Deem 1986; Griffin 1985;1993; Holly 1989; Lees 1986;1993; McRobbie 1991; McRobbie and Garber, 1993; McRobbie and Nava 1984; Nava 1992; and Sharpe 1976) began to address the omissions and 'malestream' assumptions made in youth culture studies that sociologists generally became aware of the male bias inherent in youth culture studies. Since the late 1970s early 1980s a range of feminist researchers have, therefore, concentrated on neglected themes and areas of concern that are relevant to the needs and concerns of young women. For example, in Feminism and Youth Culture, McRobbie (1991) looks at the effect of sexual inequality in the everyday lives of working class young women; the blindness of male sociologists to questions of gender; the pressure on young women to achieve idealised expectations of femininity; and the pleasure of teenage femininity and the pain of poverty arising from teenage motherhood.

In the last two decades feminists have provided, therefore, very detailed accounts of the circumstances in which women live their lives. I suggest that this work challenges much mainstream work where, as Connell (1987) suggests:

"the patriarchal pattern, with young people subordinated to old, and women subordinated to men, reappears in a long series of sociological research projects that focus on families in different countries, together with the ideologies of masculine authority that support it' (Connell, 1987, 122).

Feminist writing in the last three decades has demonstrated that gender relations are present in *all* type of institutions and social settings (Davis, Leijenaar and Oldersma, 1991). The research studies developed by a range of feminist sociologists during the

last two decades have shown that young women inhabit very different social worlds from those of young men (Griffin 1985;1993; Lees 1986;1993; McRobbie, 1991; McRobbie and Garber, 1993; Nava, 1992). Feminist sociologists have also examined aspects of young women's lives that had hitherto remained 'hidden' and unexplored in more general youth culture studies. It is feminist 'youth studies' such as the above, as well as more general texts on feminist theory and philosophy (Harding, 1991; Haraway, 1991; Mitchell and Oakley, 1986; Tong, 1992;) that have provided the foundations to enable me to conceptualize and develop a feminist discourse on young women and alcohol.

In the next chapter, I will explore the methodological and theoretical implications of developing such a discourse. It is only after this has been done, that I can begin to construct the remaining chapters of this thesis which will examine the ways in which hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations continue to constrain and restrict young women's lives in the 1990s. Drawing on an extensive range of work that has been written in the field of 'feminist youth studies', I will demonstrate the ways in which the 'feminine scripts' that young women try to adhere to in the 1990's are still inextricably linked with hegemonic ideas of femininity and gender relations. I will further demonstrate that the developing drinking patterns of the young women who took part in my research should be interpreted as being inextricably enmeshed with their attempts to come to terms with their own 'self worth' and the general low status that they have within contemporary society.

Unlike many of the findings from the alcohol studies that have been reviewed in this section, the findings based on my ethnographic research will not be engaging in the construction of broad assertions about 'young people' as a whole. Instead my work will be exploring the specific culture of three groups of working class young women in the 1990s. When I refer to culture, I am utilizing the definition utilized by Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts who suggest that culture refers to that level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life, and give expressive form to their social and material life-experience (Clarke et al, 1993). Culture is, therefore, "the way and the forms, in which groups 'handle' the raw material of their social and material existence"

(Clarke et al, 1993, p10). I am utilizing Clarke et al's definition of culture because I believe (like Tuula Gordon [1990]) that people respond to the structures within which they live in complex ways; 'they "create" and have created for them, ways of thinking and acting which embodies ideas, beliefs, values, and notions of right and wrong and these are all called cultures' (Gordon, 1990, p12). It is fitting that I examine the young women's developing drinking patterns within this conceptual framework because alcohol and its consumption are inherently cultural matters. As Maryon McDonald has suggested:

"the very meaning or reality of alcohol, the mode of consuming it, the behaviour it induces, and the definition of the substance or its consumption as problematic (or not) are matters which require, for their understanding, a grasp of the context in which they take the form they do" (McDonald, 1994, p15).

One aim of this thesis, is therefore, to provide an in-depth detailed account of the cultural context in which working class young women's drinking takes place. By doing this I will be in a position to be able to demonstrate the ways that drinking alcohol provides the young women with a lot of pleasure. I will also be able to demonstrate the ways in which the young women's pleasurable drinking activities are inextricably connected with their attempts to challenge powerfully the hegemonic ideas of femininity and gender relations that they generally encounter in the context of their daily lives.

In my analysis of young women's drinking patterns I will not be treating power simply as something one 'possesses' or as something that enables one to exercise individually and intentionally over others. Foucault argues the point in this way:

"Power is exercised, rather than possessed; it is not the "privilege", acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions - an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated" (Foucault, 1979, p16).

In other words, acquiescence and resistance to power is often complexly intertwined. Foucault continues:

"Furthermore, this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who 'do not have it'; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them (Foucault, 1979, p16-

17).

By analysing the young women's developing drinking patterns within a feminist interpretative research framework I will endeavour to demonstrate the ways in which they are asserting their personal choice within a 'multiplicity of mobile transitory points of resistance' (Foucault, 1978, p96). In doing this I will be, as Shirley Ardner (1978) has suggested:

"stressing the often little defined and seemingly vague, possibly repressed, alternative ideas which women may have about the world, including those about themselves, which may easily be overlooked" (Ardner, 1978, pxxi).

Judith Butler (1990) contends, for feminist theory, the development of a language that fully or adequately represents women has seemed necessary to foster the political visibility of women. This has seemed obviously important considering the pervasive cultural condition in which women's lives have been misrepresented or not represented at all (Butler, 1990, p 1).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to review the wide and diverse field of 'addictions studies'. I have attempted to demonstrate my knowledge of the subject matter by identifying trends in the literature and by locating areas of theoretical and empirical weakness. I have suggested that our understanding of alcohol and other addictions changes according to the social and cultural context in which they have a meaning. I have also demonstrated the way in which women and young people have been consistently targeted by addiction specialists as 'at risk groups'. Consequently, there has been very little British research conducted on the everyday meanings of drinking in the late twentieth century. The result of this is that most addictions research has been carried out within fairly limited conceptual frameworks. By choosing to utilize surveys as their main investigative tool, researchers have only been able to provide statistical generalizations about drinking habits. Although these surveys have provided many interesting details about consumption levels amongst different groups, they have not provided details which help us to understand the role that alcohol may have within the more general context of people's lives.

I have suggested that because young women (and women in general) experience their everyday worlds as a series of gendered social circumstances, it is important that their drinking is documented and understood within this context. I intend, therefore, to develop a feminist interpretative research strategy that will enable me to identify and locate the young women's developing drinking patterns within their more general experience of living within a deeply gendered cultural world. By developing such an approach I am aware that my findings may challenge much mainstream addictions research.

The purpose of the next chapter is to explore the methodological and theoretical implications of developing such a research strategy. First, I will provide a detailed reflexive account of the ethnographic research strategy that I developed with the young women. Second, I will discuss the many ways in which the practicalities of 'doing ethnography' are related inextricably to more broadly based epistemological questions and concerns.

CHAPTER TWO

FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHY AND ENCOUNTERS IN THE FIELD

The contents of this chapter have been based on the assumption that feminist ethnography is an identifiable research methodology that is concerned with producing knowledge about women as well as addressing wider epistemological questions and concerns. Consequently, this chapter is divided into two main sections. Section I, Feminist Ethnography, examines the processes involved in developing a feminist ethnographic research strategy. While Section II, Conducting Ethnographic Research: A Complex and Demanding Interactive Process', engages in a range of methodological and epistemological debates. During the course of the discussions presented in this chapter, it should become clear that issues such as 'researcher involvement' and 'power' are part of a range of identifiable epistemological themes that are inextricably enmeshed with the more practical fieldwork issues and concerns of any feminist ethnographer.

I FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHY

Adopting Diane Bell's position, I am not going to become embroiled in debates which ask what constitutes feminist ethnography (Bell, 1993, p30). I will leave this debate to others (see for example, Stacey, 1988). I begin this chapter, therefore, with the assumption that feminist ethnography is what I have been doing since 1990. Maureen Cain suggests that:

"all feminists are concerned with how knowledge which is helpful to women can be best produced and with what such knowledge should be like" (Cain, 1993, p73).

Sandra Harding adds:

"a reliable picture of women's worlds and of social relations between the sexes often requires alternative approaches to inquiry that challenge traditional research habits" (Harding, 1991, p117).

I contend that feminist ethnographers are involved in developing locatable, partial and critical knowledges that are based on shared epistemological concerns. The central

purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to provide a detailed reflexive¹ account of the ethnographic research project that I have developed. During this account I will endeavour to discuss the many ways in which the practicalities of 'doing ethnography' are related inextricably to more broadly based epistemological questions and concerns.

The starting point of my reflexive account begins with the assumption that it is always worth talking to women about their lives. In the course of my account I will endeavour to address a range of issues including: gaining access, researcher roles and relationships; interpretation; and speaking on behalf of others. But before I can address these issues, I must begin my discussion by locating my research within a more general discussion which explains why I began my ethnographic research project in the first place.

I(i) The beginning

There were three main reasons for wanting to concentrate on alcohol and young women for my DPhil research studies. First my professional role as an Alcohol and Drugs Prevention Officer had allowed me to embark on a variety of small scale research projects regarding young people and alcohol, and I wanted the opportunity to extend and further develop my investigations. This was because I felt that I could provide fresh insights to the field of alcohol and young people studies. Second I felt that there were no feminist perspectives regarding young women's use of alcohol within the 'addictions' field. I wanted to be able to play a significant role in creating an opportunity for working class young women to express their knowledge and views of the social worlds that they live in. As Ely has suggested:

"even before selecting their topic, qualitative researchers ask meaningful

¹ Reflexivity is a very important aspect of ethnographic fieldwork and analysis. Reflexivity refers to the necessity for ethnographers to monitor and reflect upon their roles as observers and participants during the time when they conducted their research. Reflexivity demands, therefore, that ethnographers make very explicit in their research the processes by which their data and findings were produced. See for example Aldridge, Griffiths and Williams (1991); Cotterill and Letherby (1994); Poland and Stanley (1988); and Skeggs (1994). Reflexivity makes the assessment of any piece of ethnographic research possible. Mead (1962) described reflexivity as a turning-back on one's experience upon oneself. Christine Griffin defined reflexivity as a "continual re-examination of your approach to the work, to the women, and to the theoretical perspective from which you are working" (Griffin, 1980, p5).

questions that arise from life experiences... the majority of topics for research mesh intimately with the researcher's deepest professional and social commitments (Ely, 1991, p30).

My final reason for wanting to conduct my ethnographic research project was because I thought that it would be fascinating, rewarding and an intellectually challenging experience.

I(ii) Why feminist ethnography?

Prior to registering for my DPhil I wanted to conduct an ethnographic research project because I believed ethnography was the only research method that would allow me to develop 'a dialogue with persons in their natural situation revealing the nuances of meaning from which their perspectives and definitions are continually forged' (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973, p6). I also wanted to continue in the tradition of utilizing ethnography as a critique of generalized theories about the social world (Davies, 1985, p95). At this point in my thinking I did not foresee any methodological problems in my approach. I merely envisaged myself embarking on a 'great ethnographic voyage of discovery', as this is how I had chosen to remember the work of Becker (1961; 1966) and others (Lacey, 1970, Willis, 1978; Whyte, 1955).

I hoped that my studies would allow me to develop my own brand of 'feminist ethnography' where I would be able to be flexible and innovative in my research approach. I was looking forward to entering the field where I could set the boundaries and be in control of my own research project. I had chosen ethnography and participant observation as my favoured research strategy precisely because of the enormous flexibility that it offered me in being able to develop an insider account (Conrad, 1990) of young women's developing drinking patterns. I was heeding Evans and Pooles' (1991) advice that:

"any representation of young people's self-perceptions needs to be a dynamic one, showing how they vary across life actions contexts and over time, and how they differ" (Evans and Poole, 1991, p2).

My ethnographic research strategy was going to allow me access to a range of settings where I would be able to gain an understanding of the views and behaviours that the young women developed over a period of time. But in the months leading up to my

fieldwork, I began to realize the enormity of the task that I had set myself. I had assumed that ethnography was the most appropriate research methodology for finding out about young women's lives, but I had not really worked out how I was going to develop my fieldwork strategy. Furthermore, like Skeggs (1994, p74) I was not aware of the long and vast tradition of feminist ethnography.

Although every research paradigm demands a set of systematic methods, ethnography also demands a set of commitments which are intricately related to the social concerns, beliefs and motivations of the individual researcher. Ethnographers have to be passionate about documenting life in multi-layer, first-hand ways, they also have to be motivated to work independently with a range of people in what are often difficult circumstances. The measure of the success of any ethnographic work rests, therefore, on the knowledge, sensitivity, skills and involvement of the individual researcher. The remaining sections in this chapter will provide material that will help to appraise the successes and failures in my ethnographic endeavour.

In carrying out my research I have certainly been guided by my understanding of a feminist methodology. While most writers on feminist methodological issues agree that there is no one method that can be called *the* feminist methodology, certain identifiable characteristics can be identified. For further discussions of feminist methodology see, (Bowles and Duelli Klein 1983; Harding 1987; Holland, Blair and Sheldon 1995; Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Stanley and Wise, 1983;1993). Rosalind Edwards (1990) suggests:

"a feminist methodology has at its base a critique of objectivity, of the supposedly rational, detached, value-free research as traditionally espoused" (Edwards, 1990, p479).

She further suggests that from this critique flow three linked principles which are of importance at all stages of research, from conceptualization through to production.

- "1. Women's lives need to be addressed in their own terms... a feminist methodology starts from an examination of women's experiences because the 'personal is political'. Women's oppression in a sexist society forms a basis for their own and other women's experiences, and social structures can be examined and understood through an exploration of relationships and experiences within individuals' every

- day lives.
2. Feminist research should not just be *on* women but *for* women... The exploitative power balance embodied in the researcher-object should be subverted so as to allow women's voices and priorities to be heard.
 3. A feminist methodology involves putting the researcher into the process of production... on an intellectual level... and on a reflexive level" (Edwards, 1990, p479-480).

As a feminist researcher, I will, therefore, explain the grounds on which my interpretations have been made by making explicit both the process of decision-making which produced the interpretation, and the logic of the methods on which these decisions are based. Holland and Ramazanoglu warn that this will:

"entail acknowledging complexity and contradiction which may be beyond the interpreter's experience, and recognising the possibility of silences and absences in the data" (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994, p 133).

Throughout my ethnographic work I have tried to make young women's presence highly visible. By asking them many questions about their lives, and by observing and participating in a wide range of their everyday activities, I have been in the very privileged position of being able to comment in great detail about particular aspects of their lives. As Stanley and Wise have suggested:

"the best way to find out about people's lives is for people to give their own analytic accounts of their experiences" (Stanley and Wise, 1983, p167).

The ethnographic knowledge that I have produced is most certainly "situated, perspectival, contextualised, and partial" (Hekman, 1990 quoted in Bell, 1993, p30). This is because the conclusions that I have drawn have been developed from the complex interaction of my particular feminist standpoint, my feminine identity, my fieldwork roles and relationships, and my interpretations of the data that I collected. Developing research strategies within a feminist methodology gives us, therefore, the opportunity of being able to develop another way of seeing the world (Stanley and Wise, 1983, p158). My feminist ethnography will demonstrate that:

"feminist thought or knowledge is not just one unitary and coherent 'speech' but multiple and frequently contradictory knowings" (Harding, 1991, p285).

I(iii) Getting started

Although, like Jane Ribbens (1989) and Cotterill and Letherby (1994, p107) I found "the feminist literature to be quite literally liberating and invigorating" (Ribbens, 1989, p579), the actual experience of developing my 'feminist' research confronted me with issues and concerns that I found difficult to clarify and resolve. Harding suggests that, although studying women is not new, studying them from the perspective of their own experiences has "virtually no history at all" (1987, p8). One of the consequences of this is that my work, like that of other feminist researchers, has to be assessed according to its contribution towards the more general development of 'feminist sociology'. Cotterill (1992) suggests that the commitment to create a sociology for women means more than adding women to what is already there and merely filling the gaps left by traditional approaches to gender (Cotterill, 1992, p594). Bearing this in mind, my initial concerns were focused on how to develop a framework of research methods that would provide young women research participants with the opportunity to play an active and collaborative role in the research process. I wanted to ensure that the participants understood that they could decide whether they would like to become involved in my research. I also resolved to make sure that they understood fully what I was doing and why. Furthermore, I wanted to be able to develop a range of research strategies that might ultimately lead to the participants being able to contribute and influence the production of my thesis. My successes and failures in this very ambitious venture can only be gauged by the account that follows.

At this point ethnographers generally explain the ways in which they reflected on how their research was developing; whether their fieldwork roles were satisfactory; and how fieldwork relationships were developing. They also often explain the ways in which they constantly recorded their reflections alongside their observation notes forming what are called 'methodological notes' (Burgess, 1985; Hammersley, 1979). This is not so in my case. Because I was working full-time throughout the two and a half years that I was conducting my fieldwork I did not have the time to make such distinctions when I was recording my fieldnotes. I frequently reflected (and agonized) over my roles and responsibilities in the field, but I did not have the time to record all of these feelings onto paper. Furthermore often my feelings and field work

observations merged into one when they were hurriedly recorded onto tapes to be later transcribed into hard copy. On other occasions I am fairly certain that my feelings and concerns were missed out due to the magnitude of the fieldwork data that I was recording. A consequence of this is that my reflexive account has been developed as a largely retrospective account.

Utilizing Judith Aldridge's position (1991) I suggest that this does not make my account more, or less, accurate, complete, adequate or 'true' than any other ethnographic reflexive account (Aldridge, 1991, p10). This is because all research accounts are framed and shaped by the particular context and circumstances in which they take place. By admitting that my reflexivity has developed as a result of my retrospective insights also highlights the fact that ethnographers spend a lot of their time involved in constructing and reconstructing textual accounts. If I had written this account by merely using my 'methodological notes' this thesis would not have benefitted from my continuing intellectual development after I left the field. It was only after I had left the field, and I had time to re-submerge myself in the literature, that I began to discover the questions that I had not asked; the analysis that had not been carried out fully; and the inadequacies of my emerging theory. By working retrospectively I was able, therefore, to address and remedy these flaws.

I(iv) Identifying suitable locations

Prior to beginning my fieldwork I had an extensive knowledge of the county in which my research would take place. My knowledge was based on my professional experiences as a Drugs and Alcohol Prevention Officer, and as a result of a series of 'fact finding' visits that I had made throughout the county with the Youth Clubs UK Fieldwork Officer². I had also already decided that I wanted to target different

² Youth Clubs UK adopted its name in October 1987. It was formerly known as the National Association of Youth Clubs. Youth Clubs UK is a national agency which youth groups (uniformed and non-uniformed) pay to be affiliated. In return, the youth centres receive regular newsletters which keep them up to date with the competitions and events that Youth Clubs UK are organizing and/or funding. Traditionally Youth Clubs UK has been perceived as an agency which co-ordinates sporting events. Recently this emphasis has changed and Youth Clubs UK has become more involved in promoting the social welfare aspects of young people's informal education.

communities so that I would be able to comment on the similarities and contrasts that I might find between different groups of young women. During October 1990 to February 1991, utilizing information gained from health professional colleagues and by examining County Council census information obtained from the County Council Research and Information Group, I attempted to identify an inner city working class estate (Abraxus), an outer city working class estate (Blummerstone), and a working class estate in a county town (Crofton). This was a difficult task because census information was only available on a ward basis. Nevertheless, by using the census information I was able to identify wards that had variations of age groups, ethnic composition, housing tenure, housing conditions, unemployment rates and car availability. Using this information I then tried to identify estates within the areas. I was able to locate various inner and outer city estates but not a county town estate. I decided, therefore, to utilize the census information to select a county town in the north of the county³ in which I could carry out my research.

I deliberately chose city estates that had a mixture of black households because I wanted to have a racially mixed sample group. However, my approach still allowed black young women to be excluded from my research. The findings in this thesis are

During the time that I was trying to set up my fieldwork, I discovered that Youth Clubs UK had just appointed a new fieldwork officer for youth centres. Since, at the time, I had only tentatively decided on an inner city working class area on which to focus my research, I thought that it might be useful to meet the new worker to discuss other areas of the county where it might be appropriate to conduct my research. I discovered that the first task of the new worker was to visit all the affiliated youth centres within the county. I decided to accompany the fieldworker on some of her visits to gain an overview of youth provision and to gain a 'feel' of the areas in which the youth centres were situated. Our visits to the youth centres were to begin in January 1991. At this point in my fieldwork I was aware that I was actually regarding the visits to the youth centres as a potential strategy for setting up my fieldwork. This was because I was beginning to realize that accessing young women was a harder task than I had originally envisaged. However, making contact with young women through youth centres was not as straightforward as I had hoped. This was because unknown to me Youth Clubs UK was not a very well respected organization. Hence, my association with them prejudiced certain youth workers against me and my work. Unfortunately, I found this out only after I had already made twelve evening visits to youth centres with the Youth Clubs UK fieldworker! I decided, therefore, to abandon this initiative.

³ This was a practical decision. I lived north of the county in which my research was based. The two city areas that I had selected were over 35 miles away from where I lived. By choosing a county town in the north of the county I was trying to reduce the travelling time that would be involved in carrying out my fieldwork.

based, therefore, on a white sample group of young women from Central England. During the course of my research I only met three black young women, one in Abraxus and two in Blummerstone. None of these young women were regular girls' group attenders. This made it impossible, therefore, for ethnicity to emerge as an important consideration regarding young women's drinking behaviours. On a more general note, however, I did find that conducting ethnographic fieldwork simultaneously in three different areas was a useful fieldwork strategy. Being in more than one site sharpened the contrasts and similarities between the different groups of young women while, at the same time, it did not prevent me from becoming very familiar with each of the three areas. I was also able to develop a range of research roles in the three locations that allowed me to question and clarify the interpretations that I was developing during the course of my fieldwork.

When I began conducting my reconnaissance expeditions to the Abraxus estate, (the inner city working class estate) I was very unsure as to what I was trying to do. I convinced myself that I was trying to gain 'a feel' of the area, and was trying to gauge the type of facilities that were available for young people. (My thinking was, that the fewer facilities available for young people, the more likely drinking alcohol would be an attractive recreational pursuit). But more importantly I was also trying to work out how I was going to make initial contact with young women who lived on the estate! My reconnaissance expeditions at Abraxus invariably took place in the late afternoon, just as it was beginning to get dark. I chose to visit the areas near to the schools, shops and youth centre, observing if young women were visible in the groups of young people that appeared to be 'hanging around'. I made this decision because a wide range of literature suggested that young women do not occupy the same public spaces as young men (Deem, 1986; Gillespie, 1992; McRobbie, 1991; Nava, 1992).

I made three reconnaissance expeditions in an effort to gain an impression of what it would be like conducting ethnographic fieldwork, and to reassure myself that such a project would be possible in the area that I had identified. I also wanted to gain an impression of the possible age ranges of young women that I might be able to gain access to. At this point I was unsure as to how I was going to develop a research

strategy that would allow me access to the wide range of age groups that I felt should be incorporated into my research strategy.

Unfortunately, the reconnaissance expeditions did not fulfil any of my expectations. Furthermore, I soon realized that the literature was correct: young women did not appear to be amongst the general groups of young people I saw walking around the Abraxus estate. On my last reconnaissance expedition I decided to sit at the bar of the 'chippie'. The 'chippie' provided an eating bar as well as some video games, hence it was popular with young people. It also provided the only indoor place (except the youth centre, which only members could enjoy) for young people to hang around in. As I sat at the bar trying not to feel conspicuous I felt distinctly uncomfortable. I realized that I needed to develop a more structured approach to meeting young women where I would be able to introduce myself and my research ideas to them.

By early February 1991 I had decided that I would contact non-uniformed statutory funded youth centres with a view to conducting my fieldwork with their youth centre members⁴. My visits to different youth centres also made me decide that it might be interesting to work in different type of youth centres. On my visits I had discerned that the city council funded centres had a very different 'feel' to those funded by the county council. The city council had spent a lot of money on developing purpose built youth centres. The county council funded youth centres in contrast, appeared to be run down and 'making do' with few resources. Furthermore, the community school youth centre appeared be more like a school common room than a youth centre. Eventually, I decided to select: a city council funded youth centre (Blummerstone); a county council free standing youth centre (Abraxus); and a county council youth centre

⁴ There were three types of youth provision available in the county where my research took place: City Council funded youth centres; County Council (Local Education Authority) funded youth centres; and non-statutory funded youth centres. City Council and County Council funded youth groups met in purpose-built buildings, while the non-statutory groups met in a variety of buildings, often church halls and Red Cross Buildings. In general, the non-statutory youth groups met because they were members of specific 'uniformed' groups, for example, the Guides, Scouts and so forth. According to Youth Clubs UK, these groups generally attracted a younger age group, who were mainly from middle class families. I decided, therefore, to concentrate on the non-uniformed statutory funded youth centres. This was because I wanted to gain access to young women from working class families.

attached to a community college (Crofton).

I had also decided at this point, that it would be more appropriate (and easier) for me to conduct my fieldwork girls' groups within the youth centres, as opposed to mixed sessions. I made this decision for two main reasons. First, during my visits to youth centres with the Youth Clubs UK officer, I had observed young men dominating virtually all the youth centre activities. The young men invariably played football in the general 'hall' area of the centres, and also controlled the activities at the pool tables, at the dart boards, and at the slot machines. Second, all the male youth workers whom I met during my visits demonstrated open hostility towards the idea of me initiating any activities with the young women at their centres. They all told me that "girls' work was unfair" and that boys were losing out as a result of it.

I(v) Making contact

Gaining access to youth centres, whether city or county council funded, was a very difficult procedure. It was relatively straightforward gaining information regarding the times of opening and the facilities offered by different youth centres, so I was able to find out which youth centres offered girls' groups to senior young women. (Young people aged 12-14 are referred to as juniors by the youth service. Young people aged 15-25 are referred to as seniors). I decided to visit senior youth groups to focus on young women aged 15 and over. However, I soon discovered that many young women aged 12-14 actually attend senior groups. I was already realizing that young people do not abide to adult's arbitrary constructed 'age groupings'. As a result of attending senior youth sessions, I met, therefore, a variety of young women aged 12-21 years of age.

I finally met youth workers at the Abraxus youth centre in March 1991 but unfortunately I was not able to begin my fieldwork until April 1991. (See Appendix II for a detailed account of the difficulties I encountered when trying to gain access to youth centres). By June 1991 I had also met the staff and members of the Blummerstone Youth Centres. I began my fieldwork at the Blummerstone Youth Centre in August 1991. Shortly after this, in September 1991, I was finally able to

begin my fieldwork at the Crofton Youth Centre. Abraxus Girls' Group met on Wednesday evenings from 7.00 pm-9.00 pm. Young women aged 12-16 attended. During the course of my fieldwork I attended thirty three girls' group sessions. The Blummerstone Girls' Group met on Tuesday evenings from 7.00 pm-10.00 pm. Young women aged 16-21 attended. I attended forty four girls' group sessions. I also attended ten senior mixed sex sessions and five afternoon 'unemployed sessions'. The Crofton Girls' Group met on Monday evenings from 7.00 pm-9.30 pm. Young women aged 15-17 attended. I attended thirty three girls' group Sessions which took place in the context of mixed sexed senior sessions. During the school holidays the Abraxus and Crofton youth centres closed so I met the young women at their homes and in a variety of other locations, such as their local 'recs', town centres and so forth. Not all of my fieldwork took place within the young women's youth centres. This was because all the girls' groups became involved in a variety of excursions to venues such as: ice skating rinks, roller skating rinks, cinemas, theatres and restaurants. I also went out to 'pubs', clubs, and raves with the young women from the Blummerstone and Crofton Youth Centres. My fieldwork in the youth centres continued until September 1992. After this date I continued with my many visits to the young women's homes in the Blummerstone and Crofton area, I also attended various birthday parties and so forth with the Abraxus, Crofton and Blummerstone groups. I also continued to be involved in several 'day trips' with the Crofton and Blummerstone groups up until September 1993. (See Appendix III for names ages and friendship groups of the young women who attended the Abraxus, Blummerstone and Crofton youth centres).

When I was conducting my research in the three youth centres I often talked to the young women about how they perceived themselves. Without exception all the girls' group attenders at Abraxus, Blummerstone and Crofton preferred to be called young women as opposed to girls. Bearing this in mind, I tried to adhere to the young women's wishes in my first attempts to construct this thesis. I referred to the research participants as Abraxus, Blummerstone and Crofton young women. However, this soon became very muddling, especially on the occasions where I was describing activities which applied to more than one of the groups. Categorizing the research participants drinking activities also proved to be a very difficult task. The young

women's activities did not break down into neat categories. For example, initially I thought it was possible to make generalizations about the Crofton 15-17 year olds drinking patterns, but I soon realized that these would exclude 16 and 17 year olds from Blummerstone. I had to develop, therefore, a strategy which would represent patterns, complexity and inconsistencies in the young women's drinking.

Although I realize that loss of some data is inevitable in any strategy that has been developed to represent the complexity of social interactions, I do feel that I have been successful in developing a strategy that is able to portray patterns, similarities, contrasts and inconsistencies in the young women's developing drinking careers. However, I also feel that my strategy has ultimately let the research participants down. This is because after many months of searching for ways of categorizing the participants, I eventually decided to categorize them as young girls (age 12-14 approximately), middle girls (age 15-17 approximately) and older girls (age 18-21 approximately). Development of the categories means that young girls includes fifteen of the Abraxus young women. Middle girls includes all twenty of the Crofton young women, three Abraxus young women, Trisha, Tirina and Donna, and three Blummerstone young women, Julia, Liz and Lisa. Older girls includes twenty three of the Blummerstone young women.

Even now as I write this final version of my thesis, I am not convinced that my strategy is an entirely satisfactory solution. I feel that I have only partially liberated the young women from the rigid age categories that addiction researchers invariably apply. However, throughout my analysis I will endeavour to draw attention to any areas of inconsistency, ambiguity or overlap between the different groups of young women. I am aware that I have done little to help resolve what is a difficult and complex issue. However, I do feel that I have done the best that I can in my attempt to construct meaningful categories that will represent the complex and diverse drinking patterns and social lives of the research participants.

I(vi) Gaining access

I knew that negotiating access to youth centres would demand tact and patience. This was because the literature on school ethnography stresses the importance of the initial negotiations in getting the research off to a good start (Burgess, 1985; Woods, 1985), but I was not prepared for the time that it took for me to negotiate access to each youth centre. I was also not prepared for the number of times that I found myself in the position of negotiating access with a range of different people. However, with hindsight I have become increasingly aware of the ways in which each and every stage of the ethnographic research process is intricately related to the context in which it takes place. Burgess quotes Bechhofer who suggested that:

"The research process... is not a clear-cut sequence of procedures following a neat pattern, but a messy interaction between the conceptual and empirical world, deduction and induction occurring at the same time" (Burgess, 1985, p7).

The ways in which we gain access to our fieldwork locations has very profound consequences regarding the knowledge that we can develop. The sexist hostility that I had encountered in my meetings with a range of male youth workers was not an isolated incident. I was soon to discover that the behaviour of the boys who attended the youth centres would be much more offensive than that of their youth workers. Yet it was within these environments that I had to carry out most of my fieldwork. It became clear, therefore, that the young women who attend these youth centres and who are used to these circumstances would find it very difficult to begin to comprehend either my intended research role within their youth centres or the more general intentions of my research project. The environment and circumstances that the young women encountered in their daily lives had not offered them any opportunity that might help them to understand the possible significance of 'feminist research'. At the time of initiating my research I did not realize this. This was because I was putting all my energy into my attempts at implementing my research strategy that I had carefully planned. In other words, I was allowing the mechanics of doing fieldwork to outweigh any more general epistemological concerns. Lynn Davies (1985) analogy appears to be especially appropriate to the situation that I found myself in while conducting my ethnographic research:

"the ethnographer being a sort of tea strainer, who may exhibit much

decisiveness about the interpretation of the tea leaves, but who has less impact on the amount and blend of the brew that is poured onto her/him" (Davies, 1985, p84)

I(vii) Developing relationships

Within the feminist literature there is much discussion regarding the social position and power of the researcher (For example, Finch, 1984; McRobbie, 1982; Mies, 1983).

There are also texts urging researchers to break down the usual hierarchy associated with the researcher and the researched (Greed, 1990 p145; Roberts, 1981, p41; Stafford, 1991, p12). But at the time that I was conducting my fieldwork there appeared to be little advice on the development of strategies that lead to non-exploitative relationships within the 'research process'. This lack of practical advice within the field of 'feminist research studies' actually made me feel quite powerless. I realized that I did not really know how I was going to embark on my fieldwork, and my various reconnaissance trips had left me feeling very vulnerable and completely out of my depth. These feelings were also made much worse by the fact that the only attraction that I commanded during my reconnaissance expeditions was the unwanted attention of boys and men. I had not considered, at this time, that this might be a recurring theme throughout the two and half years that I would be conducting my fieldwork. I had not heeded Christine Griffin's advice that although feminist researchers may be very different from the subjects of their research in terms of class, age or race, we actually share the "experience of femininity, and of having to operate within, and resist patriarchal oppression in different ways" (Griffin, 1980, p3).

I continued to feel vulnerable and rather bewildered regarding my ethnographic fieldworker role, even after I had decided to contact youth centres with a view to carrying out my research. In an attempt to allay my fears I began reading a range of youth work texts (for example, Akehurst, 1983; Jeffs and Smith, 1990). I was hoping that the texts might offer me practical advice regarding the development of non-exploitative relationships with young people. Eventually I did find useful and helpful advice from Alan Rogers (1981) regarding the strategies I should employ to make contact with young people. His booklet Starting Out in Detached Work, reassured me that I did not have to spend days/weeks 'hanging around' street corners in order to

gain access to young people. His advice was to:

"call in on youth clubs; in youth clubs young people are not so surprised at being approached by an interested adult. Making a first contact here can help you to gain introductions in pubs and cafes where that approach would be out of the ordinary because young people do not expect the odd interested adult to be around on the streets! Once your face gets known it becomes easier to gain acceptance into new or related groups on the streets" (Rogers, 1981, p18-19).

Roger's advice reassured me that I should definitely develop my fieldwork in the youth centres in the first instance. Then, once settled in a youth centre, I could begin to find out about the other locations where young people might be found. I realized, even at this early stage of my research, that I might not find it very easy to gain access to other young women outside the youth centres if I was seen to be associated with one particular centre. But this was a trade-off I would have to make, otherwise I might never have been able to begin my ethnographic fieldwork. I was soon to find out, however, that despite being prepared and well versed in the skills needed to begin detached youth work, beginning ethnographic fieldwork can still be a difficult, frustrating and exhausting experience.

As a researcher and as a professional worker working with young people I was very aware of the unequal power relationships that are often created between adults and young people. Although I realized that such relationships can never be anything other than unequal, I also felt that there were strategies within the ethnographic research process that would help me to make my developing relationships with the young women research participants as non-exploitative as possible. First, I was going to conduct my research in an environment that was familiar and comfortable to the young women, thus it was I who was the outsider working in the unknown. I was going to be dependent, therefore, on the young women's support and approval of me as a person (as well as a researcher) to be able to conduct my research. Unlike other proponents of more quantitative research designs and methods, I would, therefore, be trying very hard not to create situations whereby the research participants were reduced to mere research 'subjects'. I also wanted to ensure that the young women would have the opportunity to decide whether they wanted to talk to me or not. I would respect young women's lack of interest or concern with my research, although I

would make every attempt to ensure that the young women understood the implications of my research. I had hoped that I might be able to negotiate a way of working with the young women that would encourage them to feel that they should and could make active contributions to the research that I was conducting. I was used to developing 'working relationships' with young people as a result of my drugs and alcohol prevention and education work. But in my fieldwork role I was looking forward to being 'just a researcher'. This was because I felt that I would be released from the usual statutory requirements that I had as an adult who worked with young people. I felt that I would have greater freedom to be able to communicate with the young women in ways that they deemed to be appropriate, and not the other way around. I was certainly not prepared for the difficulties that I was about to encounter in the three youth centres.

I(viii) First encounters

As soon as I began to introduce myself to the young women at the Abraxus, Crofton and Blummerstone youth centres, I became aware of the ways in which so called 'insider accounts' are dependent upon a range of variables that have both practical and epistemological concerns. In each of the youth centres I developed very different roles and relationships with the young women. A number of factors influenced this, but none more so than my initial encounter with them. My introduction to the Abraxus young women was in retrospect disastrous. This was because I was unsure of myself and I allowed the female youth worker to introduce me to the young women I did this because I wanted her to accept me and my research, and I wanted her to encourage the young women to enter into dialogues with me. Prior to being introduced to the Abraxus young women, I had asked the youth worker to introduce me as a researcher interested in young women's activities. I explained that I would talk to the young women about my interests in alcohol at a later date, when I knew them much better. The worker ignored my briefing and introduced me as a 'Drugs and Alcohol worker from the Drugs Centre in the City'. I felt that this introduction prevented me from ever being able to assume a role of merely an 'interested observer'. The introduction labelled me as an 'adult authority figure' of whom the young women should be cautious. Indeed it took me many months of hard work to develop a role within the

youth centre that gained the trust of the Abraxus young women. I was eventually successful, as the following quote suggests:

Donna: "You're not like a youth worker, they all think we're kids really, they try not to, but they let it slip like by telling us what to do all the time".

Kerry: "You're different from most grown ups aren't you, like you're more like us in some ways...it's good really someone older like bothering to find out about us and that... most people aren't interested are they..."

Donna aged 15 , Kerry aged 14 from the Abraxus youth centre.

Ethnographers learn very quickly when immersed in fieldwork! So by the time that I began my fieldwork at the Blummerstone Youth Centre I made very sure that I introduced myself to the young women. This way I took responsibility for the young women's initial responses to me. As a result my initiation was much less traumatic than it had been at the Abraxus Youth Centre. Another reason that I was able to quickly develop a rapport with the young women at the Blummerstone Youth Centre was that the atmosphere was very different from that at the Abraxus. At the Blummerstone Youth Centre, the youth workers made the young women feel that the centre was theirs and they encouraged them to play an active role in the management and organization of the centre. Another factor that influenced the atmosphere was the young women's ages. At the Abraxus Youth Centre although the young women's ages varied between 12-16 years, most of the regular attenders fell between the ages of 12-14 years of age. At the Blummerstone Youth Centre the young women were aged between 17-21 years and they demanded an equal relationship with the youth workers. On the first night that I visited the centre I went away with the impression that I had visited a group of friends, not two youth workers and 14 young women.

My positive experiences at the Blummerstone Youth Centre bolstered my confidence in my fieldwork role. Consequently, when it came to me making introductions to the Crofton Girls' Group everything went very smoothly. This was because I was no longer afraid to explain to them what I was trying to do. I had examples from my fieldwork at Abraxus and Blummerstone to draw upon so I was able to be very specific regarding what they might expect from having me 'hanging around' with them. I was able to outline what type of contributions I would be able to make to the group. I

described various video, music and drama sessions that I had organized with the Abraxus young women. (These will be discussed in detail in Section II(ii) of this chapter - Developing Fieldworker Roles). I also suggested that I would help them to organize excursions and so forth. Settling into the Crofton Girls' Group was, therefore, very straightforward due to the clarity of the roles that I was able to outline to the young women. They knew what to expect from me, and at last I felt that I knew how to conduct myself as an ethnographic researcher in youth centre settings.

However comfortable an ethnographic researcher feels while conducting fieldwork, it is very important to be aware of the power relationships that shape every social encounter. An example of this is that I did not anticipate that the Abraxus and Crofton female youth workers would actually be very wary of me and my fieldwork intentions. As Fiona Poland suggests:

"there is little difference between relationships developed in 'life' and 'ethnography'; both are complex, problematic and subject to continual negotiation and renegotiation about issues of power and definition" (Poland, 1988, p31).

At the Abraxus Girls' Group, the youth workers' lack of support affected my fieldwork role in very profound ways. But this was because this was my first attempt at conducting ethnographic fieldwork and I did not really know what I was trying to do; consequently, I felt very insecure and vulnerable. But because I was much more confident in my fieldworker role by the time I got to the Crofton Girls' Group, the youth workers' lack of interest in both the youth centre activities and in my research did not really affect my developing research relationship with the young women. This was because I felt well versed in a range of youth work skills, so I was quite happy developing a range of activities for the Crofton young women to become involved in, inside and outside of the youth centre settings. I would not have known how to manage 'youth worker apathy' had I encountered it during an earlier stage in my fieldwork. Consequently, I might have felt unable to continue with my research in those settings.

Developing a range of different roles within the youth centres was initially a very

demanding and exhausting task. But it is also very important to the ethnographic process. This is because it is the relationships that researchers are able to establish with their participants that are the most crucial aspect of any ethnographic research strategy. Throughout my research, I was fully aware that I was only able to gain access to rich and diverse data because of the ways in which I interacted with the young women. Furthermore, from very early on in my fieldwork, I realized that the chief motivation for young women to accept me and to participate in my research was because they liked and trusted me! As Ely (1991) has suggested, the process of 'entering the field' never quite ends when involved in qualitative work, this is because "trust and co-operation need to be maintained" at all stages of the fieldwork (Ely, 1991, p25).

Carrying out ethnographic fieldwork is, therefore, very stressful for this reason. Ethnographers have to be very creative and energetic people. This is because ethnographic research data are created, not collected! Throughout the early stages of my fieldwork I felt as though I was constantly having to negotiate and renegotiate my roles and relationships with the different groups of young women. However, this did become less stressful as my fieldwork progressed. This was because I gained more confidence in the roles that I had adopted within the youth centres, and I no longer felt the need, therefore, to create new roles or responsibilities within the different settings.

II CONDUCTING ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH: A COMPLEX AND DEMANDING INTERACTIVE PROCESS

Not surprisingly, I found it most difficult to establish myself in the Abraxus Youth Centre. Because the youth worker had introduced me as a drugs worker from the drugs centre in the city, the young women were initially very suspicious of me and my intentions. The first few weeks fieldwork at the Abraxus were, therefore, very exhausting both physically and emotionally. I did not feel at ease with the young women, I felt conspicuous and superfluous. I just did not know what to do with myself. A few of the young women were interested to find out about me and my work, so they were easy to communicate with. But most of the others were not really interested in me and resented my presence at their youth centre. These young women

spent most of the first five weeks setting me a variety of 'tests and tasks'. The tests varied. Once they emptied the contents of my rucksack into a wastepaper bin, on another occasion they put sugar in the pockets of my coat. Such 'tests' were to see how I would react towards them. Tasks generally meant that I was expected to bring a certain item to the youth centre: a cake; a video; or a magazine. I endeavoured to deal with these 'tests and tasks' in good humour. Mostly, this coping strategy worked well. However, I did find it very difficult to cope with two young women who hit me if they thought that I was in their way. On several occasions I felt quite threatened by the young women's behaviour. By week five of my fieldwork I was actually contemplating giving up on the Abraxus group to find an alternative group. I was still grappling with this dilemma, when in week six the majority of young women decided that I was actually a very good person to have around!

This arose as a result of an excursion to the cinema. I volunteered to drive a group of the young women in my car. On the way to the cinema, I allowed the young women to shout out of the car windows, and I allowed them to 'persuade' me to 'race' the other youth workers to the cinema. Suddenly, my status changed. I was no longer perceived as a 'responsible adult figure', instead I was an 'okay' person to be with. After this event, even the young women who used to hit me sought my company at the girls' group sessions.

II(i) Negotiating fieldworker roles

Throughout my fieldwork at the three youth centres, I was, therefore, constantly negotiating and re-negotiating my relationships with the youth workers and young women at the centres. This is a very demanding and stressful position to be in. At the Abraxus Youth Centre I adopted the roles of a 'learner' and 'questioner', especially with regard to pop-music, popular television programmes, slot machines games and in the notions of 'cool'. I was a 'specialist' in terms of giving the young women a selection of literature to help them in their social studies 'drugs' project. I was a 'patient listener' of concerns and troubles, and an 'arbiter' of small scale disputes. I was also an 'initiator' and 'organizer', especially on 'boring nights' when the young women wanted something to do. I also became a 'joker' and a 'friend'. Very rarely did I feel

like a mere ethnographic researcher.

By the time I began my fieldwork at the Blummerstone Youth Centre I was more prepared for the type of roles that I should take on at the youth centre. This was helped by me explaining to the young women on my first meeting with them what I was trying to do. (I explained that there was a great deal of information about the type of things boys did in youth centres and other settings, but little on the type of things girls did. I also explained how I was interested in how alcohol fits into the type of activities that young women become involved in). The young women were fascinated by the fact that anyone was interested in them. The consequence of this was that they spent the first few weeks vying for my attention. From very early on in my fieldwork at Blummerstone, I felt welcome and secure. I certainly did not spend hours feeling out of place wondering what to do with myself as I had done at the Abraxus Youth Centre.

Consequently, I quickly found suitable roles for myself at the youth centre that managed to satisfy both the youth workers and the young women. The youth workers appreciated the support I could give them, regarding information and advice for young people using drugs and alcohol. The youth workers also discovered that I was used to writing reports, so I could help them develop their skills in this area. Furthermore, the youth workers and the young women saw me as a useful cook who could add vegetarian meals to the girls' group rather limited menu. The young women would often use me as a springboard to test their ideas and would canvas my support for these, especially when they wanted to develop alternative activities to those being planned by the youth workers. I was also perceived as 'clever and educated' by the young women so I was often called in to be an arbiter in debates and discussions. I was surprised (and relieved) at how readily the youth workers and young women acted as though I had always been part of their group. I got on particularly well with one of the youth workers, Lorraine, and found her to be not only an excellent youth worker, but also very supportive of the work that I was trying to do. She was also, I feel, mostly responsible for encouraging the young women to accept me so readily. The young women looked upon Lorraine for advice and support, and because she often

told the young women during my first few weeks: "Tina's alright, she's dead sound, she only wants the best for you", the young women were encouraged to accept me readily as part of their group.

Lorraine was very different from all the other youth workers whom I met when conducting my fieldwork⁵. Many of the young women regarded her as a friend. This certainly worked to my advantage. Often, when the young women were organizing other aspects of their social lives outside the youth centre, Lorraine and I were invited to join in with their activities. We went to a variety of pubs, clubs, raves and discos. On several occasions the young women actually *insisted* that we go along with them. They stated that they had a better time with us, because "you make us more confident when going into pubs and stuff" and they also said "we have a better laugh with you two, because you ain't afraid to dance or owt". Because of these very positive experiences at the Blummerstone Youth Centre I felt much more relaxed prior to embarking on my fieldwork at the Crofton Youth Centre.

For the first few weeks it was very difficult carrying out fieldwork at the Crofton Youth Centre because unlike the Abraxus and Blummerstone Youth Centres, the girls' group took place on the same night as the mixed sex senior session. It was also difficult because the youth worker based at Crofton was not interested in developing any activities with the young women. Nevertheless, because of my experiences at the Abraxus and Blummerstone Youth Centres, I was able to be very specific with the young women regarding my research intentions at the Crofton Youth Centre. Throughout my fieldwork at the Crofton Youth Centre the young women were very interested in the research that I was conducting. This was very different from the other groups who appeared to forget the reasons why I was hanging around with them. The Crofton young women were always eager to talk to me about my research work, and my work as a Drugs and Alcohol Officer. They even interviewed me for their school

⁵ Unlike all the other youth workers I met, Lorraine was an unqualified worker. Hence her approach towards young people was based upon 'gut reactions' and her experiences of being a mother. She encouraged the young women to take responsibility for their own activities. She did not mind if they wanted to go to a 'pub' or a karaoke evening, as long as they took the initiative and did all the planning.

magazine and put the notes that I gave them outlining both my professional and research role, on their youth centre and school notice boards. I was also able to suggest a variety of activities that I thought we could become involved in. (These activities are discussed in the next section). So although it was very difficult to have conversations with the young women at the youth centre because of the constant noise that the young men created, I was able to develop a range of activities that allowed us to get out of the youth centre on a variety of occasions.

II(ii) Developing fieldworker roles

I created and developed a range of complex research relationships that both sustained my contact and extended my communication abilities with the young women at the three youth centres. My research methods were guided by a mixture of theoretical appropriateness and practical expediency. For example, it was made clear to me very early on in the Abraxus Youth Centre that the young women would not be familiar or comfortable with me interviewing them in any structured way. Conversely, the Crofton young women would have been very disappointed had I not arranged a series of one to one and group tape-recorded interviews with them. For the Abraxus young women I organized, therefore, several 'video sessions' where they developed a series of 'role plays' around the issue of 'teenage drinking'. The video sessions were invariably followed by discussion groups, which I was able to tape-record. I also found myself able to utilize the young women's homework and projects as vehicles on which to base further discussions about alcohol. During my fieldwork both the Abraxus group and the Crofton group were given assignments on drugs and alcohol. Instead of merely providing one to one advice and support to the different young women, I developed literature, quizzes and discussion groups which provided me with 'structured' opportunities to find out about the young women's knowledge and behaviour regarding alcohol. The young women suggested that by developing a range of group discussions and activities I had been able to make their school work 'more interesting'. Like Lewis (1992) I found that these 'group sessions' were very useful in generating rich responses. This was because the young women used the sessions to debate and challenge each others' views, thus allowing a fairly spontaneous discussion. They were also able to have more control over the topics of conversation than they

would have had if I had been having one to one conversations with them. Because such sessions were so initially productive at the Abraxus Youth Centre, I also developed these fieldwork strategies at the Blummerstone and Crofton Youth Centres.

The titles of some of the video sessions that the young women developed in the three youth centres were: "Family parties"; "Drinking in pubs"; "Drinking at the 'rec'"; "Drinking to drown your sorrows"; "Drinking for a laugh"; "Why teenagers get pissed?". The focus of all the sessions were generated from topics that had appeared in my fieldwork notes. Throughout my fieldwork I had to be prepared, therefore, to create situations that would give me opportunities to talk to the young women about the interpretations that I was developing about them and their drinking activities. In these situations I found that my professional 'group work', 'interviewing' and 'interpersonal skills' were invaluable. In hindsight I think that it would have been very difficult to have carried out my ethnography without this bank of skills and resources to draw upon.

Discussion and role playing groups were always productive in the three youth centres if I kept the sessions varied and brief. After 15-20 minutes of concentrating on an exercise, the young women invariably began demonstrating signs of boredom. So it was quite a challenge on my behalf to keep the sessions lively and interesting. I tried to make the sessions fun, often I encouraged the young women to dress up and to 'act up'. Many of the young women told me that they really enjoyed the video role plays. Even those young women who did not join in with the 'role playing' would invariably assist in videoing the 'vignettes' or would take part in the discussions afterwards. It was very rare that individuals refused to join in with such activities. However, I was aware that a few 'key' individuals invariably took major parts in such performances. In these circumstances I tried to make sure that this situation was not deterring other young women from taking part. I felt that I was generally successful in these strategies, although of course, I cannot assess the ways in which individual young women's reactions and responses to the discussion items may have been influenced by their relationships to the young women who were playing 'key parts' within the sessions.

At all the youth centres I was able to have many in-depth 'unstructured one-to-one conversations' with the young women. These conversations were rarely planned but inevitably were very informative. I found that I could use these situations to help build bridges between my life and those of the young women. Pam Cotterill (1992) describes this type of situation as providing opportunities for research participants to "place" their researchers (Cotterill, 1992, p600). As the months passed I was able to share aspects of my life with the young women. I tended to concentrate on aspects of my biography that I appeared to have in common with them. For example, like many of the young women I had parents who had divorced and had since re-married. I had also grown up in a small house with brothers and a sister vying for space. During my fieldwork I shared a range of my family photographs with the young women. The young women especially liked the photographs of me when I was a child.

By locating myself within this written account I have, very firmly, suggested that there are no a priori grounds for treating any textual account as more real or true than any other. It is certainly the case that the young women who took part in my research may have given different accounts to other researchers, yet these accounts would have been as 'real' and 'true' as the accounts that they gave me. This is because all research participants accounts are part of "a creative process in which we select to present ourselves as a particular type of person and then offer accounts of our actions which support that view of ourselves" (Campbell, 1984, p3). The accounts that research participants give to researchers will, therefore, always be a product of their relationship with the researcher, their conceptions of themselves and the sort of person that they want to present to the researcher. As Martyn Denscombe has suggested:

"The ethnographic researcher... needs to be aware that the respondents are far from passive providers of data... they are active agents with an interest in what appears 'for the record' and the information they do give is consequently 'negotiated' between the researcher and the respondent, reflecting the extent of rapport and trust established between the two" (Denscombe, 1983, p115).

Bearing this in mind, the evenings that I spent with the young women outside the confines of the youth centres proved to be an invaluable source of data for reinforcing material that they had presented during the more formalized discussion sessions held in their youth centres. These session also alerted me to areas of concern to which I had

previously not given enough consideration. So although I found my evenings at roller skating and ice skating rinks, 'pubs', 'clubs', 'recs', 'raves' very demanding, stressful, and exhausting they did provide me with valuable ethnographic insights.

Furthermore, I felt that this aspect of my fieldworker role also reversed the general balance of power that is invariably present within the 'researcher and researched role'. Although I felt that I had made every effort to permit the young women to dictate the terms under which they took part in my research at their youth centres, I was aware that they did not ultimately have the power to say no to me. This was because I had introduced myself to them as an 'adult researcher'. As a 32-year woman I could do little else. My dual status as a researcher/ professional drugs and alcohol worker encouraged the young women to perceive me as having some sort of respected social status, and consequently much greater power than them. However, this position was totally reversed in regard to my being allowed access to the range of social settings that they visited outside the confines of the youth centre! I had no knowledge of these settings and was very dependent, therefore, on the young women's willingness to let me join in their activities.

II(iii) Issues of vulnerability and power

My lack of knowledge and little power in such settings made me at times feel very uncomfortable. This was for a variety of reasons. Firstly I had to 'create' yet another range of fieldworker roles! The dynamics of the researcher/researched relationship changed dramatically. For example, prior to going 'out on the town' with the Blummerstone young women, and 'out on the rec' with the Crofton young women, they made it very clear that the Tina who had become accepted in their youth centres, and went to ice-skating rinks and cinemas with them, was not going to be allowed to go out 'raiding on the town' with them unless she made changes. The young women were unhappy with my appearance. They insisted that I should abandon my 'no make-up and casual leggings and sweatshirt appearance' for one that was 'more zappy and less daggy'. In other words, they were critical of my personal 'feminine identity script'. I felt that this placed me in an uncomfortable situation. The young women often wore very tight and skimpy clothing that I would never consider purchasing. I certainly did

not want to wear clothes that might attract unwanted male attention. But I also did not want to be excluded from the young women's evenings out. Furthermore, the 'educator' part of me wanted to enter into discussions with them about dress and alternative 'feminine identities'. However, I resisted this inclination because I realized that dress was a very important component of their 'raz performances' (as will be demonstrated in chapter 7, 'Going out on the raz and escaping'). It was also clear that 'razing' provided them with a great deal of pleasure, so I did not want to unsettle or disempower them over this matter. So I agreed with their wishes and went out shopping with them for appropriate clothing.

Throughout my fieldwork I found myself in the position of having to negotiate my 'identity scripts'. From Monday to Friday, 9-5, I was performing the script of a professional woman at work, which had clearly recognizable boundaries. But once I arrived at my fieldwork locations, my scripts were very much more variable and diverse. I have already explained the different identities that I created during the course of my fieldwork: joker, friend, supporter, teacher, observer and so forth, but now the young women were responding to my 'feminine identity script' in a very specific way. They suggested that I should 'mould' my feminine identity so that I could fit more easily into their social and cultural worlds. On nights out on the 'raz' I wore my 'trendy' lycra leggings and tops, but I did not change my hairstyle and I wore very little make-up. The young women felt that this was okay and I eventually got used to wearing what I would normally consider to be uncomfortable and inappropriate clothing. This decision to change my appearance to fit in more closely to that of the young women's certainly affected my ability to gain access to data; and it also affected profoundly my fieldworker role. Because of my perceived youthful appearance and slight height and weight I was invariably mistaken for 'one of the girls'. Consequently, I was seen as 'fair game' (Stanley, 1988, p84) by the men that were in the various 'pubs' and 'clubs' that we visited. On my 'nights out on the town' I became subject, therefore, to the same sexist, oppressive and sometimes abusive gender relations that the young women encountered. Consequently, my 'nights out on the town' provided me with the most uncomfortable and disempowering fieldworker role that I found myself having to adapt to.

Another factor that made these evenings difficult was that very early on in the fieldwork I decided that I would never drink more than one pint of normal strength beer or lager. I felt that further consumption of alcohol would not be conducive to the ethnographic research process. I remained unconvinced of Flood's (1981, p175) assertion that mild inebriation does not distort the selection and recording of ethnographic data. Although I remain convinced that I was correct not to become drunk while conducting my fieldwork, I did often find it quite difficult to appear enthusiastic and cheerful after spending 6-7 hours amongst a group of people who were intent on becoming as drunk as their finances would permit! Despite all of these difficulties, I do think that the time that I spent with the Crofton and Blummerstone young women 'hanging around recs' and 'going out on the town' gave me the opportunity to be able to develop my most insightful understandings of their developing drinking patterns.

II(iv) Being explicit about my concerns and intentions

Throughout the various stages of my fieldwork I endeavoured to remind the young women the reasons why I was spending time with them. I wanted them to be clear that I was observing and recording their actions and conversations so that I could write about them at a later date. They soon got used to 'Tina and her tape-recorder'. Furthermore, on some 'nights out', and on holiday, my tape-recorder was used by them to record their thoughts about their activities. On many occasions these tape-recordings provided rich and detailed accounts. On other occasions, however, the young women used the tape-recorder merely to record their drunken anecdotes which were often incomprehensible! (See Appendix IV for details of the different strategies that I developed to ensure that I was developing detailed and accurate fieldnotes).

As well as developing different strategies to collect my fieldnotes, I also developed strategies to share my fieldnotes with the young women. This was a very useful strategy for three main reasons: first, I wanted the young women to be fully aware of the type of detailed notes that I was recording, second, I wanted them to comment on my observations and make amendments accordingly, third, I thought that sharing my fieldnotes might prompt discussions/debates on particular themes that had developed

from individual sessions. As Jaber Gubrum has suggested:

"Fieldwork is not just a matter of carefully observing and systematically documenting what people say and do. Fieldwork involves participating with people in understanding everyday life, not vicariously, but analytically" (Gubrum, 1988, p74).

The Crofton and Blummerstone young women appeared always to appreciate and enjoy the opportunity to be able to read about themselves, although their interest often evaporated when they could not identify themselves in the text. The Abraxus young women were not interested and did not really understand what I was trying to do. However, these experiences of sharing my fieldnotes with the young women were not so awful as to deter me from continuing developing strategies that might enable the young women to be active participants in my data analysis strategies. My ideas for involving the young women in my data analysis initially developed from my fieldwork experience when I was on holiday with the Blummerstone young women.

During the holiday I kept a daily diary. I was explicit with the young women regarding my intentions and suggested that they should write one too. On our way back from holiday I let the young women read my 'holiday diary' and they 'set me right on a few details'. I tried to get them to write their own accounts, but they were not interested. One young woman did eventually tell me that she had written a record of the holiday, but she was too embarrassed for me to read it. When the young women were reading my diary, they told me that they enjoyed the bits that were like a story; I had titled my diary 'A story of young women enjoying themselves away from Blummerstone estate'. I did this, because I had just finished reading Undoing the Social: Towards a Deconstructive Sociology (Game, 1991) in which Ann Game explores the many different ways in which people like to read/watch stories (Game, 1991), and this reminded me of Janet Finch's (1987) suggestions that vignettes or short stories:

"allow for features of the context to be specified, so that the respondent is being invited to make normative statements about a set of social circumstances, rather than to express his/her 'beliefs' or 'values' in a vacuum" (Finch, 1987, p105-106).

I decided, therefore, that it would be a good idea to develop some sort of 'story' in an effort to share some of my initial findings with the young women. I hoped that the

'story' would, as Finch has suggested, encourage the young women 'to define the meanings of situations' that I portrayed within my 'story' (Finch 1987, p106).

II(v) Sharing fieldnotes

Prior to leaving the field in the Blummerstone and Crofton Youth Centres I had several conversations with the young women about 'analysing' my fieldnotes. I explained how I needed a lot of time to analyse my fieldnotes, and I also told them that I would like them to be part of the processes involved in deciding what I should write about in my final thesis. The Blummerstone young women were not very interested in my discussions. Kelly suggested: "You say what you think then come back and we'll say if it's right". While Clare said "Bleeding hell, we've been telling you what to write for months now, can't you do owt for yourself?".

The Crofton young women were much more interested in taking part in the processes involved in constructing my final text. They were also interested in discussing ways in which 'data' and 'findings' could be shared with groups of young women in general. We discussed the possibility of using drama and stories. I was particularly interested in drama as a result of Vivienne Griffith's suggestions that she was able to tap into experiences and feelings which might not have been previously revealed (Griffiths, 1991). I also thought that utilizing drama would sit very comfortably with the participatory research strategies that I had tried to adhere to throughout the course of my fieldwork. Initially, two of the Crofton young women said they would be interested in constructing a series of dramas that would represent the findings of my fieldwork. But after several hours of discussing these ideas further, they decided that they did not have the confidence to 'perform'. We also thought it would prove difficult to ensure that other young women, who were no longer attending the centre, would participate in such an initiative. After much discussion, therefore, we decided that some form of story would be the most appropriate method to share data with different groups of young women. The story could then be given to those no longer attending the youth centres. Kelly told me that:

"people will only read stuff if it's interesting and not boring... it's got to make you want to read it all... so don't make it boring to read and don't put too many

long complicated words in it".

While Becky told me:

"It'll be good to see what you say about us, 'cos we want to know if you've got the picture right... you know, like make sure you get your facts straight... it will be good reading about ourselves".

When I went back to the Blummerstone young women with the Crofton young women's feedback, they also agreed that they might read something that I had written, as long as it was interesting like the holiday diary that I had shared with them. Clare set me my overall target:

"It's got to be easy to read... interesting like... not full of fucking bullshit like a boring school book... if it's crap or fucking boring we won't read it, simple as that".

I was only able to contact two of the Abraxus young women (the youth centre had closed down by this stage in my fieldwork) and they said they would read something 'easy' and 'short' as long as they did not have to write anything. Once I had this established I was looking forward to being able to spend a concentrated amount of time re-reading and analyzing my extensive fieldnotes.

II(vi) Data analysis and interpretation strategies

I had been conducting my fieldwork for over a year and a half, with my head full of insights and partial analysis. So now was the time to 'tame the chaos' (Garner, 1991).

It was up to me to:

"focus and refocus observational and/or interview lenses, to phrase and rephrase research questions, to establish and check emergent hunches, trends, insights, ideas, and to face oneself as research instrument" (Garner, 1991, p140).

There is now quite a large literature on data analysis in ethnography, but it is the views of Glaser and Strauss (1967) that appear to have been particularly influential. I endeavoured to use the technique of theoretical sampling developed by Glaser and Strauss and described by Atkinson (1979) and Hammersley (1979) in the analysis of my fieldnotes. I was, therefore, attempting to analyse all particular aspects of my data until I felt that no new categories or properties were appearing, thus reaching the point of 'theoretical saturation' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

So despite all of my earlier efforts to involve the young women research participants in my research, it was now up to me to establish some sort of sense of my diverse data. I began to read and re-read my data, highlighting aspects of the data that appeared to be relevant and interesting to my developing analysis of young women's drinking patterns. During my analysis I began developing categories, sub-categories, developing links between the categories, searching for themes that ran through most of the pertinent blocks of data and so forth. During the early stages of my analysis I felt that I was never going to be able to develop 'findings' that would do justice to the breadth and depth of my data. I also realized that despite the continual refinement of research methods, analysis of ethnographic data - and particularly theory construction - will only ever be as good as the researcher doing it! My lines of enquiry were not developing out of the ether, they were instead based upon my many months of rigorous and systematic ethnographic fieldwork. The theories that I was gradually developing were very firmly grounded in the reality of the Abraxus, Crofton and Blummerstone young women's day to day lives.

In hindsight, I now realize that my analysis was totally dependent on my knowledge, insight and imagination at the point at which it was taking place. At the time that I was conducting my initial analysis in the summer of 1992 my only previous experience of ethnographic analysis consisted of one qualitative research project which had been undertaken as part of my MSc in Research Methods. Unfortunately, this had not prepared me for the work that I needed to do for my DPhil thesis. Since my initial attempts at analysis in 1992, my data has undergone further analysis during the period 1994-1995. On the first occasion that I conducted my analysis I realize that I became too 'locked in' to what I was actually doing. I was wholly committed to the outcome that I had in mind; a text that had been created in collaboration with the young women that gave their voices a prominent position alongside my own. Focusing on this outcome prevented me from seeing beyond the specific day to day aspects of young women's drinking. The result was an inadequate interpretation of my data that overlooked the development of a more broadly based theoretical analysis of the phenomena under investigation. My revised analysis is very different. In my second attempt at analysis I was able to organize what I already knew in very different ways.

This enabled me to develop my lines of argument, while constantly learning from them, and discovering aspects that I had previously left underdeveloped. This was a very tedious and onerous exercise, but it was a very necessary element in me being able to complete my analysis satisfactorily and to be able to write this thesis.

A vital component of my first attempt at analysis involved sharing some of my findings with the young women respondents after having poured over my analysis for three months. To adhere to Clare's guidelines of not producing something that was 'fucking boring' I began to construct a 'story' that was a mixture of fact and fiction that I felt would give the young women an impression of the type of things that I would be writing about in my final thesis. My 'story' tells the story of Julie, a working class young woman who lived at home with her mother, step-father, two half sisters and her brother. The 'story' begins with Julie aged 12 years of age, and follows her through to the age of 21 years of age, where the ending is left open-ended. The purpose of the 'story' was to encourage the young women to talk to me about Julie, and to examine the similarities or contrasts with Julie's life and their own lives. The 'story' was written in a style and language that I felt the young women would recognise and would find accessible and engaging to read. Before being able to do this, I had spent many hours (both during my fieldwork, and during my analysis, reading the magazines that the young women of all ages were interested in, thus gaining an understanding of the type of written texts they were familiar with and found enjoyable⁶. I then tried to create a 'story' written in a hybrid style based on the fusion of the 'comic strips' found in the younger age group's comics, and the older young women's 'true story' style articles found in most of the weekly women's magazines. (See Appendix V for the full 'story' and some of the comments made by the young women). At this stage of my analysis I felt that going back to the youth centres with the 'story' would serve two main purposes: to check the validity of my developing interpretations; and to explore further areas/issues that I felt had not been thoroughly examined during my fieldwork.

⁶ The magazines I read were "Mizz", "Just Seventeen", "Fast Forward", "Catch", "Smash hits", "My Guy", "Bella", "Woman", "Woman's Own", "Chat" and "Best".

Sharing the story with some of the research participants certainly provided me with the opportunity to explain to them what I was trying to do in more detail than had been the case previously. Gerry and Kelly from the Blummerstone youth centre, and Kelley and Becky from the Crofton youth centre said that they now knew what I was doing. Kelley from Crofton said that it was 'important to read about ordinary folk doing ordinary things' while Kelly from Blummerstone said that I was 'describing real life like it really is'. Sharing the story also gave the young women the opportunity to debate with me the 'fairness' of the sociological demands for participant confidentiality and anonymity.

Several of the young women said that they had only read the 'story' to see what I had said about them. They were very disappointed, therefore, not to see their names written down. I explained that I had created pseudonyms for reasons of anonymity; I explained how I wanted to ensure that no-one would be able to identify the locations of the estates or the identities of any of the research participants. But the young women were not convinced by my argument. They reminded me how I had always told them that I wanted them to make contributions regarding what I should be writing about them. They also said that they were getting nothing else out of the research so at least they deserved the satisfaction of knowing that their names were in print in a thesis. They were adamant that I should use their real names, not made up ones.

In the end I decided that I would use the real names of the eight young women who made a special plea for this recognition. For all the other young women who took part in my research I have created pseudonyms. Nowhere within the text have I indicated where their names are real or pseudonyms. In this way, only the young women involved will recognise themselves. The young women all said that they were satisfied with this compromise. In constructing the compromise I felt that I had done my best in balancing their personal needs for recognition, with my needs to ensure their anonymity.

After having met with the ten young women who took part in 'story discussions' I was fairly convinced that my 'story' had been a useful strategy to experiment with. The

positive aspects of using the 'story' were: it was a fairly unobtrusive instrument to use; it could be read in the young women's own time; they decided whether they read it or not; reading a 'story' was much less demanding than further in-depth discussions or reading 'chunks' of text; the 'story' was engaging because of its relevancy to their lives; the 'story' allowed them opportunity to gain a greater understanding of what my research was about; the young women also understood that one of the purposes of the 'story' was to encourage them to make contributions towards my interpretations of their lives.

The limitations of the method were: it was impossible to get all the young women involved; three months was too big a gap to try and re-enter the field; it was not possible to gain information in the fairly structured way that I had imagined; and most of the young women (with the exception of Becky and Kelley from Crofton) got very bored with my attempt to develop any type of structured discussions. So although the 'story' did act as some sort of catalyst to stimulate debate around several key issues and concerns. It was quite difficult trying to keep some of the young women to the task.

Becky and Kelley were very interested and amenable to entering into dialogue with me about the 'story' in the ways that I had hoped. As a result I gained a wealth of useful information that endorsed both my developing interpretations and the research tool that I had developed. In summary, therefore, I received a very mixed response to my 'story'. But at least I did receive responses. Despite these limitations, I suggest that given the inherent difficulties in encouraging young people's participation, the development of a 'story' was a useful research strategy to pursue. Developing and utilizing my 'story' with the young women also appears to be a step in the right direction regarding me, the researcher, actively trying to promote the idea of an ethnographic text that has been developed in a more collaborative and co-operative manner than is usually the norm for social research projects. The 'story' that I had created as an 'exploratory research tool' sat very comfortably, therefore, with my more general feminist aims of being able to play an active role in enabling research participants to speak for themselves.

II(vii) What has my research achieved?

My ethnographic research has been an attempt to interpret and conceptualize the young women's disparate experiences regarding drinking alcohol. As I have already stated my work is 'situated, perspectival, contextualised and partial' (Hekman, 1990, quoted in Bell, 1993, p30). Following Diane Bell's example, the work in this thesis is 'proud to proclaim the possibilities of feminist ethnography, clear regarding its own politics' (Bell, 1993, p30). The knowledge that follows in the remaining chapters of this thesis has been developed, therefore, as a result of my being openly subjective and reflexive of myself and my roles within the research process. The theories that I have generated by utilizing a 'grounded theory' approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p6) have been rooted in the actual experiences of the young women who took part in my research. Kathy Davis (1988) and other feminists have argued that it is necessary to develop feminist theories that are rooted in the experiences of women, so that we can generate social theory that is conceptually coherent and grounded in empirical data. My research work should be viewed, therefore, as part of Haraways' (1991) suggested:

"earth-wide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different - and power-differentiated - communities" (Haraway, 1991, p187).

I suggest that the research that I conducted with young women is very much a project which has provided an important and socially relevant 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1991, p188) that needs to be taken seriously by the 'addictions' research community.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a reflexive account of the strategies that I utilized in my attempt to develop a participatory or 'interactive research methodology' (Light and Kleiber, 1981, p174) with three groups of young women. Throughout my research I have made every attempt to ensure that my 'research power' was not based on a lack of openness with my research participants. Although 'built-in power differentials' based on my social status, age, education and wealth were always present throughout the research process, conducting an ethnographic research project enabled me to participate with the young women in ways that would have not been possible using other more structured research methods.

Despite my attempts at involving the young women at various stages of the research process, I cannot escape the fact that I have been responsible for this final version of my research. In writing this final text, I am writing on behalf of the young women who took part in my research. By doing this I am not addressing the dilemmas of authorship that have been signalled by post-modernist writers (for example, Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Game, 1991). By writing this thesis I am demonstrating my belief that sociologists should continue to write and speak for others. As Richardson (1990) has already suggested there is no 'right' answer to the problem of speaking for others. Consequently, we are left having to realise that writing, as an intentional behaviour, is a site of moral responsibility and that, 'we can chose to write so that the voice of those we write about is respected, strong and true' (Richardson, 1990, p38).

I suggest that the theories that I have developed during the course of my research are rooted firmly within a feminist theoretical framework. My theories are also grounded in the experiences of the young women who took part in my fieldwork. The aim of this project is, therefore, to begin the process of developing theories that enable working class young women's voices to be heard in the 'addictions' field. I am doing this because the young women who took part in my research do not have the power to define publicly what their drinking activities mean. The theory that I develop in this thesis will certainly be partial, embodied and historically and culturally situated. But by adopting this approach I have endeavoured to pay attention to Richardson's (1990) advice when she suggests that:

"Rather than decrying our sociohistorical limitations, ... we can use them specifically to ask relevant (useful, empowering, enlightening) questions. Consequently, the most pressing issue, as I see it, is a practical-ethical one: how should we use our skills and privileges... As qualitative researchers, we can more easily write as situated, positioned authors, giving up, if we choose, our **authority** over the people we study, but not the responsibility of **authorship** over our texts" (Richardson, 1990, p28).

The next chapter; 'Locating the young women in their homes' marks the beginning of my research endeavour. It is the first of four chapters in this thesis that explores the contexts of the young women's everyday lives. The purpose of these chapters is to root firmly the young women's developing drinking patterns within the cultural context

of their gendered social lives.

CHAPTER THREE

LOCATING THE YOUNG WOMEN IN THEIR HOMES

I SETTING THE SCENE

The next four chapters are based on the findings of my ethnographic research. Lynn Davies (1985, p81) has suggested that we need a *bank* of ethnographic accounts to demonstrate how flexible people are in response to, *and to exert influence over*, particular settings. I suggest that my research makes a significant contribution to an already established bank of ethnographic accounts of working class young women. My ethnographic research strategy has enabled me to construct a vivid and detailed account of the settings and circumstances in which three groups of working class young women develop a range of drinking patterns. Furthermore, because my research strategy has encouraged the young women to talk about their experiences in as much detail as possible, it has provided an important opportunity for them to speak as real experiencing persons. In the next four chapters, I intend, therefore, to examine a range of the young women's activities in a variety of spatial locations. This chapter will examine them at home; chapter 4 will examine them in the organized spaces of their schools, youth centres and some public leisure settings; chapter 5 will examine the 'liminal' space of the 'rec'; while chapter 6 will examine the locations that they visit while 'out on the raz'.

Before I outline the central purposes of this chapter, I need to explain the ways in which the different young women who took part in my research will be presented throughout my thesis. Although the Abraxus, Crofton and Blummerstone young women are separated spatially, they are also connected by being situated within very specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts. In other words regardless of their different ages, all the young women who took part in my research share the experience of being female and working class. During the early stages of my analysis I allowed myself to believe that age was of crucial importance to the young women's drinking patterns. Later I realized that this belief had been shaped by the quantitative age structured research that dominates the addictions field. It was not age per se that was significant. The young women's ages only became significant in respect to the

sanctions that society impose upon them. For example, the Abraxus young girls had little freedom to be able to explore their social worlds outside the confines of their school, youth centre and home settings. The Crofton and Blummerstone middle girls were given slightly more freedom by their parents, consequently, they tried to get out of their homes more often, but they were still subject to parental 'curfews' because of their age. They were also unable to visit a range of licensed premises that they thought would be fun and exciting. It was only the Blummerstone older girls who did not have to adhere to any parental or societal regulations. This was because they were over 18 years of age. However, the older girls still found themselves subject to age regulations, especially in the context of visiting licensed premises, where they were invariably asked to show their over 18 identity cards.

It is clear, therefore, that age is a significant variable in all young peoples lives. A whole range of social regulations for smoking, drinking, sex, marriage and so forth are structured around young people's ages. Despite this, however, I suggest that age is not a very useful explanatory variable when trying to develop an understanding of young women's drinking patterns. In my analysis, therefore, I have constructed 'loose age categories': young girls, middle girls and older girls. I have done this so that age is not regarded as the most significant variable when considering the development of the young women's drinking activities. I have developed this strategy because I contend that the young women's social and cultural expectations are far more important than individual ages when considering the development of their drinking patterns. I suggest that the themes that I identify in this thesis as being significant to the development of the research participants drinking patterns, may also have relevance to a wide range of young women who are also growing up within working class environments in the late twentieth century.

Bearing this in mind, this chapter has two central purposes. First, it will explore the ways in which the young women are exposed to a range of traditional 'feminine scripts' within working class households. I will do this by examining the limited range of activities that are available to them in their home settings. Second, I will examine the ways in which the young women become involved in a range of drinking activities in

their homes. I will do this in two ways. First, I will examine the ways in which most of the young women are initially introduced to alcohol in their homes. Second, I will explore the ways in which the older girls are beginning to develop a new previously unexamined home based drinking activity - 'drinking to block things out'. In a later chapter (Chapter 7 - The meanings of drink) I will examine the ways in which the older girls' drinking patterns should be interpreted as being inextricably linked to their more general desire to create pleasure for themselves, while also asserting some power within the contradictory social world that they are situated in. It is important to note that the purpose of this chapter is not to be exhaustive. The themes that I introduce will be developed more fully in later chapters. My intention at this stage is to introduce some of the issues and concerns that have been raised by my research findings.

II IDENTIFYING THE YOUNG WOMEN IN THEIR SPATIAL LOCATIONS

Most of the young women who attended the Abraxus Youth Centre lived very close to their Youth Centre which was situated in the southern part of an inner city estate. This was the run-down part of the estate where the housing stock was in poor repair. The main part of the estate was built in the late 1940s and early 1950s. An outer ring road ran through the estate creating effectively north and south sections. The south part of the estate comprised local authority housing, as opposed to the mixture of owner occupied and local authority housing to be found in the north part. The north part of the estate also had some small shops: two small grocery/off-licenses, a hair dressing salon, a chemist, a video shop. There was also a fish and chip shop, a 'pub' and a working men's club. The shops on the south side of the estate were all closed and boarded up. There was also a primary school and secondary school situated on the north section of the estate.

The local authority owned housing stock was in poor repair. Information from 1991 Census (obtained from the County Council Research and Information Group) suggest that 62% of the housing stock is owned by the local authority. The Census information also suggests that 20% of the housing had no central heating and 5.5%

was overcrowded. In the past, the city council had operated housing policies that had effectively 'ghettoised' specific groups of people. Some areas on the south side of the estate, had been used to house single parent families and middle age men (ex-prisoners, men with drink/drug problems, and men with other mental health problems). These groups were housed between the homes of elderly people who had been left behind by their more mobile and affluent grown up children. These are all groups that Lawless suggests are generally seen to be susceptible to poverty (Lawless, 1981, p32).

All of the houses on the estate were built to identical specifications. Each house has a small front garden with a concrete path leading up to the front door. The front door opened into a small kitchen (approximately 6ft x 8ft). From the kitchen the hall leads to the bathroom and sitting room. The back door opens onto a medium sized garden (20ft x 40ft). Upstairs there was two double bedrooms, and one single bedroom. None of the houses that I visited had central heating fitted with the exception of Tara and Trisha's house. Heating generally consisted of a gas fire in the sitting room and possibly a storage heater in the hallway. All of the houses that I visited were in a poor state of repair. The young women's families could not afford to pay for repairs, and the council programme for house improvements had been suspended. All the houses had problems with: mould in the kitchens and bathrooms; original metal framed windows that needed replacing; exterior brickwork that needed attention; and several houses had leaking roofs. The housing that most of the Abraxus young women lived in was local authority owned housing stock. Only Trisha, Tara and Kelly lived in the northern part of the estate and their parents had purchased their houses from the local authority.

Information from the 1991 census states that 61% of the population on the Abraxus estate were white, 10% black, 24% asian and 5% other. The 1991 census reveals that the unemployment figures for the estate were above average (16%) when compared to the average figure for other parts of the city (4.4%). Only 42% of households had access to cars. Those without cars had to rely on public transport which was limited and expensive (70p per single journey into the city centre).

The Blummerstone estate had been purpose built to cope with inner-city slum clearance in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The estate did not have the same run-down appearance as Abraxus. This was helped by the owner-occupied and local authority housing being very mixed throughout the estate. Run-down houses with boarded windows could be found next door to owner-occupied houses with cladded walls, double garages and conservatories. Information from the 1991 Census states that 37% of housing stock is local authority owned and 47% is owner occupied. All the members of the Blummerstone Girls' Group (except two) lived in local authority housing.

The streets and avenues of the Blummerstone estate radiated from a large green in the middle of the estate. It was within this very large green area, that the primary school, the secondary school, the neighbourhood centre, the playground, the youth centre and the surgery were situated. There was also a medium sized grocery store, a video shop, a chemist, an off-license, a fish and chip shop and a working men's club. The green in the centre of the estate should have been an area for the local residents to enjoy, but unfortunately it was mainly used by people walking their dogs, and by groups of young people sniffing glue and drinking alcohol. Hence the area was strewn with beer cans, cider and spirit bottles, plastic bags, glue tubes and copious amounts of dog faeces. It was only when the green had been cleared, for occasions such as Bonfire Night, Carnival Night and the June Fair, that the residents were able to enjoy it. Otherwise it was a no-go zone, and especially so after dark.

The young women's homes were scattered all around the estate. The Blummerstone estate was much larger than the Abraxus and Crofton estates. The houses on the Blummerstone estate were built according to Parker Morris standards and were, therefore, slightly larger and more substantially built than the houses on the Abraxus estate. The houses had a front door leading into a hall. The hall provided access to the dining room, sitting room and kitchen. On the first floor the houses had three bedrooms and a bathroom. The gardens were about the same size as the Abraxus gardens. Again, few of the houses had central heating fitted, but the houses did not appear to be in such a state of poor repair. The exterior of the houses had been

painted and replacement windows had been fitted in most of the homes that I visited. It was difficult to tell which of the house were owner-occupied and which were local authority owned. Furthermore, it was clear that people had been able to afford to create gardens, car-ports and so forth to improve their homes.

According to information from the 1991 Census (obtained from the County Council Research and Information Group) The population on the Blummerstone estate comprised 78% white, 18% black, 1% asian and 3% other. The census information shows that unemployment was higher than average on the Blummerstone estate. It was 13.6% compared to the average of 4.4% for other parts of the city. 54.6% of households had access to a car.

Crofton was a small town in the north of the county where my research was based. Crofton town was comprised of a town square surrounded by sixteen shops. The shops were small grocery, bakery, fruit and vegetable, hardware, video and clothes shops. Further out of the town were two fish and chip shops, an off-license, two chemists, a large garage, two take away pizza shops, three pubs, a snooker club, three hosiery factories, a mixture of housing stock, and a large supermarket. A large quarry works was situated on the outskirts of the town. The housing estate at Crofton was much smaller than the Abraxus and Blummerstone estates, and the local authority housing was in a good state of repair. The estate was situated on the west side of the town. The Crofton Youth Centre was also situated on this side of the town. Ward information from the 1991 census (obtained from the County Council Research and Information Group) suggests that only 13.2% of the housing stock was owned by the local authority, 5.2% was privately rented and 78.6% was owner occupied. Only 11.8% of households had no central heating and only 1.5 were overcrowded.

The young women who attended the Crofton Youth Centre lived in a variety of housing. Most of the young women lived on a small local authority estate on the west side of Crofton, three of the young women lived just outside the estate in small privately rented terraced houses. The terraced accommodation was very small. It consisted of a sitting room, a kitchen and bathroom downstairs and two bedrooms

upstairs. There were no gardens, only backyards. Only two of the Crofton young women lived in bigger semi-detached owner occupier properties on the east side of the town. The local authority owned housing on the Crofton estate was very similar to the housing on Blummerstone estate. The only real difference was that the Crofton estate had much bigger gardens. The estate appeared to be a mixture of local authority owned housing and owner occupier housing.

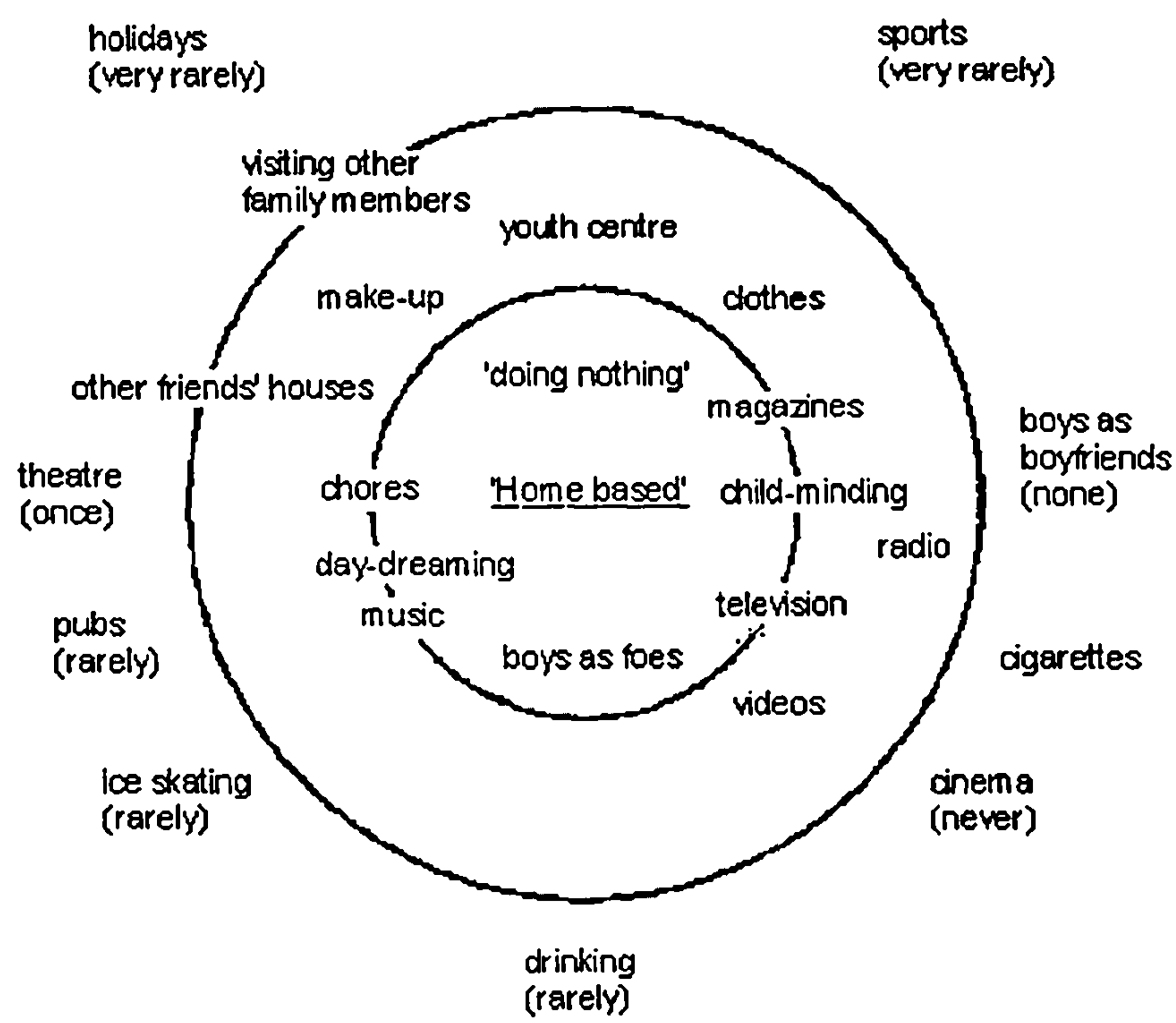
The census information suggests that the population within the ward comprised of 89% white, 1% black, 9% asian and 1% other. According to 1991 census information unemployment in Crofton was 5.4% this was about average, as the unemployment rate for the County was 5.6%. Seventy seven percent of households had access to a car, which was higher than the average for the county. This could be accounted for by considering in-comers living in the area who did not work locally, and the very poor level of public transport in the area. It was very difficult to get buses outside of the 'rush hour' periods (7.30am-8.45am and 4.45pm-6.00pm).

The consistent feature of the homes that I visited in Abraxus, Blummerstone and Crofton was that they all appeared to be very crowded. In the homes with only one downstairs 'family room' there did not appear to be enough space for all family members. The 'family room' was a space used for: eating meals; watching television; listening to records/tapes/cds; playing darts; ironing; drying washing and so forth. Even in the homes with two 'family rooms' there was often intense competition and friction between different family members regarding the activities that took place within the limited spaces. Hardly any of the young women had their own bedrooms. They invariably shared with older or younger siblings. This provided a further source of friction between family members.

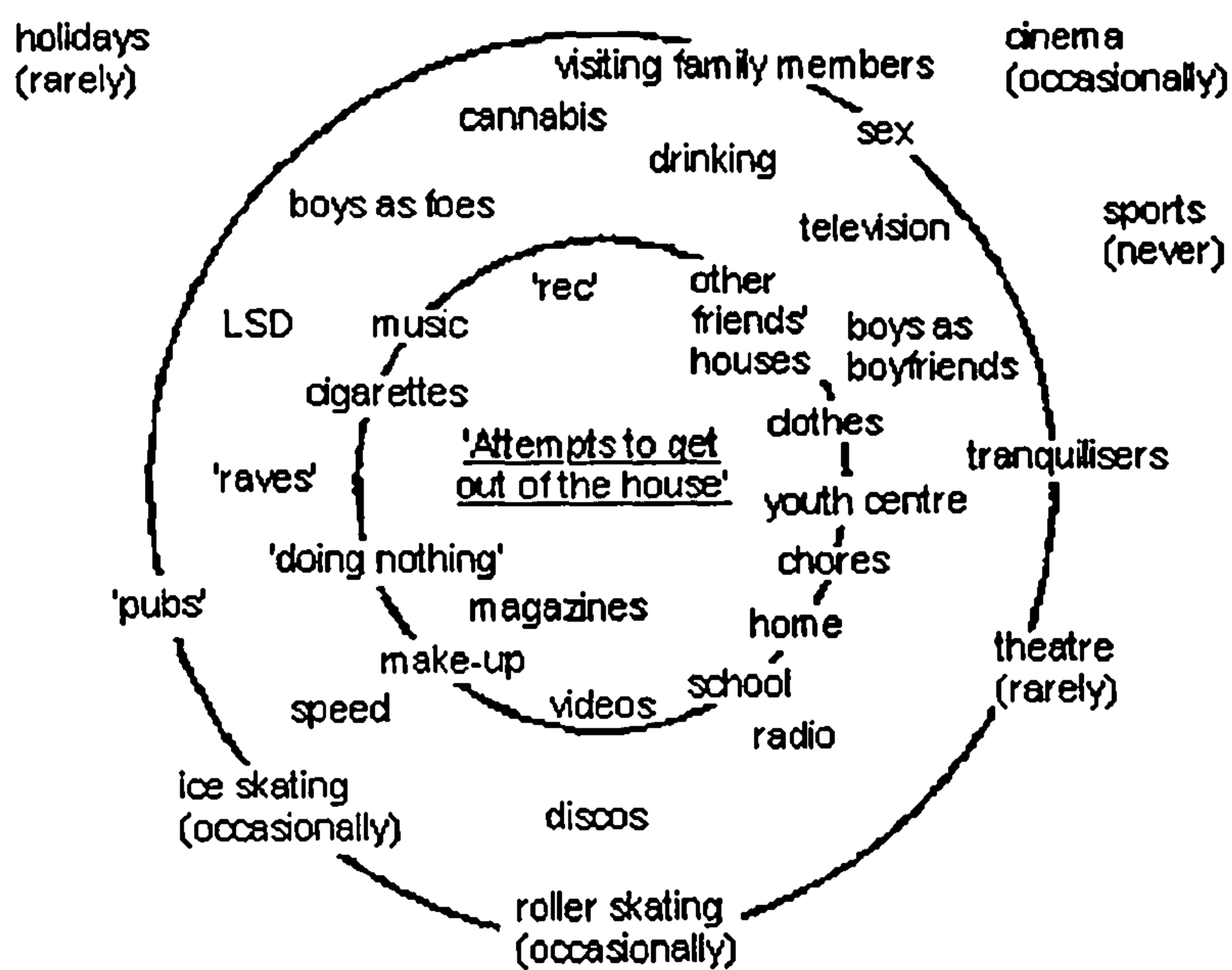
II(i) Time spent at home

Most of the young women who took part in my research spent a substantial amount of their time at home or at their friends homes. Figure 1 (see overleaf) demonstrates very clearly that even the middle girls who made a concerted effort to try and construct activities away from their homes, still spent substantial periods of time at home 'doing

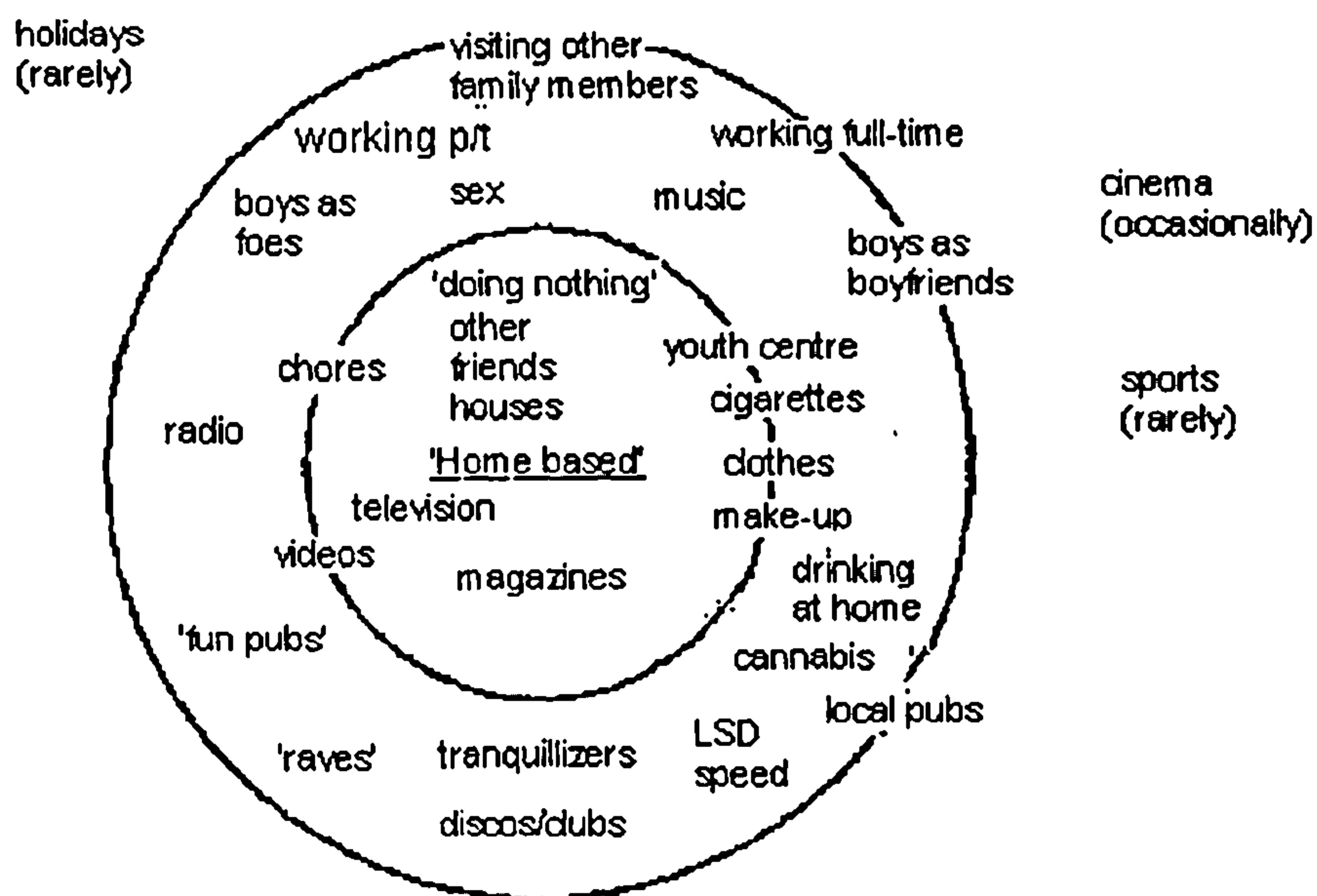
nothing'. (Chapter 5 will examine the middle girls' attempt to find their 'own spaces' away from the confines of home and organized leisure settings). All of the young women found themselves 'stuck at home doing nothing' for long periods because they had few financial resources and because there were very few 'public' activities and facilities accessible to them. This was particularly so during the winter months.



Young Girls
(continued overleaf)



Middle Girls



Older Girls

Figure 1. Young Women's Activities

The young girls and the older girls appeared to be fairly resigned to spending most of their time 'at home'. Sue Sharpe (1976) suggests:

"a young women's acceptance of her position at home becomes more a resigned acceptance of inevitability than a positive choice from alternatives" (Sharpe, 1976, p69).

The ways in which young women (age 12-16) have very little freedom outside of their homes has already been well documented (Banks et al, 1992; Gillespie et al, 1992; McRobbie, 1991). It is well known that most working class young women "spend far more time at home than their brothers, whether still at school, on the dole, at work or on a youth training scheme" (Nava, 1992, p79). In Youth Work and Working Class Youth Culture, Gillespie et al, (1992) have very clearly documented how "the laborious nature of housework often isolates many females from contact with the world outside their front doors" (Gillespie et al, 1992, p178). The observation, that young women of 12-16 years of age do not participate in many outside leisure pursuits is also very well supported in the literature (Banks et al, 1992; Deem, 1986; McRobbie, 1991; Nava, 1992). My research further demonstrates that older working class young women who are unable to obtain jobs, are now also forced into a position of spending as much time at home as their younger counterparts.

Nava (1984) has referred to this prolongation of the period of childhood as 'infantilisation' and suggests that 'young people are confined to the informal activities and relations of the street, of leisure, the youth club and the domestic sphere' (Nava, 1984, p3). I contend that although this process was very evident on the Blummerstone estate where the older age group lived, the term 'infantilisation' is an inappropriate description of such behaviour. Infantilisation appears to imply that young people are situated in some sort of 'cultural moratorium' where they merely 'retreat' into infantile behaviours. My research will demonstrate that this may not be as straightforward as the literature suggests. On the surface it may well appear that the older girls are merely continuing in the activities of their youth. They were often to be found 'hanging around' the estate and many of them still attended the youth centre. However these activities, as well as their developing drinking activities, should be interpreted as attempts by the young women to be active agents who are involved in constructing a

variety of activities and strategies that makes sense of the circumstances and situations in which they live. Bearing this in mind, I will now examine the ways in which the young women spend most of their time at home. I need to do this because young women and young men 'learn' to be female or male within the 'practices'¹ of their everyday life.

II(ii) 'Just sitting around' and 'doing nothing'

When I talked to the young women about the things they did at home, most of them accounted for their activities by using expressions such as: 'sitting around doing nothing'; 'doing nowt'; and 'just sitting around doing nowt'. Fortunately, I was able to spend time with the young women in their homes, and as a result was able to observe the multi-faceted activities they were actually describing as 'doing nothing'. Although 'doing nothing' had no foundation in 'objective reality', it was actually grounded in the 'day to day social reality' of the young women's lives. In this section, I will begin to explore the many different activities that hid behind the young women's seemingly one-dimensional concepts. I will also explore some of the reasons why the young women, regardless of their age, felt that they 'did nothing', despite being involved in a range of activities.

"Doing nowt"; "sitting around doing nothing"; 'getting bored senseless'; "nothing, just sitting around"; "sitting around bored"; "not doing owt"; "sitting round like" ; "just sitting around and that" were the most popular descriptions used by all the young women to describe their activities at home. These descriptions actually incorporated: **imposed activities** which included 'chores' such as child-minding, cleaning and cooking; **active activities** such as watching specific television programmes, videos and constructing appearances with make-up and clothes; and **filling-in-time activities** which included activities such as 'looking at magazines', 'looking at mail order catalogues', listening to the radio and watching the television in general.

¹ 'Practices' are the means through and the site in which gender ideas and relations are *realized* - that is, comprehended and made real (Cowan, 1990, p16).

II(ii) a **Imposed activities: chores and hassles**

In general all the young women were involved at varying levels with the 'imposed activity' household chores. This was especially so if their parents went out to work. Most appeared to be 'helping their mothers', but some young women were used to taking responsibility for the household chores in general.

Sara: "Mam works from five to half seven in the mornings, cleaning, then she goes onto the pub and does till twelve, she gets home about two... she does the shopping on the way home, so I do all the cleaning... during the (school) holidays I do the meals as well... I don't mind I suppose... there's owt else to do round here, it's dead boring like, just sitting and watching tele..."
(Sara aged 14 from Abraxus)

It is well known that young women are not as free as young men to enjoy leisure activities at home. Indeed, the literature suggests that the tensions in the home for young working class women are enormous (Gillespie et al, 1992, p177). In general, all the young women complained that it was very unfair that they had far more chores to do than their brothers:

Becky: "We always do more round the house just because we're bloody girls... It's always you can do that bit of washing up before you go out... never to me brother, only to me and me sister";
Debbie: "boys are bone idle, they get away we murder... mothers let 'em 'cos it's less hassle than keeping on, they just keep on at us 'cos girls are meant to know better like... It's so unfair, boys don't do owt... and they get away with it..."
(Becky aged 17, Deborah aged 16 from Crofton).

The amount of time the young women appeared to spend on household chores was certainly compatible with McRobbie's finding that 14 - 16 year old young women spend 14 to 16 hours a week on domestic work and were not joined in this work by their brothers (McRobbie, 1978).

All the young women had older or younger siblings. In the families where the siblings were younger, the young women were often expected to take a share of the responsibility for 'child-care' arrangements. Sara for example, looked after her younger siblings, two boys aged 3 and 5, and a girl aged 6 1/2, as well as doing the household chores. She was often confined to her house until her mother got back at 2.00pm each day. Trisha and Tara were also responsible for looking after their

younger brother and sister (aged 3 and 6 years respectively), until their mother returned from work sometime after mid-day.

Sara: "I'm just used to it... it's dead boring and it does your head in... can't do owt for meself most days, just hassle from them all the time... drives you mad... I'm not having any kids, none, and that's for definite, they do yer head in, they do!"

Tara: "It's a pain, like most of the time you try to ignore what they're doing... sooner or later they're into something, then all hell lets loose and it's our fault when mam gets back here..."
(Sara and Tara aged 14 from Abraxus)

The young women found looking after their younger siblings to be both an exhausting and 'boring task'. In the homes that I visited the younger siblings were very demanding of their older sisters, constantly wanting attention and disrupting any activities that they tried to become involved in. The young women who had brothers, were very angry that their brothers did not have the same household and childcare responsibilities. Furthermore, many of the young women complained that their parents often asked them to 'be in charge' or to 'keep an eye' on their older brothers. Gillespie et al, (1992, p179) suggest that the patriarchal system that dominates the structure of working class communities demands that women remain in the subordinate position of doing unpaid housework. Young working class women staying at home doing chores can, therefore, be interpreted as an integral part of their socialization process.

Many of the young women realized that they were treated differently from young men in general. They also felt powerless to do anything about it. Little seems to have changed since Powell and Clarke (1975) suggested that young women were:

"tucked away in the privatised and socially invisible family life. They stand outside the world of power, contest and conflict, and consequently only girls who stand *outside* the family... enter into that arena of challenge and control" (Powell and Clarke, 1975, p224).

Rebecca explains the situation that young women find themselves in:

"They (parents) think girls should look, behave and talk differently from boys. So if a girl says 'get stuffed and do your own washing up', all hell lets loose, specially if you happen to be chewing gum, wearing all black, 'docs' (Doc Marten Boots) and got a fag hangin out of yer mouth... girls aren't meant to be like that... that's what parents think anyway, it's one hassle after another..."
(Rebecca aged 16 from Crofton)

While Kelly suggests:

"We're meant to be sweet and nice, soft and sweet, and they (parents) try to 'protect' us... like we're meant to be kept in for our own good. So why aren't boys kept in for their own good?... it's them that go out twocing (taking a car without the owner's consent), thieving, fighting and that... not girls, but they're boys so it's different..."

(Kelly aged 18 from Blummerstone)

Rebecca and Kelly are hinting very clearly at wider perceived inequalities between how parents treat young men and women differently. These perceived inequalities were very noticeable in the arrangement of the chores within the homes that I visited in Abraxus, Blummerstone and Crofton. It was also very clear that there were glaring inequalities in the ways that parents 'surveyed' and 'policed' their daughters appearances. The young women's brothers were not subject to such scrutiny. Furthermore, parents of the young and middle girls would not allow their daughters to go out as often as their brothers regardless of the similarity in their ages. All of the young women complained about the 'unfair' ways that they were treated by their parents, yet at the same time they also justified their parents' action by saying "it's just the way things are"; "boys get it easy and we get it hard"; "life isn't about fair is it?, you just have to take it".

This section demonstrates very clearly, therefore, that all the young women are encouraged by their families to accept a traditional feminine identity and the expected behaviour associated with being a female within a working class household. Despite these pressures and the time consuming household chores they became involved in, there were also a range of activities that all the young women chose to become involved in. The two most popular activities were: constructing appearances with clothes and make-up, and watching television 'soaps'. It is these activities which are the focus of the next section of the chapter.

II(ii) b Active activities: "you dress up and just get a lot of grief "

Clothes and personal appearances are very important to most human beings, it was not surprising, therefore, that they were very important to all the young women. This was especially so if the young women were preparing to go out into the world of public leisure facilities. It has been suggested that individual clothing is a means of encoding

and communicating information of the self (Huat Chua, 1992). The young women put a great deal of time and effort into constructing and improving their appearances. All of the young women experimented with many different types of make-up, yet even after applying their make-up they were invariably dissatisfied with their appearance. Like the participants in Lesley Holly's (1989) study, the young women felt compelled to produce themselves as copies of the current stereotype of female beauty (Holly, 1989, p4). Catherine and Natasha explain:

- Cath: "You have to don't you, to make the most of what you've got like... you know it ain't gonna make any difference, but you still use it 'cos at least you look a bit better wi' a bit of colour on your face like".
- Natasha: "You see something new like in a mag or something and you think Oh that looks good I'll give it a go..." (voice unclear on tape)
ordinary folk... we don't really stand a chance, but we keep trying don't we?"
(Catherine aged 17, Natasha aged 21 from Blummerstone)

All of the young women appeared to spend many hours 'dressing up' and trying on each others' clothes. Their clothes represented, therefore, far more than just an interest in fashion. Clothes, like musical taste and so forth, are indications of the cultural identities and leisure orientations of different groups of young women. Paul Willis suggests that clothes attract the opposite sex, gain acceptance and friends in peer groups and allow young people to feel different or interesting (Willis, 1990, p88). Martin Barker (1989) suggests that clothes are an important system of meaning; clothes are chosen by the wearer to convey a self-image, a social status and so forth. He further suggests that different appearances are, therefore, rich in meanings, and are 'languages; in their own right'². It is especially disconcerting, therefore, for the young women to receive what is often continual criticism from their parents regarding their 'inappropriate' appearances. Parents (fathers in particular) felt that it was 'culturally' unacceptable for their daughters to subvert or challenge what they considered to be 'a traditional feminine appearance'. Even the older girls complained about having to

² Barker is considering the theory of semiology. Semiology is an approach to understanding how meanings are generated and communicated, it derives ultimately from the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Semiology argues that while language is clearly the most important system of meanings, it is not unique. There are many equivalent systems, for example, clothing, food, furniture, gestures and facial expressions.

tolerate their fathers and brothers endless comments about their appearance. Kelly, Deborah and Jenny from Crofton describe graphically the problems that they have encountered:

Kelly: "It's as though they don't pay attention to what's going on all round them... you'd think they'd notice that when you're young you don't dress like old fogies... it's **definitely** dad who is the worst. He is so bloody rude all the time... he thinks I'm a slag just 'cos I look like this"
(Kelly aged 16)

(Kelly was wearing black lycra leggings, black 'doc' marten boots, purple socks and a purple sweatshirt. She also wore a black hairband, black mascara and kohl, and a pair of large silver chunky earrings).

Deborah: "Man won't give me money to spend on clothes... 'cos I waste her money on crap... but I only ever buy ordinary stuff, jeans, shirts, leggings and stuff... but dad... it's always 'girls used to be good to look at... feminine like,' yet when I wear my satin stuff he says I'm got up like some whore"...
(Deborah aged 16)

Jenny suggests that all men comment about young women's clothes and general appearance:

Jenny: "All men do ... they do at the club (youth centre)... that's why we all wear jeans and baggy tops down there... it's awful them starring at yer tits, bum and stuff, just embarrassing... they think yer on the pull or something if you wear anything new like... they make you feel really stupid a lot of the time"
(Jenny aged 16)

Gillespie et al (1992) suggest that such examples demonstrate the ways in which the young women have their freedom and independence constantly mediated by patriarchal relations (Gillespie et al, 1992, p176). Jenny in particular is certainly commenting on the ways in which men and boys constantly scrutinize young women's appearance and undermine their confidence. McRobbie (1991) suggests that while it is accepted that men stare at girls and women, it is not accepted that girls and women stare at men. They are instead restricted to staring at posters of male pop stars, football stars and movie stars (McRobbie, 1991). Rosalind Coward (1984, p76) argues that male looking has become a crucial aspect of sexual relations, not because of any natural impulse, but because it is one of the ways in which domination and subordination are

expressed. She is suggesting, therefore, that the relations involved in 'looking' are inextricably linked with coercive beliefs about the appropriate sexual behaviour for men and women. The young women who talked to me about their appearances certainly endorsed the notion that both younger and older men think it is alright to comment upon, and to try to exercise some degree of control over young women's appearance, and by implication their sexual behaviour. In later chapters I will explore the ways in which the middle and older girls attempt to challenge this social convention of men and boys telling them how they should appear and behave. I will also explore the roles that alcohol has within these contexts.

The young women understood the complexity behind the notion of women conveying explicit and implicit sexual messages by their choice of clothing and make-up in varying degrees. When Kelly talks about her appearance, and her choice of clothes, it is clear that she understands the important and complex roles that clothes play.

Kelly: "It's more than just looking good like, you got to fit in with yer mates... I'm not so worried now, but before like I had to look like Deborah and them, I didn't want to be any different... it's like yer clothes sort of tell other people what sort of person you are... people look at you... boys and other girls, and they sort of know what sort of person you are... just by looking at your clothes, hair, make-up... they work out things about you... it's true - I do it... if you don't know what they're like... it's clothes and make-up you see isn't it... too tight, too much, not enough, they all say different things about you don't they ... boys as well as girls, we all do it like... it's harder for girls to suss boys as much, but you can... haircuts, clothes, tattoos and that (voice unclear on tape)... they say something... it's worse for girls though... (voice unclear on tape) harder, so many things girls have to do... more rules like..."
(Kelly aged 16 from Crofton)

Kelly's account appears to be expressing a very similar sentiment to that of Coward's (1984) when she suggests that women's bodies and the messages which clothes can add, are the repository of the social definitions of sexuality:

"men are neutral, women are always the defined sex, and the gyrations around women's clothing are part of the constant pressure towards the display of these definitions" (Coward 1984, p30).

Many of the other young women also expressed similar concerns to those of Kelly.

However, some of them tried to ignore what people in general say about their appearances. This is illustrated by Becky and Jenny's accounts:

- Becky: "You choose to wear stuff that makes you feel good. Sometimes, like at home, I can't be bothered, just old leggings and a baggy jumper, but like when we went to Rocky Horror and out to Discos and that, that's different... you feel really good, special like, you know you're dead plain and ordinary like, but you use make-up and clothes like, to make you feel good... you go out... get pissed, dance around feeling good, interesting like, not like yerself... you can be different like... daring and stuff... your got yer low cut top on and stuff and you feel well different from when your going down the street or owt like that... until the lights come up anyway... when you dress like that though you get a lot of grief... people (boys, men, family members, other girls) think you're a right dog (slag)..."
- Jenny: "You have to make sure you're dressed right for where you're going like, and you have to get it right, not too daggy and not too tarty like... you don't go down the centre like you're going to a Disco like... the lads down there keep on at you... like you're a slag and that just if you just put on a bit of mascara like, it ain't done... Rocky Horror was special, you knew you'd be alright when you got there... and it don't matter if yer dad yelled at you, called you a tart... and told you to change before you went out... we have to put up with... everyone thinks they can say things about how girls dress and that, no-one is interested in how boys look, you don't say oh! look at that slag what's he after do you?"
(Becky aged 17, Jenny aged 16 from Crofton)

Young women like Becky and Jenny are choosing, therefore, to construct their appearances according to two criteria: their perceptions of the 'dress codes' within their chosen destinations, and what makes them feel good. Beng Huat Chua (1992, p116) suggests that:

"the anticipated audience acts as the significant others to which the individual is orientated; they and the normative nature of the event jointly specify the boundaries of 'appropriateness' for the individual's adornment".

It is clear that he has not considered the complex and contradictory pressures that restrict and constrain girls (and women's) appearances! In contrast to his rather simplistic appraisal, Hayley, Becky and Jenny were actually describing a complex web of socially constructed ad hoc rules that dictate boundaries of 'appropriate' feminine dress codes. Throughout this thesis I will demonstrate the ways in which notions of 'appropriate feminine dress codes' and 'appropriate feminine behaviour codes' recur throughout the young women's lives. In later chapters I will also explore some of the

strategies that the older girls develop to subvert and challenge the notions of 'appropriate feminine codes' within a range of public settings. Prior to this I would like to explore the young women's fascination with television 'soaps'. It is important to examine the television programmes that young women were watching because in addition to their family environment, their position and relations within their schools, their experiences in organized leisure settings and so forth, television also plays an important role in 'teaching' the young women about specific 'domestic' and 'feminine scripts'.

II(ii) b.i Catching up with the soaps and watching videos

All the young women obtained a lot of pleasure from watching specific 'soaps' and videos. Some of the homes that I visited had satellite television. The channels that the households had access to were sport and film. Most of the young women were able to gain access to the television and video during the day, but they often found it difficult to persuade brothers and fathers to let them watch their choice of programmes in the evenings. Often mothers and daughters were united in their attempts to watch 'soaps', films or videos. The young women and their mothers were invariably denied access to the television on the occasions that football, snooker, darts, motor sport and cricket was being televised. Only occasionally did their fathers or brothers decide to go to a local 'pub' to watch the sporting event with their friends; this took place on the occasions that the event was not being televised on terrestrial channels. On these occasions, 'pubs' and the homes that had access to satellite television, became congregating places for large groups of men, young and old.

All of the young women were very conscientious about 'keeping up' with the latest movie releases. The young girls never went to the cinema, the middle and older girls only went to the cinema very occasionally. Most movies were viewed on video. Some of the videos were obtained from Video Hire Shops, but more often than not, the videos that circulated among the different groups of young women had been copied illegally. The older girls found it easy to obtain 'pirated' or stolen videos from their

local informal network economy³. The middle girls often obtained their pirated videos from older young men, while the younger girls were not yet part of the local networks for obtaining 'pirated' goods. However, Trisha, Tara's 16 year old sister, could get hold of newly released 'pirated' videos. She told us that they were obtained from her 20 year old boyfriend and his friends⁴.

Video watching often took place in the afternoons. Tara and Kelly talk about their experience of getting videos from the Informal Network Economy:

Tara: "They been videoed real bad, some of them have numbers and that on them, some have bits missing like..."

Kelly: "Some of the pirated ones are worn out by the time we get them...It's not all that often we get the good ones, like from the shop, they get out real quick you have to wait for ages, after all the other kids"

(Tara aged 14, Kelly aged 13)

I suggest that Tara and Kelly's experience reflects very clearly their more general position within broader British society. In other words, because they were female and poor they had only a limited access to a range of consumer goods and services that

³ Informal Network Economy describes a variety of income generation activities that took place amongst the people living on the Abraxus, Crofton and Blummerstone estates. Informal because the individuals involved in the economy were neither legitimately waged/salaried employees or self-employed. Network because the people in the economy were dependent on the networks they were part of to distribute the goods that they were selling. Economy because for many of the people involved it was their main opportunity at being able to make a reasonable amount of money. Without the informal network economy many people on the estates would not have access to the commodities that others take for granted. The informal network economy supplied a variety of goods including: cheap food stuffs; bread; cakes; biscuits; meats, fresh and frozen. Clothing and electrical items were also available. Some of the goods for sale within the informal network economy were goods that individuals purchased from large warehouses; some were bought from bankrupt stocks; while others were bought as counterfeit stocks. (This was especially so in the case of designer label clothing, watches, perfume and audio and video cassettes). Other items available on the informal network economy were stolen goods. The most popular stolen goods were car radio-cassettes, videos, hi-fi systems, televisions and computers.

⁴ A new class of 'career criminal' involving nearly a third of young men is being generated partly by youth unemployment (The Home Office, 1996). Graham and Bowling's research confirms that involvement in crime and drug abuse is widespread among those under 25. It shows that half of boys and a third of girls have been involved in thefts or violent crimes. Furthermore, the research shows that teenage girls are nearly as likely as boys to be involved in crime. 24% of 14-17 year old boys have committed at least one crime other than drug use. For those aged 22-25 the figure rises to 31%. For girls the 19% of 14-17 year olds who have been involved in crimes falls to 4% by the time they reach their mid-20s, though drug use continues at a high level (The Home Office, 1996).

were generally widely available to other social groups.

When the young women weren't watching videos they liked to watch 'soaps'. The most popular soaps were 'Neighbours' and 'Home and Away'⁵ followed by 'Beverly Hills 90210', 'Brookside' and 'Eastenders'. Like watching videos, watching soaps was invariably a single sexed activity. All of the young women told me that watching television and videos with boys was not pleasurable. This was because of the boys constant interruptions and 'piss taking' of the programmes that they were watching. Watching soaps in single sexed groups was a very active activity. The young women engaged in multi-conversations and debates related to: the soap story-lines; the character developments; the plot developments; the merits of one character being more attractive than another; the acting abilities of different characters; as well as making comments about the sets, the continuity, the fashions the characters were wearing and so forth. Furnham and Stacey's (1991) research suggests that television serves many functions in the lives of young people. Among other things it provides: entertainment; relaxation; humour; information; a prime topic for conversation; a component of peer relationships; electronic friendship including television 'companions'; a mild 'drug' to cope with stress; and a time filling activity (Furnham and Stacey, 1991). Watching soaps certainly played a vital and multi-faceted role in the lives of the young women research participants.

Two young girls explained their fascination with 'soaps' and the characters in them in the following way:

Kelly: "It's better than what goes on we our lives, like there's always something happening, and they're kids of our age... you like imagine yourself there, you know it's daft really, but it don't matter like".

⁵ The Australian produced 'Neighbours' and 'Home and Away' seemed to be the universally most popular 'soap opera' amongst all the young women, alongside the American 'Beverly Hills 90210' series, originally shown on ITV, but now only shown on satellite television. All of these 'soaps' are specifically aimed at young people. They appear to offer them an entertainment that they could relate to. The programmes constructed dramatic situations that appear to illuminate dilemmas that young people themselves have faced, for example boyfriend concerns, parents separating and divorcing. Yet they also starred young people who, despite these concerns, were still able to 'act out' exciting and glamorous lives. I suggest that the programmes helped the young women to believe that, although life was full of problems and dilemmas, it could also be fun and exciting to be a young person.

Kerry: "It's good... you just get into it, it's another world... not like real life... you just wait for it every day like".
(Kelly aged 13 and Kerry aged 14 from Abraxus)

In other words, even at a young age the television programmes as fantasy, but they are fantasies that the young women enjoy. The programmes provide them with pleasure and an 'escape' from their everyday lives that they consider to be 'boring'. The older girls even insisted on watching 'Brookside' when they were away on holiday. Clare explains:

"We can't miss it this week, it's a crucial episode... there's no point in watching them if you don't follow through the crucial bits is there... it's something to wait for, something to look forward to like... sometimes you know what's gonna happen other times you don't its keeps you guessing sometimes, make you think one thing... and they do something else... sometimes its not right, you know that wouldn't happen in real life, but it don't matter like, it's not real life, it's to give you an interest, keep you going, guessing like, talking about it with yer mates... we got to see what Mick (a character in Brookside) does tonight..."
(Clare aged 18)

The young women's engagement with soaps and other programmes that they enjoyed for example, Top of the Pops and some serialized dramas and films, was very different to their views about television in general. Clare and Kelly explain:

Clare: "It's just there, you know it's on like, but you don't give it any attention most of the time..." ;
Kelly: "I sit here of an evening in front of it and I'm bored... but there's owt else to do"
(Clare aged 18, and Kelly age 18 from Blummerstone).

So although the young women got a lot of pleasure from their favourite television programmes, they also perceived most television programmes to be dull and boring. In most of their homes the television was turned on for large parts of the day, yet this did not mean that they were paying it much attention. General television is thought of, therefore, as an activity that 'fills in time'. This type of viewing is very different from the viewing associated with watching favourite programmes, watching a video or going out to the cinema. The purpose of the next section is to examine other activities that the young women also use to 'fill in time'.

II(ii) c Filling in time activities : "Just sitting around... flicking through books, watching tele... nothing much"

'Books' was a term used by most of the research participants to describe magazines and mail order catalogues. I only ever saw two of the older girls read a novel; this was Shirley Conran's 'Lace'. In general none of the young women were interested in reading novels. I was told that 'Lace' was a "raunchy 'bonk buster' with plenty of juicy sex". It was considered very different, therefore, from "ordinary boring stuff".

Because this book was perceived as 'different' from 'ordinary stuff' Clare had waited many weeks to borrow the book from her cousin. After Clare had read the book, she lent it to Natasha. Natasha spent many hours at the Blummerstone Youth Centre skimming the book trying to find the 'juicy bits'. Once the 'juicy bits' had been found she entertained the other young women by reading out extracts. In this instance, therefore, reading a novel became a collective group experience. The older girls were not interested in reading the book, they all knew the story. Lace had been serialised on the television some months earlier, so the story was familiar. But they wanted access to the "juicy bits that the tele would have cut". Reading Lace kept the older girls entertained at the Blummerstone youth centre for several evenings over the course of two weeks. None of the sample group read non-fiction books, although the majority did appear to have access to a wide range of magazines.

The most popular magazines amongst the young girls appeared to be "Fast Forward", "Mizz", "Just Seventeen" "Smash Hits" and "My Guy". "Cosmopolitan", "Just Seventeen", and "Mojo" for the middle girls, and "Cosmopolitan", "Options", "Bella", "Best" and "Women's Own" for the older girls. However, throughout my fieldwork, I saw different aged young women look at any magazine that was available both in their homes and youth centres. All of the magazines that the young women read appeared to contain stories about television stars and popular soaps. The young women got a lot of enjoyment from reading about their favourite 'soap' and film stars. The weekly magazines (Fast Forward, Bella, Best, Woman's own, Mizz) were filled with 'real life' stories of the characters appearing in 'soaps'. Invariably the celebrities were presented as 'ordinary people who by chance and luck had become rich and successful. This was especially true in the magazines that the young girls read for example, Fast Forward,

Mizz, Smash hits.

I suggest, that the articles in the young girls' magazines actually helped them to believe that one day their lives might also be different. I further suggest that the middle and older girls may also hold onto this as a reason why magazines are viewed as a pleasurable activity; an 'escape' from the reality and rigours of day to day life. Novels are seen as demanding and hard work but magazines give instant gratification. The magazines present a variety of short stories portraying different worlds and better life-styles. They also provide endless tips and hints of ways to improve faces/bodies/efficiency in the kitchen/interior design and so forth. Valerie Walkerdine's (1984) work further reinforces the notion that although young women's magazines often do not bear any resemblance to ordinary lives, they do act powerfully to engage with important themes about 'what might be'.

The most popular place for the young and middle girls to read their magazines was at school, while the older girls swapped their magazines at the youth centre. Magazine reading at school and in the youth centre was often a participatory activity for a particular group of young women. By contrast, magazine reading at home was a solitary activity used to fill in time. All the young women belonged to very flexible friendship groups. The groups varied enormously according to different activities. Magazine swap groups, for example, were often very different from the groups of young women who 'hung around' in each others' homes. Large friendship groups often broke down into smaller groups of young women who seemed to be close to one another during different times of the year. This was especially evident amongst the young and middle girls. Friendship groups often varied between school holidays and term times. During the school holidays friends often saw little of each. Instead the young women spent time with those who lived nearby. School friends would only be seen if special arrangements had been made. The young women's friendship groups were not, therefore, rigidly defined by age. Different young women spent time together if they lived near each other, or if they were related.

Magazine reading at home was a solitary activity. Some articles in the magazines were

considered interesting, for example the short stories, so these were read in the privacy of bedrooms. But in general, magazine reading at home was perceived merely as 'filling-in-time' activity, something to pass time away.

Kerry-

Ann: "I sometimes think Christ I've become old... what a boring git I am..."

Kerry: "When there's owt on tele"

Tara: "When I'm sat in front of the tele... I look at mam's catalogue... fills in time I s'pose".

(Kerry, aged 14, Tara aged, 14 from Abraxus)

Natasha: "We're only doing it 'cos there's owt else to do..."

(Kerry-Ann aged 20, Natasha aged 21 from Blummerstone)

From this account it is clear that young women of different ages, and in different geographic localities, become involved in range of very similar activities. The account that I have so far provided, illustrates very clearly that families and neighbourhoods are specific structures that frame young women's early passage into a social class. Sex typing roles and responsibilities characteristic of a specific gender and class are being reproduced, not only through language and talk in the family, but also through day to day interaction, activities and example. Like the working class youth in Gillespie et al's (1992) study, the working class young women who took part in my research, inhabit, like their parents, a distinctive structural and cultural milieu defined by territory, objects, relations, and institutional and social practices (Gillespie et al, 1992, p9). This section has also illustrated that although the young women did not talk specifically about their 'social positions' many of them were aware, in varying ways, of the inherent limitations of their lives. The second part of this chapter will examine the range of coping strategies that the young women develop to cope with the monotony of their home lives.

III STRATEGIES FOR "SWITCHING OFF", "ESCAPING" AND "BLOCKING THINGS OUT"

From the descriptions already presented in this chapter it is clear that the young women become involved in a wide range of multi-faceted and sometimes very demanding activities at home. So why do the majority chose to describe their activities at home as 'doing nothing', 'doing nowt', 'staying in and getting bored'? Firstly, I

suggest that they describe their activities as 'doing nothing' because this is what it felt like for most of them. During the course of a day in the school holidays the young and middle girls may watch one to one and half hours of soap operas or a two hour video, they may even listen to a tape or record of their choice. But these activities take up a very small proportion of their time when compared to: doing chores; looking after siblings; sitting with their families; arguing with their families; and 'doing nothing'. For the middle and older unemployed girls there were no structured breaks away from the confines of their homes. Generally all of them were very bored with the predictability of their lives.

The older girls described the strategies they had developed to cope with their boredom. Clare, Hayley and Patty for example, spent many hours lying in their beds to avoid potential 'hassle' from their families.

- Clare: "There's no point in getting up earlier, there's nowt on do... I don't get no hassle or owt... you can just switch off and ignore everything".
- Hayley: "The longer you leave getting up, the shorter the day is, then it don't drag so... I just lie there, cosy like, away from the rest of the world"
- Patty: "When I do get up earlier me mam goes on at me for having the fire on high... tele, radio or something too loud, when I'm in me bed out of the way I can't get moaned at"
- (Clare, aged 18, Hayley, aged 19, Patty, aged 21 from Blummerstone).

On the days that I visited the young women in their homes I was invariably told "don't come round too early". Too early was before 11.30am. Staying in bed serves many purposes. I was able to identify three most common reasons for them wanting to stay in their beds. First, staying in bed, either asleep, or lying awake listening to Radio 1, or day-dreaming was a far preferable activity for many than getting up and facing hours sitting around 'doing nothing'. Second, staying in bed kept them away from the 'hassles' they experienced from other family members. Young women throughout the sample group complained that brothers and parents dominated their activities at home, criticizing fathers and brothers in particular. The hassles that were most frequently cited were: parents assuming and imposing household chores onto them; fathers and brothers 'dictating' programmes to watch on the television and so forth; and fathers

criticizing the young women over their appearances and behaviour. Third, staying in bed served practical purposes. In the winter, staying in bed did indeed save on fuel bills. Whether the young women were living with their parents or in their own houses, they all had to be very conscious of heating and electricity bills. In many homes heating was not allowed to be used during the day. By staying in bed, they were choosing to avoid many potential controversies. For most of them their bedrooms often represented their only safe haven. Bedrooms represented a brief respite away from the rest of the world. Hayley describes her haven:

"Bed is just the best place to be... you're safe and snugly, no-one can get at you, you just lie there ignoring everything, thinking, day dreaming...".
(Hayley, aged 19 from Blummerstone)

Day dreaming appeared to be a strategy used by all the young women to make the material reality of their lives more manageable. McRobbie (1984) has suggested that day dreaming is "as much an experience, a piece of reality, as is babysitting or staying in to do the washing" (McRobbie, 1984, p160). Although I was not able to examine fully the private aspects of the young women's day dreams, I was able to analyze the function that day-dreaming has in their everyday lives. This then is the focus of the next section of the chapter.

III(i) "Just day-dreaming... wondering, fantasising, wishing for things... hoping for something different"

All the young women often utilized day dreaming as an active activity; they would stay in their bedrooms away from other family members to enjoy their fantasies in peace. Daydreaming was also an activity that made chores easier; the young women would be fantasying about alternative lifestyles while they were dusting, hoovering and so forth. Fantasies helped to make the chores bearable and made the time go past more quickly. Daydreaming was also useful for filling-in-time. In these circumstances the young women would be with other family members perhaps watching a television programme, 'looking at a magazine', or just sitting with them appearing to be enjoying the same activity, but instead were daydreaming and transporting themselves somewhere else outside the context of the family sitting gathering.

In other words, the young women were utilizing fantasy to help time pass and to provide what Cohen and Taylor (1976) refer to as 'psychic excitement' in situations with little perceptual variety. They were using fantasies in the moments of their lives when they did not feel fully engaged with the demands of the concrete world. Cohen and Taylor argue that 'fantasies and day-dreaming provide a continual possibility for the blurring and distortion of the clear predictable lives of paramount reality'⁶ (Cohen and Taylor, 1976, p72). I suggest that fantasy provided the young women with 'spaces and places' that could be developed in their minds. In these spaces they could put themselves through all kinds of novel and pleasurable experiences. These were secret places which could be visited during moments of their daily lives. Coward (1984) suggests that fantasy is very different from dreaming proper. Dreaming allows the expression of unconscious wishes without this being recognised by the conscious mind (Coward, 1984, p199). But in the private life of fantasy the conscious mind is in control but nothing is certain, nothing is fixed. The young women could utilize fantasy to be who they want, and to do what ever they wanted; without any of the usual social constraints they encounter in their day to day lives. As well as using fantasy and day-dreaming at home; the young women also utilize fantasy at school; at work; and in their social lives. The role of day-dreaming and fantasy was, therefore, very important to all the young women. Furthermore, this notion of young women wanting to be someone else who is free from their usual day to day social constraints is a theme that will recur throughout the subsequent chapters of this thesis. This is because as the young women are able to access alcohol more readily, they discover that drinking provides them with an opportunity to feel and behave in very different ways than they are used to. In other words, the young women learn that drinking alcohol can provide them with 'escapes' from the material reality of their daily lives. In later chapters I will be examining the ways in which the young women access a variety of different spaces where they can drink alcohol and act out some of their fantasies. But prior to doing this, I would like to examine the ways in which they are invariably first introduced to alcohol within their homes.

⁶ Cohen and Taylor (1976) are using Berger and Luckmann's (1972) term 'paramount reality' to describe the reality of every day life (Berger, Luckmann, 1972, p35).

III(ii) "My first drink wasn't owt special"

At 13 years of age 80% of boys and 73% of girls have tasted alcohol (Royal College of Physicians, 1995). All the young women within my sample group had tried alcohol by the time they had reached 11 or 12 years of age. This is consistent with other studies (Aitken, 1978; Bagnall, 1988; 1991; Jahoda and Cramond, 1972, Plant and Plant, 1992; Royal College of Physicians, 1995). Table 1 depicts the young women's access to alcohol.

A) Young girl novice drinkers' access to alcohol	
Home	Constraints
1) parents drink cupboard	limited range of drinks available
2) celebrations: Christmas, bank holidays, birthdays	under strict parental surveillance and control
3) family parties: weddings, anniversaries, 18th and 21st birthdays	still under adult surveillance, but slightly more flexible than above
Licensed public settings	almost impossible to gain access to alcohol unless with an adult in licensed premises

continued overleaf

B) Middle girl active learner drinkers' access to alcohol	
<p>Home</p> <p>1) 2) and 3) as above</p> <p>Licensed public settings</p> <p>1) pubs, clubs, restaurants, discos etc</p> <p>2) ten pin bowling, theatre, cinema</p> <p>3) supermarkets and off-license</p> <p>Drinking at the 'rec'</p>	<p>Constraints</p> <p>as above</p> <p>need proof stating that they are over 18</p> <p>can occasionally 'pass' as over 18, but need extensive preparation to appear older</p> <p>more flexible approach to age</p> <p>young women aged 15 - 17 purchase most of their alcohol from off-licenses and supermarkets</p> <p>consumption determined by financial limitations</p>
C) Older girl legal drinkers' access to alcohol	
<p>Home</p> <p>1) 2) 3) as above</p> <p>4) Young women purchase alcohol to drink at home</p> <p>Licensed public settings</p> <p>access to all licensed public settings</p>	<p>Constraints</p> <p>no constraints other than financial</p> <p>no constraints other than financial</p>

Table 1. Young Women's Access to Alcohol

Table 1 demonstrates that alcohol is spatially limited for different groups of young women. The young girls are very much 'novice drinkers' who have their experiments

with alcohol tightly restricted by a variety of public and private constraints. Generally, therefore, their drinking experiments are confined to their home settings. Table 1 also shows that the middle girls are experimenting with alcohol in a variety of 'public places'. Although not able to purchase alcohol legally, the middle girls are able to construct ways of 'passing' as an 'over 18' to purchase alcohol in a variety of settings. I have called the middle girls 'active learner drinkers'. This group are experimenting actively and learning about different types and amounts of alcohol in a variety of public spaces. The 'active learner' drinking activities will be examined more fully in chapter 5 'Creating Free Spaces'. The Table further shows that although the older 'legal drinkers' no longer have their drinking activities spatially restricted because of their ages, they are choosing to drink in their homes.

Fifty three of the sixty four young women in my sample group had been introduced to alcohol in their homes. Young people often report that their first alcoholic drink was offered to them by parents in the family home (Royal College of Physicians, 1995, p31). As Maddox (1962) has stated:

"each new generation does not invent the idea of drinking but rather learns it... part of the cultural heritage which is passed down from generation to generation" (Maddox, 1962, p24).

However, although there was a high degree of consistency regarding the settings of the young women's first drink, the circumstances which led to the young women's introduction to alcohol varied considerably.

Parties at home were the most popular place for all the young women to have tried their first drink of alcohol. Ritual occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries and public holidays, for example Christmas were the times that the young women of all ages were offered drinks by their parents and other adults. These were mostly happy events that were fondly recounted. At these events the young girls were able to observe adults' drinking practices and behaviours⁷. Although the young girls are introduced to a

⁷ Jahoda and Cramond's (1972) study of 6 to 10 year olds in Glasgow concluded that most of the children in their study began to learn about alcohol at home and had formed clear impressions about it well before they were old enough to attend school.

range of alcoholic drinks in the context of these family celebrations, their consumption appears to be fairly heavily scrutinized and controlled by adults.

Many of the young women shared very similar stories about family parties at home. Some of them also described bigger family get-togethers, for example anniversaries and wedding parties in public halls, 'pubs' and clubs. These larger outside family parties provided greater scope for them to try a larger range of alcoholic drinks. This was because they were not so closely supervised as they were at home. Kerry describes her experiences thus:

"At my aunties wedding, me and my cousins were well away, we just kept going round to the tables all the time and emptying all the glasses... Jason were right sick, I just felt sick... some of it were horrible, made you want to puke, but we still knocked it back... it were a right laugh, no-one really noticed... too busy getting pissed themselves".

(Kerry aged 14)

Others also had very similar accounts to tell. All the young women told me that when they were first introduced to alcohol they were not aware of the different substances that they were drinking. As young girls they were drinking what they could gain access to, which often meant that they would be mixing their drinks. However, few of them said that they had become drunk or sick as a result. Melanie was the exception, she had become drunk and sick at a family party. In general it appeared that most of the young women had become mildly intoxicated at these family parties. Kerry and Rachel explain:

Kerry: "I weren't drunk or owt, just tingly and a bit giggly"

Rachel: "I weren't steamin' or owt, just light-headed and giggly, happy like"

(Kerry and Rachel aged 14)

These first drinks taken at family parties should be interpreted as young girls experimenting with the taste and effects of alcohol. The young girls associate alcohol with adult behaviour and want to see what drinking alcohol is like. Most of these first experimentations were done in the safety of adult company. However, there were a few exceptions. Eleven out of the sixty four told me how their first experience of alcohol was not done under any adult supervision. Instead drinking was done illicitly

at home, or in friends homes⁸. The alcohol for these sessions was obtained by stealing drinks from parents drinks cabinets or cupboards. Angela and Sara from Abraxus experienced their first alcoholic drink at Sara's house when her 15 year old brother was 'babysitting' (at the time the young women were 10 and 11 years old). Sara and Angela were bored because Stephen was watching football on the television. They decided to 'steal' drinks to relieve their boredom.

Sara and Angela 'tested' a variety of drinks. Neither of the young women liked the types of alcohol that they tasted. They could not remember fully which drinks they had tasted.

Sara: "There were whiskies and that, but we didn't try them... we stuck to stuff we thought would be alright... thought we'd like the taste... it put me off ever trying vodka again, it burnt... it were horrible... we were bored... thought it would be a laugh I suppose, can't really remember why we did it..."

Angela: "We just wanted to try them out and see what sort of things happen like... most of it were foul... the gin and that, ugh it were disgusting, it really was... it were a bit of a laugh I 's'pose, something to do like, no-one found out... lucky for us"

(Sara aged 14, Angela aged 13).

In contrast, Laura from Abraxus and her friend Leanne approached their first drink in a very different way. They had found a bottle of sherry in a kitchen cupboard and decided that they should see how much they could drink. They could not remember specifically why they had decided to do so. This finding was fairly consistent amongst the sample group. All the young women in the sample group said that they couldn't really remember why they had initially decided to try alcohol, it was just something they had done. Four of the Abraxus young women talked about 'having a laugh' but in general, they said the reasons they began drinking were not clear - they 'just did it'. Other young women from the sample group told me that their first drink was "to see what it was like", "because I knew I shouldn't I think", "because it was there",

⁸ Fifteen of the young women also had their initial experience of smoking in their homes or their friends homes. All of the young women throughout the sample group had tried smoking by the time they were 11 years of age. Furthermore, most of the young women had become regular smokers by 15 years of age (by regular smokers I mean that the young women were smoking as regularly as their finances permitted).

"everyone does don't they, I don't know why, I just did", "we just did it... I don't know why really".

It is clear from all these examples that young girls' access to alcohol is very restricted. Their access to alcohol depends on either adults allowing them to drink or them stealing alcohol from parents without their consent. The young girls' drinking is not a patterned activity. It is a random activity because of their limited access to alcohol. The next section of this chapter, (as well as later chapters) will demonstrate that patterned drinking behaviour develops much later on in the young women's drinking careers.

III(iii) Parents and other adults home-based drinking within working class households

Few of the young women's parents appeared to drink at home unless it was a festive occasion. All of the young women's first exposure to drinking was, therefore, the immoderate drinking of adults celebrating special occasions. The young women's fathers and brothers would visit 'pubs' and 'clubs', but their mothers would only go out occasionally for a special event. Traditionally working class people have tended to adhere to these 'drinking norms'. Men go to the pub to drink and women stay at home with the children (Hey, 1986). Occasionally men and women go out together, but this is not such a regular activity as men going to the pub to meet their friends. The young women were used to these drinking conventions. However, during the course of my research it became clear that the older girls were trying to break away from these conventions.

I discovered that the older girls were developing two different drinking activities in their homes: 'ritual drinking' in preparation for 'performances'; and drinking 'to block things out'. 'Ritual drinking' will be examined in detail in Chapter 6 'Going out on the raz.' It is 'drinking to block things out' which now needs to be explored. During the course of my research I discovered that the older girls were introducing alcohol into the home to drink as an 'every day activity'. This was something that no other family member seemed to be doing. The young women's parents were poor and could not

afford to have alcohol in the home on any regular basis. Despite this however, fathers and brothers went out of the house to drink fairly regularly (one to two times a week), while mothers went out only very occasionally (less than once a month). The older girls were not, therefore, learning a drinking model from their private or public worlds. They were instead developing a new 'home based activity' - 'Drinking to block things out'. This then, is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

III(iv) "Drinking at home isn't like drinking out... it's more about blocking things out... it's not about having fun..."

Not all of the young women in my sample group were living with their parents. One of the middle girls, Carly and two of the older girls, Kelly and Marie had homes of their own. This was because they had children. Kelly and Carly had one child, Marie had two children and was expecting her third when I was finishing my fieldwork in 1992. None of the young women were living with young men. They found the young men in their localities to be unsuitable 'life partners'. Most of the young men they knew were unemployed and many of them had criminal records. The older girls in particular, were also very disillusioned with the traditional working class family structures that they had experienced. They did not want to be part of households where men told them what to do. Furthermore, my research supports the findings of others (Gillespie et al, 1992; Stafford, 1991) that have revealed that many young women are verbally and physically assaulted by young men who were supposed to be their boyfriends. However, although the older girls had made a conscious decision to live on their own, they still felt that their lives were depressing, dull and boring. The finding that young people drink when they are fed up is consistent with that of Plant, Bagnall and Foster (1990). They suggest that older young people drank to calm their nerves, to relax and because of boredom (Plant, Bagnall and Foster, 1990). However, they do not suggest that such drinking is done at home.

All of the older girls were worried about not having enough money. Several of them appeared to be experiencing serious financial problems. Eighty pounds was the highest weekly wage that any of them could earn, and this wage was only accessible to those who worked in the factories, if they worked from 7am to 6pm, five days a week plus

some overtime⁹. The unemployed had to rely on income support which was only £33.60 a week. There was little left to spend on themselves. Kerry-Ann said that her evening and Saturday job at a hairdressers, only gave her £9.80 a week after she had paid her 'keep' to her parents each week. It was even more difficult for Kelly, Marie and Carly as single parents. They told me that they had taken out 'social fund' loans. Furthermore, they were also having money 'taken out at source' to pay for bills. This demonstrates very clearly, that they were having difficulty coping financially. Many of the older girls told me that they got very depressed about their financial situation.

When I asked the older girls what it meant to be depressed, they described it as a range of feelings that included: "being really fed-up and miserable all the time" (Hayley); "not being able to cope with things any more, just spending most of your time in tears over nothing" (Clare); "being miserable and tired, breaking into tears at the smallest thing" (Marie); "feeling so fed-up you don't care about owt, wanting to hide away and never have to go out again" (Catherine). (Eighteen young women out of my sample group told me that they had been prescribed tranquillizers at some point in their lives. Nine from Blummerstone, six from Crofton and three from Abraxus). The fact that the young women had been prescribed tranquillizers by their GPs raises several areas of concern. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to incorporate a comprehensive appraisal of the young women's use of tranquillizers, I would like to mention two main points. First, the young women's prescriptions for tranquillizers to help them 'cope', actually endorses their notions of needing 'drugs' to cope with their lives. Second, although GPs are often criticized for prescribing medication to young women in these circumstances, they may well be providing the only viable response they feel they can, when confronted by young women who say that they can not cope with the circumstances of their lives.

The older girls suggested that drinking at home was a fairly spontaneous unplanned

⁹ As part of its social charter the Council of Europe says that everyone should receive "fair remuneration", based on its decency threshold. For Britain in 1992 this stood at £193.60 a week, or £5.15 an hour. According to the Employment Department's 1992 Earnings Survey, 72% of people under 24, and 88% of people under 21, earned less than this (Low Pay Unit, 1992).

activity: it took place after a 'bad day'; an unpleasant event; or because of more general feelings of being 'fed-up' and discontented. Sometimes it involved going out to a 'mini-market' or off-license to purchase alcohol. On other occasions drinking at home was preceded by furtive hunting through cupboards to try and locate alcohol that had been 'put away' after a family celebration. This was especially so, if they had no money. In other words, the older girls sometimes found themselves in the same situation as their younger counterparts; they only had access to the limited range of alcohol that could be found in their homes!

Most of the older girls (and some of the middle girls) smoked cannabis when they could afford it¹⁰. When the older girls smoked cannabis at home they said that it helped them 'cope' and made them feel less depressed. Kerry-Ann and Catherine explain why they like cannabis:

Kerry-

Ann: "Without blow (cannabis) I feel all keyed up and miserable at the same time like, blow helps me cope, I unwind and feel better, like I sleep better and that stop worrying about everything like"

Cath: "If you were us, fucking stoney broke... stuck here, you'd need some blow to help you relax, you get as depressed as hell thinking about life and that".

(Kerry-Ann aged 20, Catherine aged 17 from Blummerstone).

On one evening that I visited Kelly and Marie at Kelly's home I found a group of young women drinking to 'block out their depression'. They explained to me how their drinking behaviours were changing as they got older:

Marie: "When I was younger I used to drink to have a giggle, a laugh, to lighten up... to chat up the lads and that, but now it's different. I tend to drink more when I'm really miserable and depressed..."

Kelly: "If I'm with Kerry-Ann of a night and we both decide we've had enough we life, we men, we owt... that's it, we go to offie, buy a bottle, (wine or cider depending on finances) take it home and just hit it... just keep drinking 'til things are blocked out like..."

Natasha: "I've done it at home a few times... mam and me, we just thought

¹⁰ It is generally thought that cannabis has a mildly sedative effect on users and seems to increase the extent to which a person is (or allows themselves to be) open to external influences ('suggestibility'). The subtlety of these effects mean that they can be interpreted by the user in a wide variety of ways, depending on what they expect or want to happen, and on the reactions of those around them (ISDD, 1993).

bugger it, and started drinking... we were that fed up... it don't really make you feel any better but you don't care... you just keep knocking it back, at the time you think Hey! let's do it like... but it gets you through, if you're paralytic, you can't worry about owt can you?"

(Marie aged 20, Kelly aged 18, Natasha aged 21)

Four of the older girls also told me how their mothers would occasionally join in with their home drinking. Natasha and Clare also talk about the ways in which they encourage their mothers to join in drinking 'to block things out'. Natasha and Clare felt that their mothers had never been able to "lash out" or do anything for themselves. Natasha and Clare encouraged them, therefore, to adopt the same home-based drinking practices that they were developing - drinking to block things out. The older girls felt that drinking at home, especially when their mothers joined in, was a highly symbolic statement to their families and the outside world. Natasha and Clare explain:

Natasha: "What I didn't know when I was younger is that mam is just as miserable as us... you just think of your Mam as Mam, but now I'm older and that we get on better, more friends like... I see she's as miserable and fed-up with her lot as we are... dad, me brothers it don't make any difference... when Clare, Marie, Mam and me knocked back that Vodka and Sherry it started off 'cos Mam, David (her brother) and Dad had a row about David's bike and that, Mam were just fed-up with 'em, when they went out... she don't drink much, but she didn't care like... it was fingers up to 'em, we knew we'd get right up their noses like.."

Clare: "It ain't done is it? A bunch of women sitting in of a night, getting as pissed as newts... Mam and I had a session last Saturday night... they (father and brothers) were going to the club... I fetched in a bottle of wine from town, just to cheer ourselves up like... when I got home the house were a tip, they'd trashed it... Mam were in tears, I got her to think 'fuck it' (unclear on tape) we had the wine and then started on Dad's home brew... steaming we were... no worries, no hassles, just us at home in our own little world completely legless, pissed as assholes... weren't Dad mad... he hates seeing women drunk like..."

Other older girls would also spend evenings at Marie's or Kelly's when they were fed-up. Natasha and Clare explain:

Clare: "You go over there to see what's going on and who is about, and if a bunch of you is fed-up, then yea we might decide to get slowly pissed... but sometimes we just have a bit of a laugh like that night

with poppers¹¹, you just have to be in the right mood".

Natasha: "It's different drinking round here (at Kelly's), it's usually because we're pissed off, so we drink to block things out and get even more depressed, but it don't matter 'cos we're depressed to start off with like... if we wanted a good time we wouldn't stay in would we, we'd go t' town or something".

The older girls have certainly discovered that alcohol is a depressant substance. The next four chapters will demonstrate that this is a very different effect to those that they generally seek when drinking alcohol in a range of public settings. Prior to the older girls developing their home based 'drinking to block things out', drinking alcohol appeared to be inextricably related to their need to: have fun, to lose their inhibitions, to gain confidence and so forth. These are very different intentional behaviours from drinking alcohol for its depressive effects. As a depressant substance, alcohol dulls the activity of the brain. It slows things down. The older girls (and some of their mothers) are drinking at home because they want to 'block things out'. This is a new drinking activity that the addictions literature has not yet commented on. This drinking activity will be examined in more detail in chapter 7 when the whole range of young women's drinking behaviours will be examined within a more broadly based theoretical framework.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to introduce the contexts in which the young girls, middle girls and older girls live their everyday lives. I have outlined the ways in which although the young women are separated by age and space, they are also connected by being situated within very specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts. I have also demonstrated that all the young women are subjected to a broad

¹¹ 'Poppers' (Butyl Nitrates) are widely available. The term 'poppers' came from the small glass capsule in which the liquids were available which made a popping noise when broken open to release the contents. Nitrates for recreational use now come in small bottles with screw or plug tops.

'Poppers' are generally inhaled. The effects of the drug start after about 15 seconds, and lasts for up to 3 minutes. The nitrates cause blood pressure to go down, by enlarging the blood vessels, which makes the heart pump rapidly. Users' experiences vary, but often a rush light headedness is accompanied by a brief intense high and a feeling of dizziness. There may be hot flushing as the body relaxes, which lasts seconds as does a carefree feeling of well-being (Release, 1991).

range of regulations and controls in their homes. I have suggested that these are related to hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations.

As well as examining a range of 'imposed' activities' and 'filling in time' activities, I have also examined a range of 'active activities' that the young women chose to become involved in at their homes. I suggested that in addition to watching videos, 'soaps' and listening to music, they were also utilizing 'day dreaming' and 'fantasying' to help time pass, and to provide 'psychic excitement' in situations which otherwise have little perceptual variety. I also demonstrated that the young women appear to have very few opportunities to experience pleasure.

I then examined the ways in which the young women were first introduced to alcohol within their homes. I suggested that in general, working class households only entertain friends and family in their homes by drinking alcohol for ritual celebrations such as birthdays, and other celebrations. It is within these contexts, therefore, that most of the research participants were initially introduced to alcohol and discovered that drinking could change the way that they were feeling. Finally, I demonstrated that the older girls had developed a new type of home based drinking activity - 'drinking to block things out'. I suggested that this drinking activity was very different from their range of public drinking activities.

The purpose of the next chapter 'Organized Worlds' is to provide a detailed account of the young women's activities in a range of organized settings. The purpose being to demonstrate the ways in which they feel that they have very little power to determine the range of activities that they become involved in at their schools, youth centres and other public settings that they visit.

CHAPTER FOUR

ORGANIZED WORLDS

I SCHOOLS AND YOUTH CENTRES

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed account of the young women's activities in a range of organized settings. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will examine the young women's experiences in their schools and youth centres. The second section will examine their experiences in a range of public leisure settings. I will examine both leisure settings targeted at young people, for example ice-skating rinks and roller skating rinks, and 'adult' leisure settings such as restaurants and pubs. It is important to examine this range of settings because it is not merely at home that the young women 'learn' about the social scripts that are associated with hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations. I will demonstrate that the young women also 'learn' about 'feminine scripts' at their schools, their youth centres and in other settings that they visit. This chapter will examine, therefore, the ways in which the young women feel that they have very little power in the organized settings that they visit.

Thirty seven of the sixty four young women in my sample group were still attending school. Although I was able to attend school with both the Crofton and Blummerstone young women during the course of my fieldwork, I was not able to attend school with the Abraxus young women. This was because, unlike the Blummerstone and Crofton young women the Abraxus young women went to three different schools and I did not have the time to organize visits during my fieldwork period. Extensive descriptions of the schools that the younger age group attended will not, therefore, be possible. But because I did manage to talk to the Abraxus young women about their experiences at school, during the course of interviews and group discussions, I will include their accounts where appropriate. I attended school with the Blummerstone and Crofton young women in an effort to develop an in-depth understanding of the varying contexts in which they experienced their schooling. All of the 12 to 15 year olds were attending school on a regular basis. This was not so for the 16 to 17 year olds. This was because some of them were playing truant, some were pregnant or single parents,

while others were on Youth Training Schemes or were unemployed. None of the Crofton 16 or 17 year old young women had jobs. Only a few of the Blummerstone 17 to 21 year olds had jobs. These jobs were part-time, and all of the jobs were low paid with poor working conditions.

Section I of this chapter will suggest that there are three main factors that influence the young women's perceptions of their education. These are: the school environment; relations within the schools; and limited career options. I will suggest that first, all of these factors are interrelated, and second, that cumulatively, these factors suggest to most of the young women that their futures will be very limited. This was especially so for the Blummerstone middle and older girls. The Crofton middle girls, were slightly more optimistic about their futures; possible explanations for this variation between the groups will also be explored.

I(i) The school environment: "I bet other schools aren't like this!"

Crofton School was a Community College that included a sixth form. When I visited the Crofton school I observed a very pleasant and well looked after school environment. The school was situated in large landscaped grounds. There was a large conservatory type main entrance, filled with plants and displays of pupil's art and craft works. The rooms and corridors of the school were painted in bright primary colours. This created a feeling of airiness within the buildings. During breaks and lunch hours I joined the young women in the 'girls' room'. (This room was for the use of young women in the fifth form and above). This was also painted in bold primary colours and was filled with comfortable chairs, a small television and a kettle. The young women sat here between lessons and in their breaks and lunch hours.

During my visits to the school, the reception, office, and teaching staff seemed friendly, approachable, and ready to listen to the young people. Many of the staff showed an active interest in what I was doing and asked questions about my research, as did many of the young people. (This was in stark contrast to my experience at Blummerstone School where I was ignored by both staff and students). The Crofton young women

told me that there were many school meetings about various issues¹. Crofton School teachers were, therefore, making an effort to make the young women feel that they had an active part to play in the decision-making process within their school.

In contrast to Crofton School, the Blummerstone School did not have a sixth form. Blummerstone was a shabby, 1950's secondary modern type school building, situated in the middle of a tarmac yard and a netball court. The football pitch, situated behind the school was the only green area attached to the school. There was a lot of graffiti throughout Blummerstone school, much of it was explicitly sexist and racist. The young women did not feel that they had an active part to play in the school. They disliked both the school environment and the way in which the teachers related to them. They found little in the school with which to identify actively. Their behaviour was very reminiscent of the young women in McRobbie's (1991, p58) study where she comments that the young women:

"were *in* school but not *at* the school... it was quickly forgotten when they got home".

There is much research which has asked whether individual schools make any differences to pupil's performances at school (Rutter et al, 1979; Jencks, 1972 cited in Mirza 1992). The conclusions from these studies are however, inconclusive. Mirza (1992, p52) suggests that a school in isolation can, if it is well run, affect pupil outcome. She also endorses Rutter et al's 1979 conclusions that 'Schools can do much to foster good behaviour and attainments, and that even in a disadvantaged area, schools can be a force for the good' (Mirza, 1992). This was certainly not happening at Blummerstone, but it did appear to be happening to some degree at Crofton.

I(i)a Relations within the schools: "Teachers treat you like crap... boys treat you like double and triple crap, you get used to it..."

The different relations between the sexes was also noticeably different in the two schools. Although the young men at Crofton School actively aggravated the young

¹ On my second day at Crofton School I attended a meeting with the young women about the opening hours of the school swimming pool. All the year groups sent two nominated representatives to the meeting.

women, their action did not appear to be overtly sexist and aggressive. The young men called the young women names; they criticised their clothing; and played practical jokes on them. The young women retaliated by doing the same to the young men. But at Blummerstone School the atmosphere appeared to be very different. An atmosphere of hostility seemed to pervade the school. Young men hung around the corridors and doors waiting to forcibly grab other young men and more often young women. The majority of the Blummerstone young men were very much 'macho lads' (Mac An Ghaill, 1994). Like the young men in Mac An Ghaill's study, the Blummerstone 'macho lads' were interested in 'acting tough', 'having a laugh' and 'having a good time' (Mac An Ghaill, 1994, p56). Mac An Ghaill suggests that 'macho lads' reject the official three Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) and the unofficial three Rs (rules, routines and regulations). Instead they opted for the three Fs - fighting, fucking and football (Mac An Ghaill, 1994, p58). The Blummerstone 'macho lads' pulled the young women's hair, they spat on them, punched them, and often stole their books to later throw them away. The young women felt that there were 'No Go' areas within the school. An example of this was an open plan staircase that all the young women avoided. The young women avoided this stairway because they knew young men would be standing underneath to look up their skirts and to grab their ankles. The young women were also used to having abuse shouted at them continually. The young women were addressed as "Hag", "Slag", "Dog", "Cunt", "Cow" and "Bitch". Julian Wood's (1984) work suggest that young men adopt these type of names for young women so that they can look down on them and give themselves an illusion of confidence. In general, the Blummerstone young men in the young women's class were less academically able than the young women, they also often appeared to be physically smaller and less mature than them. It seems reasonable, therefore, to suggest that the young men were using their vocal powers, because this was one of the few ways that they were able to demean the young women and at the same time construct a feeling of verbal superiority over them.

The Blummerstone young women also had to tolerate young men referring to them as "Fat arse", "No tits", "Thunder thighs", "Wobble Arse", "Puke face", and "Skinny Arse". They hated all the names that the boys called them. But they also explained to

me how they considered that the 'bitch', 'cunt' and 'dog' labels were more generic terms of abuse than the "fat arse" "no tits" and "wobble arse" insults. The young women felt that these insults were much more targeted labels of abuse which drew attention their individual physical characteristics. The young men's behaviour at both schools reinforced Stafford's (1991) conclusions that most young men see young women merely as objects. Furthermore their behaviour also reinforced Wood's (1984) comment that young men spend most of their time assessing women according to their 'component parts'.

Although the young women hated being called by these insulting names, they still accepted such behaviour from young men as 'normal'. They suggested that the only way of dealing with the young men's sexist language and behaviour was to ignore it. Deborah and Kelly aged 16 explain:

Deborah: "If you try to say owt they only get worse... it's better to ignore it... they get bored like, you just have to switch off and accept that's boys... it gets to you sometimes like, other times you just take it like..."

Kelly: "They're morons ain't they? They think it makes them dead hard like... we think it makes them look stupid, they keep on and we have to take it... it makes them worse if you do owt back, they just think you fancy them... just ignore it... they play up even more if they know they got you going like..."

The Blummerstone young women's experiences appeared to be very similar to those of Liz Stanley (1988) who discovered that verbal retaliation can often be wilfully misread by men as 'playing hard to get'. Not saying anything also seemed to be the strategy adopted by the female teachers who were also referred to as 'slags' and 'bitches' by the young men. The young women had no confidence in their teacher's efforts at controlling or disciplining the young men's unruly behaviours.

Lisa: "Most of them are afraid of them... they don't do nothing"

Nicky: "A few bloody boys run it over here, they (teachers) are pathetic... they don't do owt"

(Lisa age 16, Nicky aged 17)

Many of the young women were aware that the boys' behaviour was unwanted, unsolicited and very embarrassing. They were not, however, aware that often the boys behaviour constituted sexual harassment. Lisa explains:

- Lisa: "I hate the way Clay and them hang around at the lockers... they grab yer tits, pinch yer bum... their hands are all over you... it's awful! I hate it, like when I were on, he shouted to everyone 'Lisa dog breath has got a stinking jam rang on get out the disinfectant'... he kept on at me for days like that... put down stuff on chairs and that said I was showing through... I hate him"
- Me: "Didn't you try to complain to one of the teachers?"
- Lisa: "What's the point? They don't care, the women can't be bothered and some of the men are as bad as the lads".

Laura (14), Sara (14), Kelly (13), and Donna (15) from Abraxus talk about their experience of sexual harassment in their school:

- Laura: "One teacher keeps touching you (Donna and Sara all say name of teacher), yea, he's always touching you, if you're developing like... he's fondled me tits at the side like, he has, I hate him... he makes you do things like bend down in front of the class and call you names and stuff..."
- Donna: "When I were there (attending the school) he were saying things like oh is that yer bra strap poking out of yer shirt... he's always saying things like that in his stupid voice... you've matured nicely over the holidays ain't you... you can't really get back at teachers, they don't believe you if you tell them that he is picking on you, they know he's a perv though, they stick together."
- Kelly: "What about Jeanette then, Marie and Della and them saw her and Mr X snogging in the lab... no-one believed us 'til one of the parents caught them in a car... they were both suspended, but Jeanette says she was forced to do it like or he'd tell her parents and that she'd been thieving and she hadn't... It's right alright, Jenny and them said he'd been coming on to them, she wouldn't go we him and he called her an evil girl who was just teasing him because really she wanted his hands all over her tits... I'd have slapped him..."
- Laura: "When X came onto me I spat on the floor, I'd love him to be really found out... they'd stick together even then... the teachers ain't any better than the boys... you can hit them back can't you... I'm bigger than a lot of them... they still call yer names all the time though even though they know that you'll thump them for it... they think they're so fucking smart... clever, smart boys we large dicks... stupid little stupid boys we no brains and even smaller dicks..."

The behaviour that the Abraxus and Blummerstone young women described to me ranged from verbal sexual harassment to intimidating and embarrassing behaviour which included sexual molestation. Yet they regarded such behaviour as 'normal' male behaviour towards young women. Gaby Weiner (1985) and Carrie Herbert's (1989) work on sexual harassment in schools supports their assertions by demonstrating how

frequently young women are sexually harassed. Herbert's (1989, p169) work is particularly helpful on the subject because she confronts some of the problems associated with definitions, labelling and the confusion which arises for young women because of the similarity between sexual harassment and 'normal' male behaviour that they encounter on a day to day basis.

The Abraxus and Blummerstone young women talked very differently about their teachers than the Crofton young women who felt that their teachers were by and large 'fair'. Rebecca, Kelly and Becky from Crofton suggest that their teachers are: "Fair, like"; "If you behave then they leave you alone"; "Like what you'd expect from teachers... sometimes a pain, but usually alright"; "If we're mucking around they let rip... normally they're okay though". Furthermore, Becky and Charlotte from Crofton who were in the VI Form studying for A levels, commented that they were treated differently now that they were sixth formers: "Like - he's much better we us now... like he wants us to have all these discussions"; "Yea, it used to be all 'sit up and shut up'".

Other research (Banks, et al, 1992) suggests that sixth form tutors cultivate more egalitarian, friendly relations with their students, whereas YTS and other tutors tend towards a despairing, depersonalising relationship. This is further supported by the Blummerstone middle and older girls' statements, which were a stark contrast to how the Crofton young women felt about their teachers:

- Lisa: "The teachers hate us... they do... it's about keeping us in our place and treating us like shit"²
- Liz: "They're always telling us what crap we are".
- Julia: "They don't give a damn... so why should we do what they tell us? There's no point... so we just muck around... if I didn't have me

² Some of my experiences while at Blummerstone School reinforced Lisa's perceptions. This is well illustrated by the system for gaining access to toilets. On each occasion the young women needed access to the toilets outside of 'break times', they had to go to the reception to collect and sign for the toilet key. The young women also had to write down the time that the key had been collected and returned. When I asked for access to the girls' toilets outside of a 'break time' (I was busy talking to the young women during breaks), I was shown the staff toilets and given the code number to gain entry. The receptionist told me "Oh no dear, you don't want to go through all that bother, it's only to keep the girls in line... anyway the girls toilets aren't very pleasant at the best of times". This type of experience, combined with my observation and the young women's comments, certainly helped me to develop an understanding of some of the reasons that the young women were so unhappy at school.

mags to read in class I don't know what I would do... fall asleep, skive off..."³

Most of the Blummerstone middle girls did little more than 'muck around' at school. Their behaviour appeared to be very similar to that of the young women described by Griffin in Typical Girls (1985), who were trying to relieve their boredom by 'having a laugh'. As Weiner (1985) has suggested:

"schools often do not help young people realize their full potential... instead, they effectively reduce their aspirations, so that they accept their station in life...(Weiner, 1985, p87).

The young women's accounts of their experiences at school, together with my fieldwork observation suggest that relationships between staff and pupils contribute as much to the general school environment as the condition of school buildings and other school resources. I further suggest that the general environment in which the Abraxus and Blummerstone young women attended school were contributing significantly towards the developing gender relations between the pupils. By tolerating the young men's offensive behaviour towards both the young women and the female teachers, the Blummerstone school was also reinforcing the normality of young women being powerless to challenge the behaviour of the young men. The general school environment was also contributing significantly to how the young women felt about their academic potential, and their possible future career options as the next section will demonstrate.

I(i)b Possible career options: "There aren't any jobs for the likes of us are there?"

At Crofton, Rebecca, Kelly, Vicki, Tania, Jo, Jenny and Natasha were all studying for their GCSEs. They all told me that it was important to 'have exams because there aren't enough jobs'. Kelly, Vicki and Tania told me that they were going to stay on at school to re-take some of their GCSEs and take their CPVE. Becky and Charlotte were the only young women in my sample group who were taking A-levels. Jo, Jenny

³ The Blummerstone young women's behaviour at school is very reminiscent of the 'counter school culture' identified by Paul Willis (1978). The counter-school culture was a culture of resistance to school and the authority it imposed. Willis suggested that young men, through their own activity and ideological development, reproduced themselves as working class.

and Natasha were going to try and obtain YT places. Jo said she was going to "chance the real world, see if I can get a YT in a office or something". While Jenny said:

"I'll try YT... I can't stand the thought of still being at school... school kids... I want to be treated like an adult not like an imbecile in uniform, regulation colours and stuff... I want to be meself, free to do what I want to do, it does yer head in being told day in and day out do this do that... I'm getting out as fast as I can"

All the Crofton young women told me that they weren't 'brainy'. Despite this they were all prepared to take their exams and afterwards were going to try to obtain some sort of further training. At Blummerstone, none of the young women had any expectations of passing their GCSEs. Most of them merely found school to be boring and irrelevant. Acker (1994, p90) suggests:

"many studies in the gender and education literature imply that teachers play an important part in the thwarting of girls' potential... sometimes there is direct action, such as treating the sexes differently or holding differential expectations for them. Sometimes the input is more indirect, part of the school's 'gender regime' or 'gender code', whereby messages about models of masculinity and femininity are contained in everyday school practices such as pupil grouping and timetabling, and in the sexual division of labour among teachers".

When the Blummerstone young women talked to me about their experience of school, they used the following explanations:

"There's no point, not for us round here... no jobs, no YT... so what's the point? "We've been bored all our lives stuck in schools learning crap... it's not for the likes of us..."; "Folk around here don't do qualifications... it ain't for us like, there used to be jobs and that round, now it's YT or nowt... usually nowt"; "There's no point"; "It was total crap"; "It's a waste of time we wern't going anywhere"; "It don't teach out owt, just keeps you in line, disciplined like"; "Geography, history and that, it's got nothing to do with real life has it?".

The Blummerstone young women also felt that they had little choice in the matter of their future careers. I suggest that their visions for their futures were fairly accurate. This is supported by other research, for example Banks et al (1992) who suggest that in 1973 55% of young women aged 16 to 17 were employed but by 1985 only 25% were employed. Furthermore, recent local figures suggest that only 12% of 16-17 year old young women have found full-time employment (McCue, 1996). Workers in the county where my research took place have been victims of low pay. They earn 'less

than 50% of the national average (McCue, 1996). Furthermore city workers earned £3.57 per hour in 1995, compared to the national average of £8.66, making the region's women the poorest paid in Britain, and the men the lowest earners in England' (Oppenheim and Harker, 1996). The county also has more than the national average number of families in receipt of income support (Oppenheim and Harker, 1996). Given that the young women's school experience is set in this broader context, it is not surprising, therefore, that the city based Abraxus and Blummerstone young women feel that their school experience has reinforced to them that they have limited academic abilities, and career options.

The Blummerstone middle girls felt that their life trajectories were fairly well signalled. Their lives would be very similar to the lives of their older friends, their parents, and their parent's friends who lived on the estate. They were very aware, therefore, that different classes of people in society have different life opportunities and chances. As Willis (1990, p12) has suggested "membership of a race, class, gender and region are not only learned, they're lived and experimented with".

Within the sociology of education there are many explanations for why young people feel that they are doomed to fail at school⁴. I do not wish to suggest that the Blummerstone young women's low self-esteem and low expectations are merely 'products' of their schooling. Other factors such as: families; social class; parent's educational experiences and so forth, have also influenced them; but I would like to

⁴ A thorough examination of this phenomena is outside the scope of this thesis. For further explanation of such behaviour I suggest the work of Bernstein (1975; 1982) and Donald (1985).

The work of Bernstein, for example, proposed a number of increasingly complex models to demonstrate how the classification and framing of knowledge in the curriculum, along with different forms of pedagogy, produces specific subject positions for different social groups (Bernstein, 1975; 1982).

The work of Donald (1985) has viewed 'schooling as a process producing certain forms of subjectivity' (Donald, 1985, p218). Donald argues that the curriculum establishes hierarchical relations between different forms of knowledge. At the same time, this symbolic organization also generates a network of subject positions in relation to these hierarchies. That is, it defines what it is to be educated, cultivated, discriminating, clever and so forth. Donald further suggests that this system of differentiation is presented within schools as part of the natural consequence of the psychological and intellectual aptitudes of the people who occupy those subject positions (Donald, 1985).

suggest that their school experiences have certainly reinforced their negative views regarding their educational abilities. It is also evident that this pattern is not so discernable in the Crofton young women who come from very similar social backgrounds, but who have had different experiences and have decided to stay on at school. Becky explains:

"I'm not all that good... bright like... but I might as well try with me A-levels, I stand more chance with them than without, you got to have qualifications these days haven't you, it's hopeless without... I don't really know what I will do, but I might as well stay on, it beats being on YT or the dole don't it?"

To the Blummerstone young women staying at school was never an option. They had resigned themselves to their very limited options or a YT scheme and probable unemployment. Now that I have introduced the contexts in which the young women were experiencing their schooling, I would like to examine the contexts of their youth centres. In chapter 2 I explained that because British youth work has been based upon principles that are very different from most other hierarchical adult and young people relationships, I had hoped that the young women would be able to experience a very different environment to those of their homes and schools. The next section of the chapter will illustrate that this was not to be the case.

I(ii) Hanging about at the Youth Centre

The three youth centres were very different in appearance, size and in the facilities that they offered young people. The Abraxus Youth Centre had been built in the early 1970s by Urban Aid monies. From a distance, the outside of the youth centre appeared to be that of a large hexagonal building without any windows. On closer examination, it became apparent that the building had large dark glass windows with metal security bars fixed over them. The building was one storey, the central hall area rose into the roof space with smaller rooms and a kitchen radiating from the central area (See figure 2 for the layout of the youth centre). The Youth Centre was always very dark and the walls and floor were worn and shabby in appearance, as was all the furniture. There were two pool tables, a tennis table, a dart board, six slot machines and a satellite television. The slot machines were not accessible on girls group evenings, neither were the interview, staff, or store rooms. Furthermore, the serving

hatch was also locked although we did have access to the kitchen. During the winter the centre was very cold. The heating in the building was inadequate and was often broken. On Wednesday nights the Youth Centre was only accessible to girls group members. No young men were allowed to enter the premises and they were discouraged from hanging around the car park attached to the youth centre.

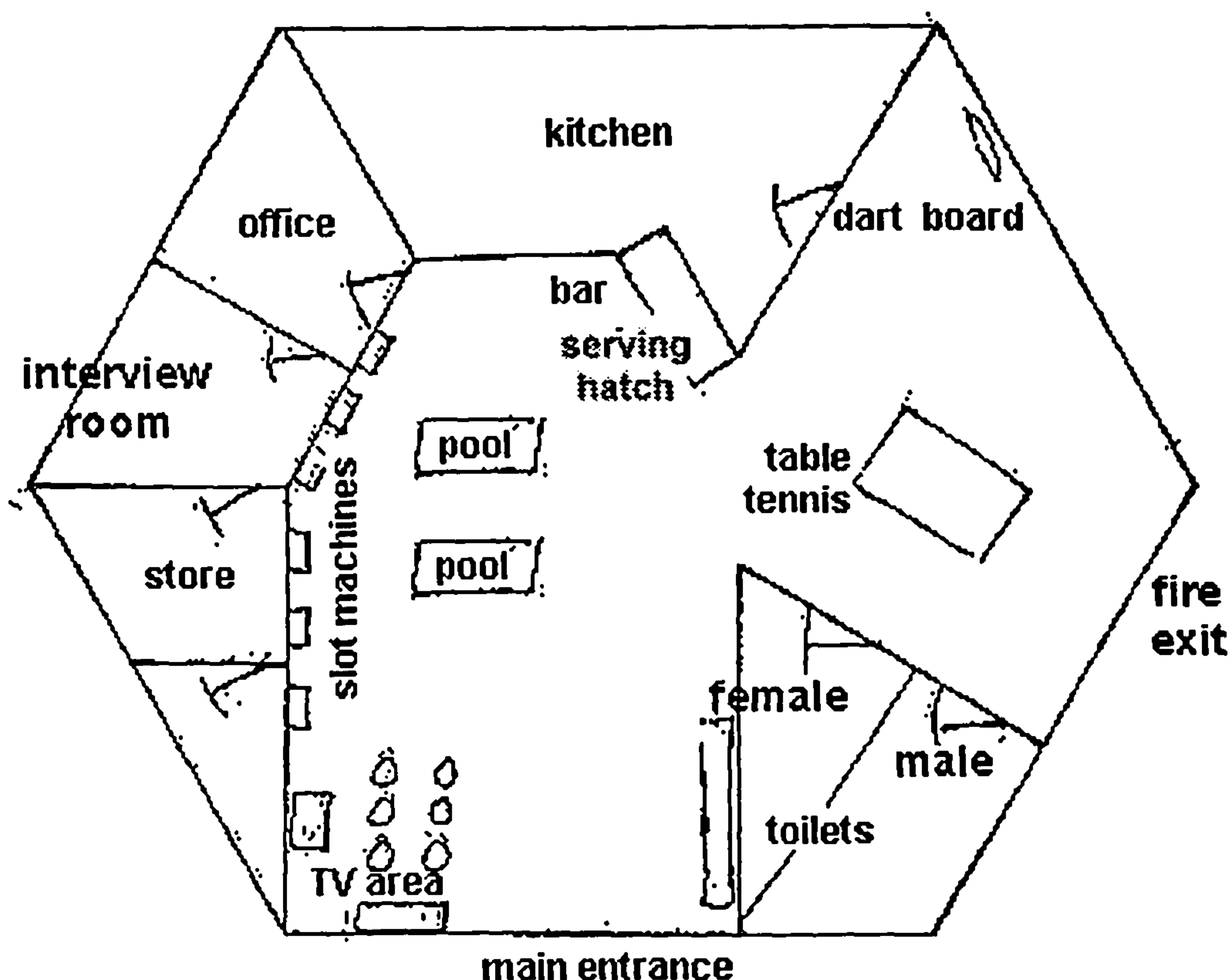


Figure 2. Abraxus Youth Centre

The Blummerstone Youth Centre was built in the late 1970s. It was by far the largest of the three youth centres (See Figure 3 for the layout of the youth centre). The Blummerstone Youth Centre provided a large sports area, a weights room, a kitchen, a television/video room, a crèche, a staff office, a girls room and a large open area for pool, darts and table tennis. The Blummerstone Youth Centre was the only centre that had a separate girls' room. The Centre had been recently painted by groups of young people, it had been painted in bold primary colours and was covered with young people's posters. The furniture and general decoration was very much better than that at the Abraxus. On Tuesday nights the centre was closed to everyone except girls'

group members. Once inside the centre they had access to all the youth centre facilities except the weights room. This was because neither of the female workers were qualified instructors.

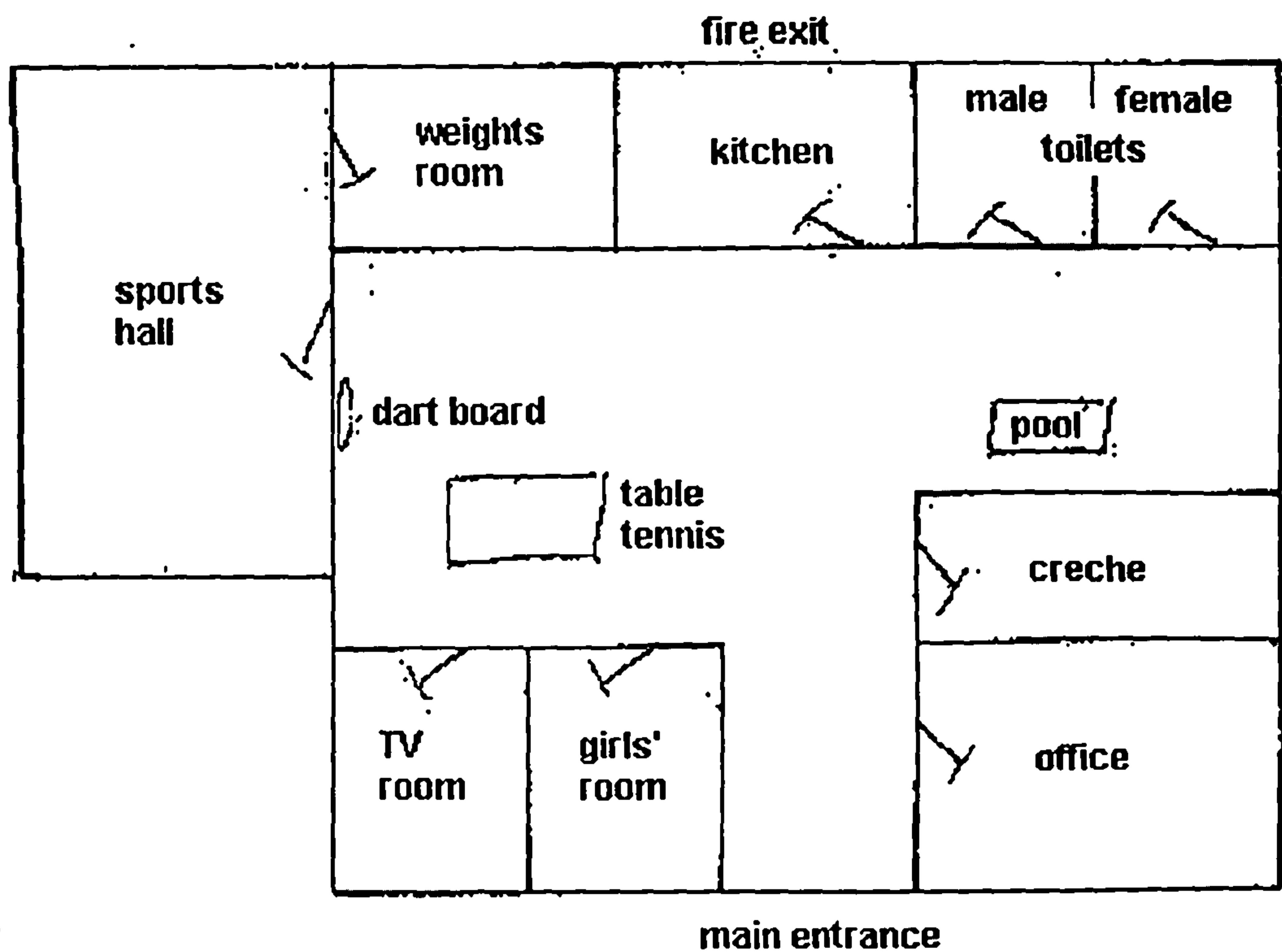


Figure 3. Blummerstone Youth Centre

The Crofton Youth Centre appeared to be very run down both outside and inside. The paint was peeling off the outside of the building and many of the wooden windows were rotting. Inside the walls and floors were very stained and in a poor state of repair. Many of the tables and chairs were broken. The Youth Centre consisted of a large sports hall with a partitioned area for a staff room, a pool table, a dart board and table tennis (See Figure 4 for the layout of the centre). The Youth Centre also had a television room and a kitchen with a serving hatch. The girls' group took place in the television room during a general mixed senior youth group session. The young men bitterly resented the girls taking over the television room on Monday evenings. The kitchen could not be used throughout the duration of my fieldwork due to a cockroach infestation. Despite striking differences between the three youth centres, there were also striking similarities; without exception all the young women had to contend with deep resentment from the young men who attended the youth centres. The young men

thought that 'girls' nights' were unfair. At all three youth centres the young women often found themselves being exposed to the young men's physical violence when they were trying to gain access to their 'girls' groups'.

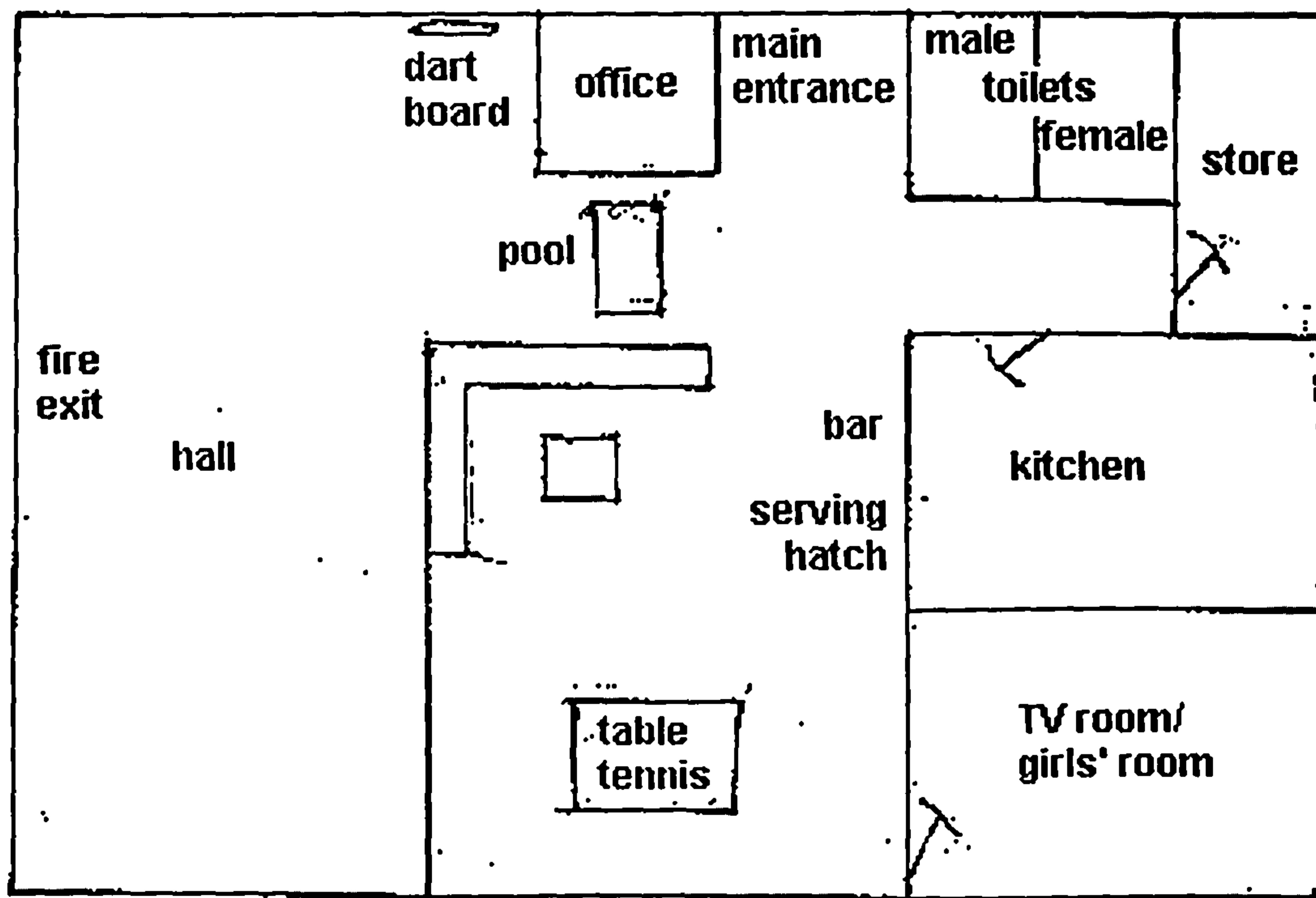


Figure 4. Crofton Youth Centre

None of the young women were able, therefore, to obtain the freedom or space that they sought in their youth centres. Gillespie et al, (1992, p121) suggest that young men outnumber young women at youth centres because young women have other things to do. My research suggests that the young women had very few alternatives to youth centre provision. I have already presented the limited activities that they were able to become involved in at home. This is why they were prepared to go to their youth centres even though they often felt vulnerable and exposed to young men's antagonistic and offensive behaviour there.

Nava (1992, p14) suggests that:

"boys often physically disturb girls' actions, physically appropriate facilities and exercise power thorough their ability to project the *threat* of physical assault, both over girls and women workers; and it is this kind of rough 'masculine' behaviour which effectively excludes most girls (and quite a number of boys)

from youth centres".

Female youth workers were aware of this, hence the development of 'girls groups' in their youth centres. But this did not remedy the situation. It seemed to make things worse. The young men (invariably supported by male youth workers) felt that it was unfair to have single sex youth sessions. The young men felt that they were being discriminated against! The consequence of this was that the young men in all three youth centres, did as much as they possibly could to disrupt the weekly girls' group sessions. Invariably all three groups of young women had to 'fight' their way through groups of young men merely to gain entry into the youth centres on their designated 'girls' night'. Often the Abraxus and Blummerstone young men would break into the buildings by force. I witnessed young men throwing bottles through the Abraxus Youth Centre windows, three young men setting fire to girls' art work in Blummerstone and many young men kicking and punching young women at the Crofton Youth Centre. Nava (1984, p25) suggests that separate girls provision fails to challenge or to offer possibilities to boys except in so far as they feel excluded from them. I further suggest that any real shift of ideas and power relationships in youth centres will only be accomplished through effective dialogues between young women, young men, and male and female youth workers.

Rebecca (aged 16) from Crofton explains how exhausting it was trying to defend young women's rights to the exclusive use of a room within the youth centre on one night a week:

"We always put with up them, they play football in here, fighting and screaming all the time... they take over the darts, pool, the cassettes, we don't get a look in... when we do we only get covered in bruises... it's fucking exhausting just trying to get what is ours to get, it ain't right, they (youth workers) know but they don't do owt... we need this room for girls group just once a week, it's not a lot to ask for is it?"

During the course of my fieldwork, the Crofton youth workers found it so difficult to defend the young women's rights that they actually stopped trying. The male youth workers were not interested in the young women's needs and resented being told what to do by a senior female youth worker. Consequently, the female youth workers were often treated no differently from the young women by both the male workers and the

young men! The young women did not seem to understand this, and were, therefore, often angry with the female youth workers because they felt that they were not doing enough to support them. Walkerdine (1989, p201) has suggested:

"girls grow up on one side of a sexual divide, already with myth and fantasy... They will be discriminated against because they are not men... the struggle is not easy and it raises many contradictions for the women with whom they come into contact".

This was certainly proving to be the case for the female youth workers who felt unable to empower the young women that they were working with.

Deborah and Kelly (aged 16) from Crofton were very fed up with young men's aggressive behaviour:

Kelly: "You have to tell them what it's like here... what it's like at home, at school and everywhere else... fucking boys everywhere, like they were owning the place. They never shut up and never leave us alone... don't matter what age they are they are all pathetic... it don't ever get better... I don't know why they're like it they just are"

Deb: "No-one asks us what we want to do of a night... there's more than pool, football and darts, and even if we want to do that we never get to join in wi' the boys always hogging it all... they're animals most of the time, they are... it's not fair like, we're all meant to be treated equal like but that's crap... no-one stands up to them, they do what they want and they always get away we it"

In general, all the young women who attended the youth centres were aware, in differing ways, of the unequal power that they held in relation to young men. The young women were learning, therefore, that they should merely 'accept' and 'cope' with the young men's overtly aggressive and offensive behaviours. As Campbell (1980) has stated boys being boys, becoming men, at their leisure comes out at once again in actuality as the boys being crude, over-physical and contemptuous of the girls. The fights that I witnessed between the young women and young men included the young men: pulling at the girls' hair and clothes; as well as punching; kicking; and spitting at the young women. Often the young women would lose the battles. On several occasions at the Crofton Youth Centre not even the male youth workers could gain entry to the girls room because the young men had barricaded the doors.

When the young women attended general mixed sessions at their youth centres, they were often denied access to the centre's resources by the boys behaviour. The only reason that the young women tolerated such conditions at their youth centres was because there were no alternatives in the areas that they lived in. Clare (aged 18), Kelly (aged 18), Natasha (aged 21), and Kerry-Ann (aged 20) from Blummerstone explain:

- Kerry-Ann: "The pubs are crap, we can't afford town, it's here or nowt, pathetic ain't it? Putting up wi' this lot (the boys), it don't change this place it's always been a pile of shit, always the same fucking lads, they make me sick most of them"
- Clare: "Have you really been round here (the estate) since you've come here? There's fuck all else here, it's home, or here, that's it"
- Kelly: "I just come to get out of the house, and I can bring him (her child). Nowt ever happens, it's the same folk, same hassle from the same boys, but you just get used to coming"
- Natasha: "I don't come here a lot now, once the weather gets worse I will I `spose... the pubs and that round here are crap.. there's owt else, nothing happens, you come here just in case something does happen...I don't miss girls night that's best, cos' we go out away from the boys"

I found the evenings that I spent at the Crofton and Blummerstone mixed session youth groups to be exhausting both mentally and physically. A typical mixed session at Blummerstone for example, would consist of approximately thirty five young men aged 15 to 23 and no more than ten young women aged 15 to 21 years of age. The young men continually harassed the young women. They would not allow them access to the sports room, to the computer games or to a variety of other equipment. The young women also had to tolerate the young men's aggressive and offensive behaviours in general. A typical 'mixed session youth group' at Crofton consisted of 25-30 young men and less than 8 young women. On several evenings at the Crofton Youth Centre large scale fights broke out amongst the groups of young men. This resulted in the centre closing early on these evenings. The young women were never involved in these fights but always had to share the ensuing 'sanctions' imposed upon the youth centre.

I observed young women being harassed and assaulted constantly by the young men in

their youth centres. At Crofton after a long fought campaign, the young women were successful in gaining access to the pool table, but they continued to encounter harassment each time that they attempted to play. The young men pushed, thumped, spat at and fondled them when they were trying to playing pool and other games in the Blummerstone and Crofton youth centres. Kelly, Hayley and Natasha explain:

Kelly: "How can you concentrate with someone's hand on yer bum, or with someone grabbing yer tits when your lining up for a shot, it's hopeless... the worse thing we've ever done is beat them in the pool tournament because they've been even worse since then"

Hayley: "I gave up trying to get anywhere near the darts board years ago, it weren't worth it, Janine got a dart thrown in her leg once by R, they're pigs, they have the darts to themselves... if they don't thump you they try putting you off, keeping on at you about how useless we are, going on about what we are wearing, talking filth and that, it's not worth the grief... let them get on with it"

Natasha: "I used to get in there (the weights room) with Mandy, but it wasn't worth it, they'd pull my hair, touch me up, call me all names, talk about me figure, shape and that... B even pushed me up against the bars and ripped me top off, the others just laughed and said I was asking for it coming in dressed up like a tart... even C who I used to go out with joined in with them keeping on at me - you give up in the end - it ain't worth the hassle... that's how they get away with it" (Kelly aged 16 from Crofton, Hayley aged 19 and Natasha aged 21 from Blummerstone.)

The only times that the Blummerstone youth women could really escape the Blummerstone young men's aggressive and offensive behaviour was when they attended 'girls group excursions'. However, this was not the case for the Crofton young women. This was because the boys from the Crofton Youth Centre also managed to spoil their excursions. On one occasion they found out which film we were going to see. They turned up at the cinema and sat two rows behind us. They threw popcorn at us until the youth worker asked the manager to intervene. On another occasion six young men shouted obscenities at the young women while they were waiting for the mini-bus to take them to the 'Rocky Horror Show'. (A vital component in seeing the Rocky Horror Show is to dress up as one of the characters. On this occasion all the young women had chosen to dress as the character who wore black lacy basques, black fish-net stockings, suspenders and a great deal of make-up). The young men from the youth centre shouted the following:

- A: "Fucking hell Becks, a face like yours and your going to start kerb-crawling... yer ought to pay us to gob us off"
- B: "Oi Kelly, if you're after a good fucking you might as well stay over here - we're fucking brilliant at fucking, especially with slags like you"
- C: "Ugly, ugly, fucking ugly all that bloody flesh is fucking revolting ... (unclear) fucking good fucking that's what you all want... fucking come over here then fuckers..."
- A: "Fuckers, fuckers, fucking fucking fuckers that's what slags you are..."

But it was not just the young men from the youth centre who behaved in overtly offensive ways towards the young women. They also encountered similar obscenities from other young men that they encountered on their evenings out. The young women were angry and upset by young men spoiling their evenings out, but they also felt that there was little they could do to compete. Deborah explains:

"We ought to do something... anything back to them. But we don't 'cos there's owt we can do in return, slagging them off, giving them the finger, just makes them worse, so we do owt and they get away wi it... it makes you feel so cheap and it shouldn't because it's them not us!"

Deborah's statement illustrates how many of the young women felt. Yet not only did the young men's aggressive behaviours intimidate and frighten them, it also ultimately threatened the future of all the girls groups at the three youth centres. The youth workers at Abraxus, Blummerstone and Crofton Youth Centres found it increasingly difficult to develop strategies to deal with the young men's disruptive and violent behaviours. By the end of my fieldwork, therefore, the Crofton and Abraxus girls' groups had been suspended indefinitely⁵.

⁵ When I interviewed Rachel and Sara from Abraxus in September 1992, they told me that the girls' group was no longer based at the Youth Centre. Prior to the girls' group moving the young men's violence had escalated to the point where one young woman had her arm broken during an attempt to disrupt the girls' group. The young men had also set fire to the Youth Centre. At this point the youth workers decided that it was no longer safe or viable offering girls only groups. The girls' group moved to a Community Education building. The young men followed. The girls' group eventually closed in March 1993. The young men caused over £20,000 worth of damage to the new building. The Youth Centre is now only open to mixed sessions, and is only open in daylight hours. The young men's continual campaign of violence and intimidation was ultimately successful. Girls' only sessions have been abandoned, and none of the young women who were in my sample group now attend the centre.

The story for the Crofton Girls' Group is very similar. Most of the young women had given up trying to gain access to the girls' room by March 1992. They had given in to the young men. The girls' room reverted back to a television room. By May most of the young women had

The young women disliked the sexist objectification that they had to contend with. They were well aware of the imbalance of power in the situations they frequently found themselves in at school, in their youth centres and in a range of other public settings, but they also felt unable to do anything about them. During the course of my fieldwork it became very clear that the overtly sexist behaviour of young men commented on by sociologists such as Willis (1978) and Wood (1984) do not appear to have been modified during the last decade. My more up to date work, as well as the work of others such as Stafford (1991) suggest that young men continue to behave towards young women in overtly aggressive and sexist ways. During the course of my ethnographic fieldwork I soon learnt that young women invariably feel powerless when trying to cope with young men's intolerable sexist and offensive behaviour. This was particularly so in the range of public leisure settings that they visited. This then is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

II ACTIVITIES AWAY FROM SCHOOL AND YOUTH SERVICE PROVISION

Although this section is going to look at the range of activities that the young women became involved in away from the confines of 'youth provision', most of the activities/events that I will be examining in this section were actually organized by youth workers. The purpose of this section is threefold. First I will illustrate the ways in which young women feel that their access to a variety of leisure facilities is being surveyed and 'policed'; I will demonstrate the ways in which their behaviours are invariably sanctioned by adults and other young people. Second, I will demonstrate the ways in which young men, and men in general, continue to control the 'public spaces' that the young women are trying to gain access to. Third, I will try to link the 'enforced behaviour sanctions' that young women encounter in public spaces to a

stopped attending the centre altogether. By June both part-time female youth workers had given in their notices because they could no longer cope with the young men's violence. Only five of the young women were attending the centre on a very sporadic basis: Kelly; Deborah; Becky; Rebecca; and Natasha. By July it was decided to close the Youth Centre to all senior groups. In August the female senior youth worker resigned. She was replaced by a male worker. The Youth Centre was to remain closed to all young people over the age of fourteen until the beginning of the autumn term. When I went back to the centre in October, all of the young women who took part in my research had stopped attending.

broader framework of the restricted 'feminine scripts' that working class young women have access to in the 1990's.

II(i) Occasional leisure activities: "looking forward to it is often better than actually going"

During the course of my fieldwork I went on a variety of youth centre excursions with the young women. I even organized an ice-skating and tin pin bowling activity for the Crofton Girls' Group. The youth centre excursions I attended with the different groups are depicted on the table below:

	cinema	restaurant	ice-skating	roller-skating	ten pin bowling	theatre	pubs
A		1	2	1		1	1
B	2	2	2	1	2		6
C	1	1	1	2		1	1

Table 2. Girls' Group Excursions to Public Leisure Facilities
A = Abraxus, B = Blummerstone, C = Crofton

It is not possible here for me to comment on all the young women's excursions. I will comment, therefore, on the situations and circumstances that the young women encountered in ice-skating and roller-skating rinks; in restaurants; and in 'pubs'. I have chosen these venues because they are fairly typical of a range of public leisure settings that are targeted at young people. I suggest, therefore, that my observations, and the young women's accounts, should provide a detailed picture of their experiences in other similar leisure settings.

II(i)a Ice-skating and roller skating

None of the youth centres could afford to organize many excursions. Hence all the young women throughout the age groups looked forward to the planned events with much excitement. The atmosphere at ice-skating and roller skating rinks seemed to be very similar. At the roller skating rinks there appeared to be approximately 65%-70% young men, compared to 30%-35% of young women. At the ice-rinks there appeared

to be a 60%-65% balance of young men compared to 35%-40% young women. The young men at the rinks appeared to be in the age group 15-20 years of age. It was immediately apparent that the young men controlled the 'space' of the rinks and the activities that took place within them. Hey (1986) comments that the male ability to command and control a space seems to be one of the first lessons of social learning. The young women were used to normalising young men's control of a public places, it was something that they always had to contend with. Henley (1986, p38) suggests that women's femininity is gauged by how little space they take up, while men's masculinity is judged by their expansiveness and the strength of their flamboyant gestures. This certainly seemed to be the case at the rinks that we visited.

At both the roller skating and the ice-skating rinks young men were extremely troublesome towards all groups of young women. They stood in groups around the exits on the rinks in an attempt to prevent young women (and me on several occasions), from gaining easy access onto or off the rinks. Young men pushed young women on the ice, they pinched their bottoms, pulled and spat into their hair. Similar or the same groups of young men would skate very fast in opposite directions to everyone else so that they could collide with people and make them fall on the ice. (They were not allowed to do this on the roller-skating rinks, everyone had to skate in the same direction. I was told by one of the roller skating workers that this was to prevent the type of activities that were taking place at the ice-skating rinks).

Different groups of young men developed a range of aggravating tactics on the rinks. Other participants, including families and younger boys and girls had to merely tolerate the young men's anti-social behaviour. Throughout this thesis I will demonstrate the ways in which young women from an early age learn to accept young men's offensive behaviours as merely 'a normal feature of heterosexual men's activities in groups'. In general the young women felt that the young men spoilt their excursions at the ice-skating rink. Their feelings are reinforced by the following statements: "They ruin everything"; "why don't they pick on each other instead of girls all the time?"; "I'm not coming here again... it's they lads"; "they make it dangerous!"; "it ain't fair"; "they ruin it for everyone"; "Prats that's what they are, fucking prats".

On one occasion two the Abraxus middle girls and two of the young girls began talking and drinking lager with a group of young men who had previously been harassing the Abraxus Girls' Group. The young women who were joining in with the young men soon incurred the wrath of the group members. It was difficult to identify what the remaining members of the Abraxus girls' group disapproved of more strongly; the young women drinking at the rink, or them seeking the company of young men. As Sue Lees (1993) has suggested, young women are daily confronted with contradictions that they have to develop strategies to deal with. In this particular context, I suggest that the young women disapproved of the young women's 'unfeminine behaviours' in general. This is certainly supported by Sara's appraisal of the situation:

"Look at them, everyone can see they're chasing they lads... it's embarrassing, it's like they're boy mad.. that's what drink does to them... Trisha isn't that sort of girl really, not easy like, she ain't, that slut Laura is the one, not Trish, she don't behave like normal girls, but not Trish, it's the booze inside of her..."

On the occasions like the one documented above, individual young women were perceived by other young women as transgressing the norms associated with appropriate feminine behaviour. The young women were invariably called 'slags', 'drunken slags', 'stupid pigs' 'dogs' and so forth. These situations, and others that I will comment on in subsequent chapters, will illustrate the contradictions and sometimes bewildering situations that young women find themselves in. Both my fieldwork observations and the young women's accounts support the work of Barbara Hudson (1984) where she suggests that young women are daily confronted by conflicting sets of expectations, expectations that arise from connotations we attach to femininity and adolescence. The notion that young women should behave in a 'feminine way' is a theme that appeared to dominate young women's entry into the public arena. Nowhere was this more evident than when they tried to enter restaurants and public bars.

II(i)b Eating and drinking in public places

Although I did not visit many restaurants with either of the youth centre girls' groups, all the young women had visited restaurants and 'pubs' as part of their general

programme of 'girls' group activities'. Furthermore, many of the middle and older girls from Crofton and Blummerstone had visited various 'pubs' on many occasions. Fifty eight of the sixty four young women in my sample group had visited a 'pub'/working men's club or something similar on at least one occasion during 1992. Because the majority of the young women had been introduced to a range of licensed settings during their adolescence, it is important for me to examine carefully the range of experiences that they typically encountered.

On the evening that I visited a Mexican restaurant with the Abraxus girls' group it was very clear to all of us that the restaurant staff were not comfortable dealing with a party consisting of two women and eleven young women under 15 years of age. On our arrival at the restaurant we were hurriedly taken to the furthest end of the restaurant and had to wait for the waiters and waitresses to construct a long table for us which was situated very near to the toilets. We were also told that the young women were under no circumstances allowed to drink alcohol and would we ensure that we finished by 8 o'clock because the table was needed. We had arrived at 7 o'clock and had booked our table three weeks in advance! Furthermore, according to the 1964 Licensing Act the waiter has no rights or powers to stipulate that young people should not drink alcohol when in the company of adults. The 1964 Licensing Act stipulates: 'Children above the age of 5 are allowed to consume alcohol in an eating area on licensed premises if bought by an accompanying adult' (Section 169(4) of the Licensing Act 1964).

Despite the waiter stipulating that the young women should not drink alcohol, one of the waitresses served the young women with two and a half pints of shandy and one and a half pints of lager. The young women shared these drinks among themselves and as a result were becoming quite boisterous, and highly spirited; laughing loudly and telling jokes. At no time were they louder than a group of adults also in the restaurant. Yet within 10 minutes of them beginning to be noisy, the proprietor came to our table to complain. Some of the young women answered back and began swearing saying that they were not as noisy as the adult group who were by this time, becoming louder. Eventually, at 8.20pm we were asked to 'leave and never return'. The young women

were very angry about the way in which they had been treated unfairly.

- Tara: "They were stuck up bitches looking down their noses all snooty like... you could tell as soon as we walked in"
- Sara "If we'd have been a group of lads, or so called grown ups like them in there, nowt would have been said... just 'cos we're girls, it's always the same isn't it, (*Sara affects a funny high pitched voice*) 'girls should know how to behave'"
- Angela: "That geezer (proprietor) said we were meant to be young ladies not animals, so why did he treat us like shit then... we were behaving alright, even when we were giggly like... that other lot were swearing and everything and not a word were said to them... one rule for them, one for us... (unclear) time and time girls have to behave like girls"

Often the experience of the middle and older girls was not dissimilar to the young girls experience. For example when the Blummerstone Girls' Group arrived at a 'pub' for a meal (a reservation had been made two weeks earlier), the restaurant manager told us that he needed proof of all the young women's age. He also said that if they were all over 18 years old, they were welcome to order drinks and 'meals in the baskets' in the bar. The restaurant manager was acting in contravention of the 1964 Licensing Act which stipulates that: 'Young people over the age of 16 are permitted to purchase beer, porter, cider or perry with a meal in an eating area or licensed premises' (Section 169 (4) of the Licensing Act 1964). On this particular occasion the young women were so taken back that they did not even argue with the manager. Instead they came to find Lorraine (the Blummerstone youth worker) and I to sort things out. We went into the restaurant to claim our booked table and there were no other problems during the course of our meal. But both the Mexican meal and this 'pub' experience serve to illustrate the ways in which young women's access to 'licensed' public settings are frequently surveyed and restricted by gatekeeping adults.

II(i)c Pubs and clubs

Very few of the young women in my sample group went to the pub regularly. The only young women who appeared to be regular pub attenders were those who had 'steady boyfriends'. For these young women the pub represented a setting where they could be with their boyfriends. Few of the young women in my sample group had 'steady boyfriends', so few of them regularly visited 'pubs'. The notion that single

adult women do not visit 'pubs' is well documented within the literature, but there is little research commenting on the absence of groups of young women. Marsh et al (1986) for example who have provided 'a national picture of 13 - 17 year olds drinking habits' merely suggests that 'younger teenagers drink at home, and older teenagers invariably drink in public bars, clubs and discos'. Other alcohol researchers have also assumed that the extra spending power of older young people will be associated with a higher rate of alcohol consumption (Denscombe and Aubrook, 1991). Cohen (1989) noted that young women do not attend 'pubs' as frequently as young men, but like other researchers, he has failed to comment on the possible reasons for their absence.

The next two chapters will examine the alternative locations in which the young women chose to drink. Some of these locations do not demand 'over-18 identity cards', and most of them provide cheaper venues for them than drinking in traditional 'pubs'. But first, I will examine other factors that may deter young women from visiting their local 'pubs'. First, all of them told me that they did not feel welcome in the various 'pubs' and clubs that they visited. All of the them had relatives or friends who were members of working mens clubs. This meant that most of them had attended various 'clubs' for family events⁶, such as bingo, karaoke, discos and barbecues. The young women felt that the atmosphere in the local clubs and 'pubs' was very similar. This was because men dominated the space. When the Crofton and Blummerstone young women talked to me about 'pub' and club atmospheres they described how they disliked men constantly surveying them:

Carole: "I hate walking into them, men that stand round the bar stare at you, and eye you up all the time"

Natasha: "You can feel 'em thinking 'oh cop a load on that'... look at the arse on that... it's even worse if they start chatting you up... really old men, 40, 50... 60 year olds touching you up it's fucking horrible..."

Carole: "That's pubs they're all geared up for men... satellite tele wi' sport, darts, billiards and that it's all for men, how much in a pub is for

⁶ The young women were under no illusions about the 'family events'. The members of the club were all men. Women, (generally the male members' wives and partners), could only attend the club as invited guests. They were not permitted to become members. The 'family events' were strictly controlled by the male club members. The young women had to have fathers, brothers or boyfriends 'signing them in' as guests. Each member was entitled to invite a maximum of three guests.

women... town pubs and that for our age and that they're different like, but you need cash for them... local pubs and that they're for men to hang round in, women aren't meant to hang round in pubs all day..."

Cath: "They (bar staff) look down their noses at you don't they? They don't really like girls in pubs do they, landlords and that"
(Carole aged 20, Natasha aged 21, Catherine aged 18 from Blummerstone).

Shirley Ardener (1978) contends that any space where men are present in large numbers becomes designated as 'public' and at the same time, ironically, 'out of bounds' for women. Furthermore, in regard to gender relations in 'pubs', Valerie Hey (1986) suggests that 'public' houses have never really been public for women. She notes that claims to have studied them as social institutions, as 'living organisms', or whatever, have failed to explain why women have been prevented or discouraged from securing access to them (Hey, 1986, p58). During the 1990s many breweries have targeted women, families and the over 50s in an attempt to increase the numbers of pub customers (Whitbread Inns, 1995). To encourage this development breweries are renovating the decor of their pubs and are attempting to offer an extensive range of food (Whitbread Inns, 1995). The breweries do not seem to be aware that these cosmetic changes have done very little to alter the long established 'male culture' of most pubs. Furthermore, the recent increase in 'sport theme pubs' which offer satellite coverage of football/cricket and other sporting events, also do not encourage women of any age to think that pubs are anything else other than a public drinking space dominated by men! The gendering of space in 'pubs' also makes this very clear.

The observations that Spradley and Mann (1975) made about the lay-out of American 'bars' are equally relevant to 'typical' British 'pubs' in the 1990s. Spradley and Mann

(1975) suggested that the territorial arrangements of the bar reflected the dominance of traditional male activities. Figure 5 is a schematic representation of the spatial organization of the 'Blue Anchor' 'pub' that I visited on several occasions with the Blummerstone young women. (This was also the 'pub' that we visited for our meal).

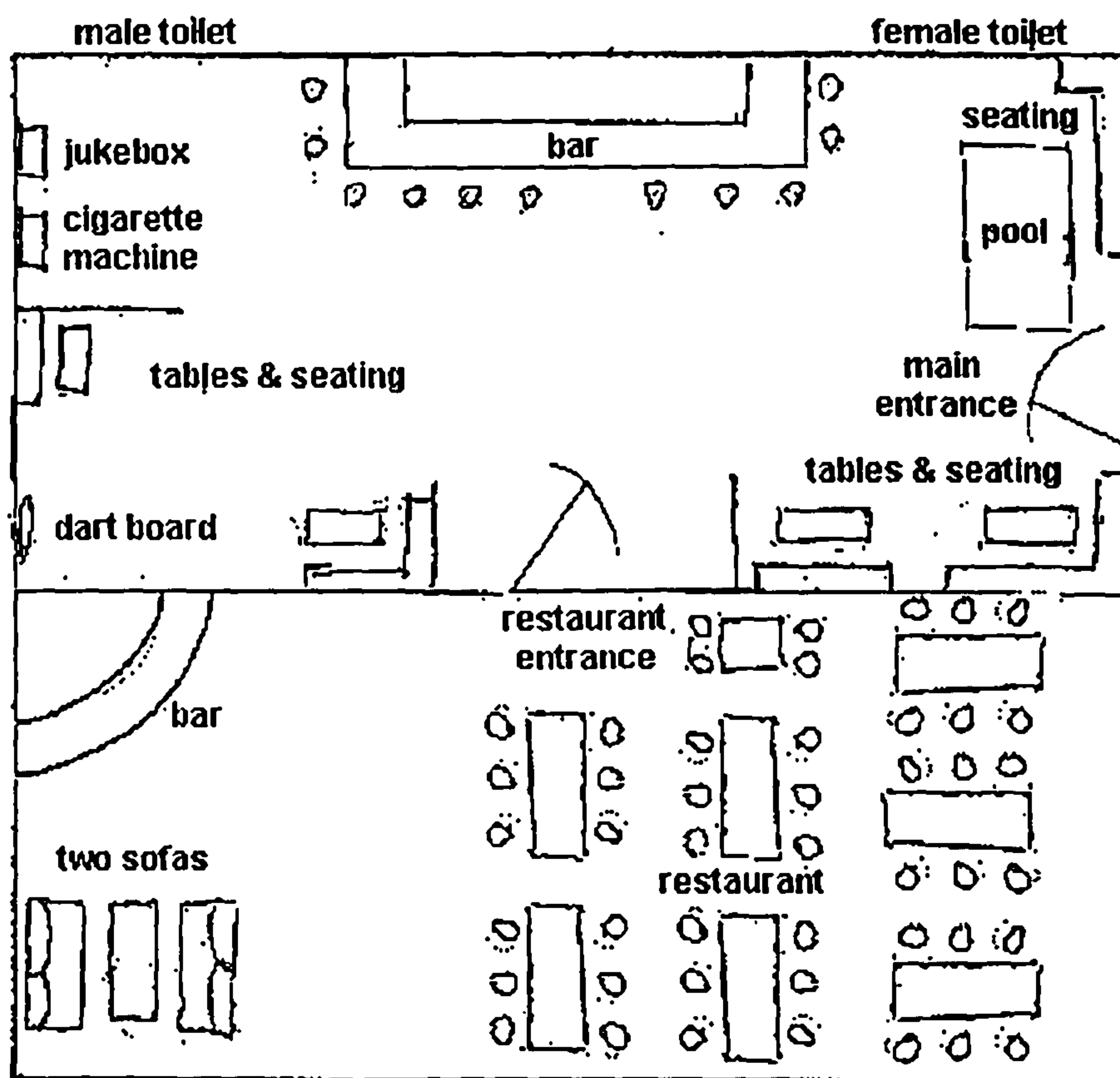


Figure 5. The Blue Anchor Pub

Figure 5 depicts very clearly that the 'Blue Anchor' 'pub' has been designed with men in mind. Men sit on the stools around the bar. Men play pool in the top right hand corner of the bar, they play darts in the bottom left hand corner, and they also decide what music is played on the 'jukebox' in the top left hand corner. The only free area for women to sit in the bar, is the bottom right hand space which is located next to the draughty entrance. Furthermore, to gain access to the women's toilets, women have to walk through the pool table area which is always busy and filled by men. The pool table in bars is thus a space that reflects fairly accurately the values of a male-

orientated culture. Women are rarely allowed access to pool tables or to dart boards in pubs, as was the case in the young women's youth centres. When the young women walked into the 'Blue Anchor' bar and other very similar bars, they felt unwelcome, and so did I! Spradley and Mann (1975, p101) suggest that the way we respond to physical perceptions are culturally learned responses. When the young women and I experienced the cultural phenomenon of the 'Blue Anchor' bar (and other bars), we were responding to the ways in which the space is allocated and defined by men and men's activities. The 'Blue Anchor' bar, like Spradley and Mann's 'Brady's Bar', is a stage on which men can perform, but it offers no such opportunity for women (Spradley and Mann, 1975, p 148). 'Pubs', bars, and clubs in Britain all admit women, yet at the same time, they also remind us constantly that we should be aware of our status within them. Bars reflect, therefore, traditional features of the wider culture (Spradley and Mann, 1975, p145). I came to realize that one of the most pervasive messages communicated by the territorial arrangements in bars and 'pubs' is the importance of sexual differences. In the 'Blue Anchor' women were not really welcome in the bar. We all knew this. We were welcome in the restaurant; to eat a 'pub meal': this is an acceptable feminine activity. But we were not welcome to stand at the bar and drink. Drinking at the bar was not an acceptable feminine activity; this is an activity for men only. It was made very clear to the young women and myself that we would never be allowed to gain full entry into the world of the 'Blue Anchor bar'. It was definitely off limits to women. Like Spradley and Mann's 'Brady's Bar' the 'Blue Anchor bar' seemed 'to function both as a *business* and as a men's ceremonial center (sic) where masculine values are reaffirmed' (Spradley and Mann, 1975, p 130).

In addition to the young women not feeling welcome in the male-dominated environment of the pubs that they visited, they were also angry that bar staff often treated them differently from young men of the same age. Sarah and Charlotte's accounts explain how they became banned from their local pub.

- Sarah: "There were seven of us, four lads, three girls on New Years. We'd been here all night... everyone bought us drinks like, we were all pissed, we were no more pissed than the lads... Leanne ended up puking in the toilets... it going everywhere and in the passage..."
- Charl: "Few days later he (landlord) told us we were banned... Shane and

they puke most Friday nights, outside, inside the toilets and that and not a word... it's always different for girls"
(Charlotte and Sara aged 17 from Crofton)

Based on my personal experiences and my observations it is clear that bar staff often treat women, and young women in particular, very differently from men and young men. (For a fuller examination of bar staff's attitudes regarding young women and 'pubs' see Appendix VI). The notion that pubs and bars are not really respectable places for women is, therefore, a potent myth that continues even in the 1990's. Public houses are simply not public for women. As Driessen (1992) has stated:

"bars provide a social context for the creation and maintenance of male friendship and the celebration of masculinity" (Driessen, 1992, p 73).

The public house is 'a political institution expressive of deeply held gender ideologies' (Hey, 1986, p72). When women do visit 'pubs' they are expected, therefore, to adhere to a fairly coherent set of male initiated social regulations. These are some of the socially constructed regulations that I observed during the course of conducting my ethnographic fieldwork:

- Women should never command more space than the men; on several occasions I observed groups of young women being asked by bar staff to sit down and to 'keep it down', but equally noisy groups of young men were never asked to sit down or to 'keep it down'.
- Women should never enter a bar unaccompanied; it is still culturally unacceptable for a lone women to drink in a bar.
- Women should always be prepared to wait to be served, male regulars and other men are invariably served before women waiting at a bar. (When I talked to a barmaid about this phenomenon she told me that all bar staff prefer to serve men drinks because they always know what they want to drink and, were, therefore, easier to deal with. Other bar staff also told me that women in general don't know what drinks they want, and they often change their minds after they have ordered).
- Women should only order drinks that are considered to be appropriate 'ladies drinks'; many pubs in the county where my research took place still refuse to serve women pints! Furthermore, men and women are often given half pints of beer in different glasses. (A male bar manager

told me "men should be given 'half pint pots' and women should be given more ladylike stemmed glasses").

- Women should not become drunk; it is 'unladylike', and finally,
- Women should move away from the bar after they have been served; standing at the bar is a male activity.

I suggest that these socially constructed categories have combined to create the 'right atmosphere' for 'pubs' for a very long time. That is, an atmosphere that will ensure that the brewery that owns the 'pub' makes a healthy profit. The 'right atmosphere' is, therefore, one that will attract 'heavy drinking' men, not women and young women who are not traditionally perceived as heavy drinkers or buyers of large rounds of drinks.

There are very different expectations, in general, about how men and women should behave when they are drinking in bars. It is still not as acceptable for women, as it is for men, to be drunk in public. In Constructive Drinking: Perspectives from Anthropology Mary Douglas (1987, p13-14) suggests that it is widely assumed that women do not step outside their roles. Little seems to have changed since Dight (1976) stated in a survey of Scottish attitudes about drinking that over 90% of respondents agreed with the statement: 'A drunken woman is a far worse sight than a drunken man'. In a 'landmark report' prepared by the Advisory Committee on Alcoholism (Department of Health and Social Services [DHSS] 1978) which has set the standards for alcohol services during the 1980s and 1990s, the Secretary of State for Social Services (whose Department sponsored the report) stated:

"There is nothing manly or heroic or glamorous about those who drink too much. In men it is crude and embarrassing, in women it is plain sickening".

This is a good example of the ways in which young women and women in general, are expected by and large to adhere to fairly rigidly defined socially constructed 'feminine scripts'.

It is not surprising, therefore, given the above circumstances, that the young women found 'pubs' to be a fairly dull places to visit. Furthermore, many of them also thought that 'pubs' were expensive for the limited facilities that they offered. Sarah and Kelly

explain:

- Sarah: "Who in their right mind is going to pay to stand around and get bored, the pubs round here are real dives full of old men, older than me dad ... £2 at the pub don't go nowhere, but £2 at the offie that's different you got more choice and you can get pissed"
- Kelly: "Even if you don't want to get pissed, it's expensive in pubs and a lot of hassle..."

CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated how difficult it is for young women to find spaces away from oppressive gender relations and 'adult surveillance' in general. In Section I, I demonstrated the ways in which the young women often feel powerless within their school and youth centre settings. I also illustrated the ways in which they are encouraged to 'normalise' the often obnoxious and offensive behaviour of young men. Section II examined a range of public leisure settings and demonstrated the ways in which young women's access to public space is much more limited than young men's. I also examined the ways in which bar staff, restaurant staff and so forth construct strategies that discourage young women's presence within their establishments. I suggested that the consequences of these socially constructed strategies is that in most public settings young women's presence is greatly outnumbered by the highly visible and very vocal presence of men.

I illustrated the ways in which adult gatekeepers carefully control young women's behaviour in public spaces by dictating the range of 'feminine behaviour codes' that are appropriate within those settings. The young women were both angry and frustrated by the ways in which young men dominate public spaces. Finally I suggested that despite some breweries making a concerted effort to change the image of their pubs, the situation of young women feeling not welcome in a range of licensed settings does not look as though it is changing significantly. In the next chapter I will examine the ways in which the Crofton and Blummerstone middle girls locate and create 'free spaces' that are away from both adult surveillance and the more general oppressive gender relations that they are used to encountering in their daily lives.

CHAPTER FIVE

CREATING 'FREE SPACES'

The last two chapters have provided detailed accounts of the difficulties that the three groups of young women encounter when trying to find 'spaces' at home, at school, at the youth centre and in the public arena of organized leisure facilities. The focus of this chapter is on the spaces that young people create for themselves; I will examine the roles that 'recs' play in the young women's lives. I use the word 'rec' as the young women in my sample group did; as a generic term that describes a recreation ground, or an open area that is used to 'hang around' with other young people. Other spaces that were utilized to 'hang around' were: car parks; condemned houses; and street corners. I was told that these locations provided spaces to be 'away from watching eyes'. The young women were trying very hard, therefore, not to be confined to the bedroom culture that McRobbie (1991) has previously identified.

I FINDING SPACES TO HANG AROUND

Although the age range of 'rec' attenders varied between 13-20 years of age, the majority of young people that I met during the course of my fieldwork, were between the ages of 15-17 years. Most of the Crofton and Blummerstone middle girls spent much of their free time hanging around their 'recs'. Two of the Abraxus young girls - Laura and Emma - were also regular 'rec' attenders, as were Andrea and Jane from Blummerstone. Furthermore, most of the older girls told me that they had 'hung about' at 'recs' on a regular basis when they were younger. They also told me that once they were able to purchase alcohol and to enter licensed premises legally 'recs' had lost most of their appeal.

In this chapter I will demonstrate the ways in which specific aspects of the middle girls' 'youth cultures' are no longer less public than those of young men. I will also demonstrate the ways in which the middle girls' activities at their 'recs' form a crucial part in the development of their interpersonal and social skills, as well as their drinking and drug taking activities. I will further demonstrate that it is in the context of the 'rec' that many of the middle girls discover that drinking alcohol enables them to behave in

ways they would never consider when sober. In other words, I will be examining the ways in which drinking alcohol enables the middle girls to reject the socially constructed 'feminine scripts' that generally restrict their daily behaviour. I will further demonstrate the ways in which the 'rec' drinking sessions provides them with opportunities to experience a sense of power as well as a great deal of pleasure.

I(i) The symbolic meaning of the 'rec'

It has been suggested that 'hanging about' is an activity that young people become involved in when they are in the 'transitional period of adolescence' (Hendry et al, 1993). 'Transitional period of adolescence' describes the period when young people are attempting to move away from adult controlled leisure facilities such as youth centres, and towards commercialised leisure facilities (Hendry et al, 1993, p114). I contend that the 'rec' provides young people, and young women in particular, with a unique environment. The 'rec' is unique because the young people perceive it as a 'transitional space' that they can appropriate during their adolescent years. Paul Willis (1990, p2) suggests that young people are all the time expressing or attempting to express something about their actual or potential cultural significance. I suggest that young people are utilizing 'recs' to develop their 'rite of passage' or 'transition' from their status as adolescents, who are tied up with the institutional worlds of schools and youth centres, towards adulthood, and the leisure activities that adults have access to. Van Gennep suggested that 'Rite of Passage' are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen, 'threshold'), and aggregation (Van Gennep, 1960, p11). His work, which was carried out in the very early part of this century, is concerned mainly with the symbolic properties of 'rite of passage'. Van Gennep (1960) suggested that during the liminal period, the characteristics of the 'passenger' are ambiguous. Victor Turner (1969) has since developed Van Gennep's work by exploring some of the social properties of the liminal phase of ritual. Turner (1969, p95-96) suggests that:

"liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial... liminal phenomena offer homogeneity and comradeship' with some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond "(Turner, 1969, p95-96).

It is this aspect of liminality which is particularly significant to my developing

discourse. Turner continues:

"liminality allows unstructured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders" (Turner, 1969, p96).

During the course of my fieldwork analysis I began to realize that the that the middle girls spent at their 'recs' could be described as a 'liminal period' in their lives. During the 'liminal' period:

"the characteristics of the ritual subject (the passenger) are ambiguous; he (sic) passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (Turner, 1969, p94).

The last two chapters have demonstrated the ways in which all the young women felt constrained and restricted by their home, school, youth centre and public leisure environments. But the 'rec' is a 'liminal space' that allows the young women and other young people to create a neutral territory that does not submit them to the type of constraints and restrictions that they experience in general. The 'rec' provides the young people with what is often their first opportunity to create their own 'community' which is away from the adult world in which they have to live their everyday lives.

In this chapter I am suggesting, therefore, that the 'rec' is an indeterminate space which different young people can access for a variety of different reasons. It is a public space, but it does not subject young people to the same sort of the restrictions as do other public places. In the 'recs' the middle girls often have their first opportunity to spend time hanging around in peer- led groups with very few formal external controls. I suggest that this is crucially important to them. The last two chapters have showed the ways in which the young women throughout the sample group have to compete with adults, social conventions and young men in an effort to gain access to public spaces. When the middle girls are at their local 'recs' they feel as though they have created a space for themselves with other young people. It is in this space, therefore, that they can experiment with a range of different activities that will ultimately help them make the transition from being an adolescent to an adult.

I(ii) Hanging around at the 'rec'

During the course of my fieldwork I attended twenty three 'rec' sessions. Sixteen of these sessions included drinking. Only four of these were preplanned drinking sessions; two at Blummerstone and two at Crofton. I also 'hung around' with the Blummerstone and Crofton middle girls in an off-license car park, a neighbourhood centre and youth centre car park, and by the railings of a fish and chip shop on many occasions. Hanging around the 'rec' was invariably a summer evening activity. When I asked the middle girls what they did at the 'rec' I received a diverse range of replies which included:

- Liz: "Just chatting and that"
Julia: "Drinking and smoking dope" (Cannabis¹)
Kelly: "Just hanging about like"
Kirsten: "Getting completely legless"
Deborah: "Sometimes getting plastered, sometimes just sitting about and talking and that"
Sandra: "Eyeing up the talent" (young men)
(Liz, Julia, Kelly, Kirsten, Deborah, Sandra aged 16 from Crofton)

When I asked the middle girls what was the main reason they went to the 'rec' I received a similar wide range of replies:

- Cath: "To meet the boys, to get smashed, to hang about, to pick up... to have a laugh... it depends... it depends on everything and anything really"
Nicky: "To get pissed, to hang about, this and that... to do what we feel like"
(Cath and Nicky aged 17 from Blummerstone)
- Rebecca: "Just to get outside... to have some space where you can just hang about with kids our age...relax like"
Becky: "To have a laugh and see who is about... see if anything interesting is going on"
Keeley: "We went through a phase of getting drunk up there, but it didn't happen every night like, even though we went up there most nights"
Sarah: "It depends... like sometimes we've been up there just to hang about

¹ Cannabis is derived from *Cannabis sativa*, a plant found wild in most parts of the world and easily cultivated in Britain. Cannabis is generally smoked rolled up into a cigarette. Cannabis resin or oil is usually first mixed with tobacco, but herbal cannabis may be smoked on its own. Cannabis can also be smoked in a pipe, brewed into a drink or put into a food (ISDD, 1993). The young women within my sample groups smoked the resin with tobacco. None of the women in the 12-17 years age group were regular users of cannabis. Sharing a 'joint' at the rec was often, therefore, the young women's only experience of the substance.

a bit, but we've ended up really pissed... depends on who else is there, and how you're feeling like"
(Rebecca, Keeley aged 16, Becky and Sarah aged 17 from Crofton)

It is clear from the above statements that 'recs' provided venues where the middle girls could become involved in a variety of activities. The 'liminal' nature of 'recs' was attractive to a wide range of young people. The middle girls were able to meet young men and women whom they would not necessarily encounter in their schools or youth centres. The spaces provided by 'recs' encouraged, therefore, a 'microculture' of young people to develop in specific locations (Wulff, 1988). Wulff has suggested that microcultures are very distinguishable from other forms of culture:

"the particular combination of personalities, the localities where they meet, and certain momentous events that they experience together, are three elements in every microculture" (Wulff, 1995, p65).

The youth microculture found at the 'recs' are, therefore, very similar to the 'communitas' described by Turner (1969, p96). The young people were enjoying the opportunity of 'hanging about' with other 'equal individuals' in a liminal space where they could experiment with a range of different feelings, behaviours and activities. My intention is to examine the middle girls' activities within the 'rec microculture' so that I can develop an understanding the various roles that alcohol has within these activities.

I(iii) "Hanging around, chatting and that"

A recent survey of parks in the city in which my research was based suggested that 90% of the residents regularly used city parks (Madge and O'Connor, 1994). The survey suggested that city parks are used by different people at different times of the day; the most popular activity by far, for people of all ages, was 'just to sit and hang about' (Madge and O'Connor, 1994). This is the activity that all of the middle and older girls had become involved in at one time or another. Liz and Deborah explain:

Liz: "It's nice coming up here to talk"

Deborah: "We chat about everything like, you know stuff that you don't talk about anytime else... usually it's just a bunch of us, but sometimes it's boys as well, we just talk, have a joke and that, it's different from school and that, you know what I mean like... it's more relaxed like, just different"

(Liz and Deborah aged 16 from Crofton)

Sara, Catherine, Becky and Deborah explain their motivation for going to the 'rec':

- Sara: "You just get used to going to see who is about... sometimes you stay... see who turns up, sometimes you don't... it's up to you really"
- Cath: "You don't want to miss owt, so you see who is about... hang around a bit, have a chat and a fag, maybe a bit of 'draw'... if there's no-one there you go home again... not like going to get pissed... it's just being social like to see what happens"
- Becky: "I go there to get away... for some space, often it'll only be a can of pop or something, so it's not just to drink and that"
- Deborah: "Yea, to be social like... and to get out of the house"
- Cath: "You can get away from all the hassle up there, on-one keeps on at us... we're just hanging around with kids our own age and it's alright... have a drink, a fag and a bit of space"

The middle girls are describing the 'rec' as a space that permits a range of relatively spontaneous informal, flexible activities. Although this did seem to be the case in general, I did observe that football often took up a lot of space on the 'recs'. This was especially so in the early part of summer evenings. Football often appeared to dominate the spaces that young people were to be found in. Generally, the young women were intolerant of football played in their schools and youth centres because the game invariably interrupted or prevented them becoming involved in their chosen activities. But this did not appear to be the case in the 'recs'. Though Gaby Weiner (1985, p56) suggests that football monopolizes most public spaces and reinforces male ownership of many aspects of the environment, the middle girls did not feel marginalized at their 'recs', so they did not mind watching the young men play football.

It was the flexible and fluid aspects of the 'rec' which the middle girls found exciting. It offered them a new set of possibilities - anything might happen. This is illustrated very clearly by Keeley's statement:

"you never know what might happen, if you don't go down there you might miss out on an excellent raz, but other times you go and nowt happens, you just sit around like, chatting, mucking around and that...it's okay, sometimes it's a bit boring, but usually like we have a bit of a laugh...it's what keeps the interest like... the other week Dave, Shane and Mel turned up just when we were ready to go... we stayed a bit... went to the shop, then the chippy and that, it was well sound, one of the best nights we've had for ages."

Deborah and Lisa express similar feelings:

- Deborah: "Sometimes nowt has been planned like, you just go to hang out, then one thing leads to another... others turn up...we start drinking, sometimes I've been as pissed like that, as we have at the weekend or something when we been going out to get drunk. Usually like, there isn't much drink around, only a can or something, so we just hang around and that, chat and stuff that's all, it's well wicked down here on some nights and there's no alcohol, draw (cannabis) or owt"
- Lisa: "It's no use trying to work out why we go, we just do. Sometimes for some things, other times for others... we need some place of our own, there ain't owt for the likes of us just to hang around like, that's what we do a lot of the time, just hang about it's not always about getting pissed or owt... of a night we just have a couple of fags and one can or cider or something between five or six of us... it's alright. Other nights we decide to drink, it just depends on how we feel, who is there, it's just us kids together doing owt we want to do... just hanging about like"

During the course of my many hours spent in the presence of such groups I discovered that although young people do experiment with a variety of activities under the auspices of 'hanging around' the most popular activity by far was merely to 'hang around and chat'. Sitting around and 'talking' is a very important activity for young people. Furthermore, I suggest that 'talking' at the 'rec' is not seen by young people merely as a means of and for communication. The young women who I got to know at the 'rec' regarded 'talking' as an activity itself. When I was at the 'recs' and other informal public spaces, I found that 'talk' was very distinctive. I suggest that the middle girls were exploring different ways of constructing their talks; they were practising different narrative styles; trying out jokes; and constructing sentences using swear words; and making up rhymes and songs that also utilized swear words and obscenities. This was behaviour and talk that appeared to be specific to the 'rec': I had not observed such behaviour or 'talking styles' anywhere else. Talking at times almost became a performance. As an adult I had to learn to talk in a very different way to be able to join in with their conversations at the 'rec'. I had to try and remember rhymes and songs that I too had constructed with my friends many years ago. I began to remember settings, circumstances and rhymes that I had forgotten about until I began 'talking' with the young women at the 'recs'.

Other young people who were not regular 'rec' attenders were unable to enter readily

into the type of conversations that took place. On the occasions that I observed new members try to gain entry into the group they found it difficult to join in with the rhymes, slang and 'in-jokes'. They were unfamiliar with both the language and the style of talking. Like me, they had to persevere while probably also feeling left out and foolish, until they could begin to understand what was going on. The regular 'rec' attenders were able, therefore, to present themselves as much more sophisticated speakers than the non-attenders. One of the prime resources which young people draw upon are sets of specialized words (James, 1995, p50), the 'argot' of youth subcultural style (Brake, 1985). It is through the articulation of these words that young people are able to separate themselves off from the adult world, and identify for themselves those who do or do not yet belong. The 'rec' provided the middle girls with a space to develop their styles of talk. Allison James (1995) shows that talk is an important medium through which young people carve out for themselves particular cultural locations for the self and for identity. I suggest that access to spaces such as 'recs', spaces that are peculiar to young people, also play a key role in the development of young people's identities because it is often their prime talking space.

I(iv) "Having a laugh, mucking around and that"

The groups at the 'rec' were mixed and single sex groups. During the course of my fieldwork I observed middle girls participating in all the social activities of the mixed groups. These activities included drinking alcohol, smoking, drug taking and occasionally sexual experimentation. Furthermore, on several occasions I observed the middle girls actually dictating the terms of the group's activity. On these occasions it appeared that young men and women held equal status within the groups. This was very different from the ways in which they were generally treated by young men.

Tania and Roisin are aware of the different power relations at their 'rec':

- Tania: "Sometimes you wonder why girls bother wi' boys they're such bloody pigs to us... down at the 'rec' we get our own back... we just joke and muck around wi'em, give 'em as good as we get from them"
- Roisin: "Kevin ignores me at school, gives me grief at the club (youth centre) but at the 'rec' we talk and that like, he treats me like an equal, it's probably the ale... life is complicated ain't it why don't boys and girls just get on... boys reckon they're so bloody superior..."

why do they behave like shits most of the time, they would be alright if we stayed at the 'rec' and never did owt else like"

I suggest that some of the middle girls' power in the mixed sex groups had developed as a result of them being able to gain access to a greater variety of off-licenses compared to their male counterparts. The middle girls often looked older, and were often physically bigger than the young men their age. They were also able to purchase 'dope' and other soft drugs from dealers who had previously refused to sell to young men on the grounds of their age. It was clear that the dealers were hoping for future sexual favours from the middle girls. They were aware of this and used it to their advantage. However, they appeared to be unaware that ultimately they might not be able to maintain their perceived power in these relationships. Away from the context of the 'rec' the middle girls could also help the young men to gain access to various clubs and 'fun-pubs' in the town². It is not surprising, therefore, that the power relations between young men and young women were very different in the context of the 'recs' than in the more formal public settings that young men and women frequented.

For the middle girls their 'recs' represented the only spaces where they felt free to do whatever they pleased. They were away from parents and other adults, and they were, often for the first time, interacting with young men on a fairly equal basis.

Furthermore, for many of the middle girls this was the first time they were able to experiment with a variety of different activities and behaviour without being openly criticized by their male counterparts. Lauren Langman (1992, p59) suggests that the three major tasks of adolescence are: establishing autonomy from parents; testing and consolidating one's identity(ies); and learning to cope with newly emergent sexuality. The middle girls found 'recs' to be a very useful space for performing these type of tasks. It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that many young people also began to utilize the 'rec' as a space where they could begin to experiment with the effects of

² These venues were heavily 'policed' by bouncers. Traditionally bouncers throughout the country invariably allow more young women access than young men. Once the young women were told that they could enter the club, they would say "and you mean my boyfriend too don't you". This was the most common way that young men aged 16-17 were able to gain access to clubs.

alcohol.

I am not suggesting that all the 'rec' attenders in my sample group joined in with the mixed sexed drinking, drug taking and sexual experimentations at the 'recs'. Often the young women who did not join in, also did not approve of the mixed sexed activities at the 'rec'. Not surprisingly, those who did join in with mixed sexed 'rec activities' were open to much more criticism than the young men. By joining in the mixed sexed 'rec' activities the middle girls were perceived as 'bad' or 'loose' women by adults and young people who did not approve of the 'rec' microculture. As Henley (1986, p91) suggests, a loose woman is one of bad reputation, and her attributed looseness comes from a lack of accepted control over her sexuality. Angela and Tara from Abraxus explain how they feel about a young women they know who is 'hanging around' with young men in open spaces:

Angela: "I bet the boys think she's a right slag ... it's not right for girls to be doing what she does"

Tara: "She's a pathetic tart hanging around with all the boys... it's desperate ain't it... you expect it from them (the boys) don't you... she's no mate of mine... pathetic the lot of them, girls that have to hang around with boys"

All of the young women who visited the 'rec' were well aware that their reputations would be harmed as a result of 'hanging around' with young men. Catherine and Kelly explain how they felt about the labels that adults and other young people give to young women who 'hang about 'recs'.

Cath: "They're just jealous that they're not part of it... they're just boring little farts, they'll be dead and gone before they try owt different like... they don't do anything...boring little lives for boring little people, at least we're having a go, so bugger them, we're just trying to live a little, they ought to try instead of being silly little girls all the time"

Kelly: "Me Mum has a go sometimes says I'll get a bad reputation and that. They call us slags don't they? We ain't bloody slags, we're just trying to enjoy ourselves for once... they ain't much else to do round here, so we're making our fun...stuff them, who cares anyway... they say we're slags they're just the same as us, only they're too afraid to admit it like... we've had enough of just sitting around doing nowt because we're bloody girls"

Despite the criticism they received from adults and other young people, the middle girl rec attenders did not perceive their behaviour as creating any kind of a problem. They all knew that on occasions they were loud, they also knew that they were quite boisterous, but because they were away from any built-up areas they did not regard their activities as creating any sort of nuisance. Kelly explains:

Kelly: "Hanging out at the 'rec' is the only time you can really get away from all the hassle... we get hassled all the time... families, teachers, youth workers, down the 'rec' you're away from all of that... kids our age just sitting, mucking around and that... we don't have to do anything... we just being ourselves - no-one can tell you what to do like"
(Kelly aged 16 from Crofton)

I(v) "Experiments, tests and tastes"

The first 'rec drinking session' that I observed was a pre-planned drinking session in Blummerstone. The session was attended by eight young men and seven young women including Nicky (aged 17), Liz (aged 16) and Catherine (aged 17). In general all the young people become very drunk by the end of the 'rec' session. The young people had drunk: a large bottle and three-quarters of vodka (46 units approximately³) with tonic and lemonade; two large bottles of martini (44 units) also with lemonade; lager [twenty cans approximately] (30 units) and six large bottles of cider (27 units). The young people obtained their alcohol from a variety of sources. Beer, cider,

³ In recent years it has become widely accepted that the most accurate means of calculating alcohol consumption is by using the system of 'alcohol units'. Numerous health promotion campaigns have publicised this system and now most people have at least a basic awareness of the concept. Unfortunately, much of the publicity material produced has tended to oversimplify the system. It is commonplace, for example, to state that "one pint of beer contains two units of alcohol" - and that "a bottle of wine contains seven units". In reality the situation is much more complex. There is now a great diversity in the strength of alcoholic drinks. Furthermore, the market for both low alcohol and high strength drinks continues to develop. Many brands of lager, for example, are now brewed at approximately 9% Alcohol by Volume (%ABV) - which is almost three times the strength of the so-called 'ordinary beers' quoted in much of the literature. A pint of beer at this strength would contain not two - but five units of alcohol. Similar discrepancies can be found with most other types of alcohols such as cider, wine and spirits. Despite the complexities involved in calculating 'alcohol units', I have made an attempt in my work, to make note of the young women's approximate consumption of units. I have done this, because, calculating units is still the most straightforward way of documenting patterns, contrasts and similarities in drinking activities. I have made my approximate calculations by referring to The Big List, The Ultimate Guide to Alcohol Units, (Hard Rain, 1995) which includes details of 2,000 alcoholic drinks. Unfortunately, The Big List, did not include the units of any of the newly introduced 'alcopops'.

cinzano, martini and lager were generally bought from off-licenses and supermarkets. While spirits often seemed to be 'stolen' from parent's drinks cupboards; only occasionally were they bought from supermarkets. The first Blummerstone 'rec' session had begun at 3.15 on a Friday afternoon and stopped a little after midnight. I attended from 6.30pm to 10.00pm. At the second 'planned session' Catherine (aged 17), Liz (aged 16), Lisa (aged 16) and Julia (aged 16) attended with four young men. There was very little drinking at this session (the young people could not afford to purchase any alcohol). Instead they decided to smoke cannabis. They had one 'joint' to share between them. The session lasted from 6.30pm to 10.00pm. As well as these two pre-planned drinking sessions I observed many other spontaneous drinking sessions at Blummerstone 'rec'.

The first Crofton pre-planned 'rec drinking session' that I observed took place in a single sex group. Five young women including Becky (aged 17), Vicki (aged 15), Sara (aged 15) and Christine (aged 17) attended. They drank: two large bottles of cider (9 units) and two cans of beer (3 units) on this occasion. The young people became moderately tipsy. The session lasted from 6.00pm to 11.00pm. I attended from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. At the second pre-planned 'rec drinking session, Vicki, Becky and Sara attended with 4 young men. The young women became very drunk by drinking a mixture of cider [two large bottles] (18 units); lager [two cans] (3 units); half a bottle of cinzano (11 units) with lemonade; 6 assorted bottles of alcoholic lemonade (12 units approximately); and half a bottle of Taboo (10.5 units). The session lasted from 6.30pm to 11.30pm. As well as these planned drinking sessions I observed many other spontaneous drinking sessions at Crofton 'rec'.

The first thing to note about the middle girls' drinking behaviours at the 'rec' is that they are all still in the early stages of experimentation with the effects of drinking alcohol. Like the 'novice drinkers' in chapter 3 their drinking activities are largely random activities. Furthermore, the amount of alcohol that middle girl 'active learner drinkers' can purchase is still heavily restricted by limited financial resources. The middle girls' experimentations appeared to fall into the following three categories: experimentations in an effort to test the tastes of different types of alcohol;

experimentations to test the alcoholic strengths of different drinks; and experimentations with the different experiences of intoxication. Figure 6, The Dynamics of Drinking at the 'Rec', illustrates that there were many different factors and routes that led to the middle girls achieving sobriety, moderate drunkenness or advanced drunkenness as an outcome of their 'rec drinking'. The outcomes of anyone's alcohol consumption are always notoriously difficult to predict⁴.

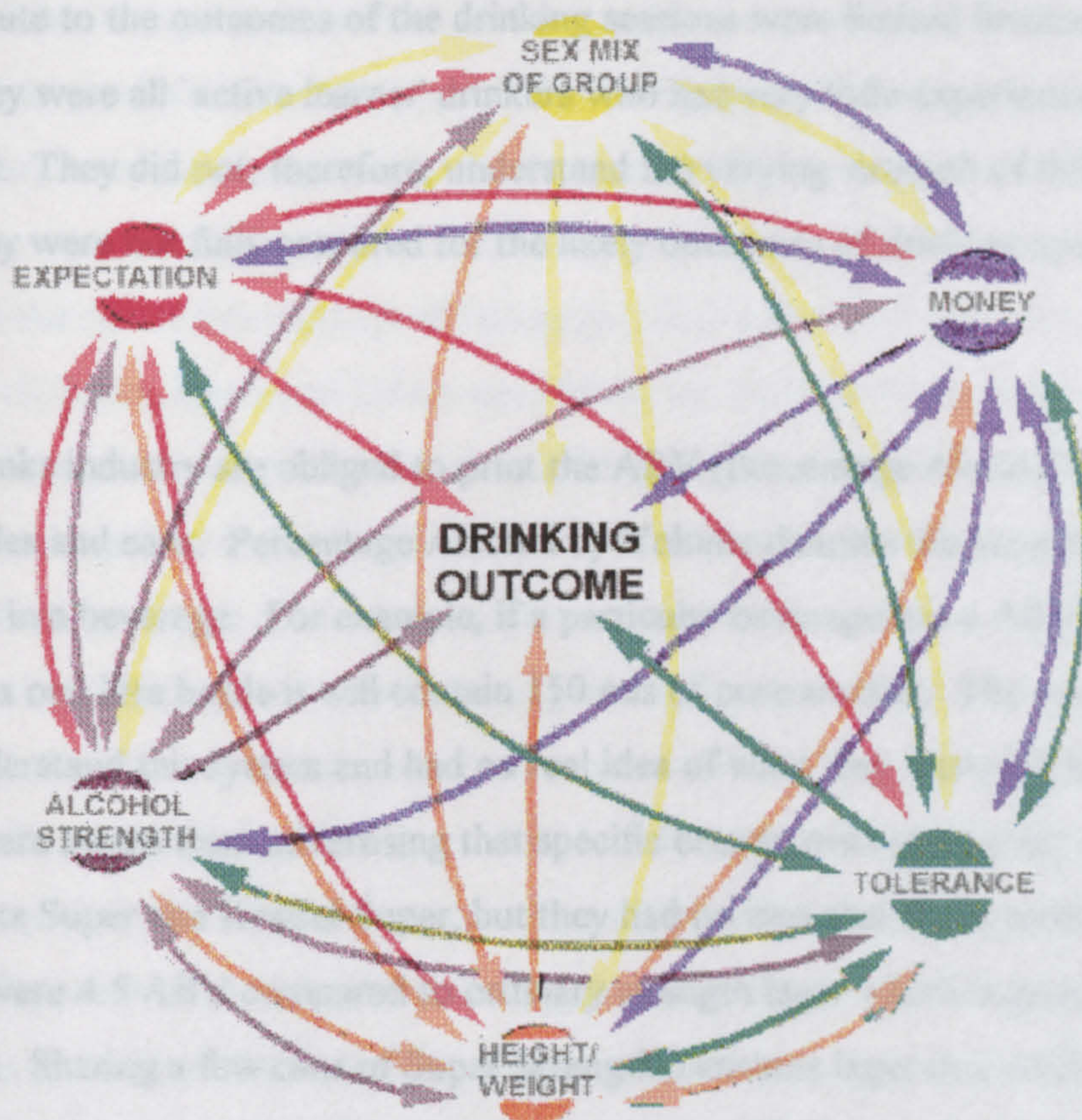


Figure 6. The dynamics of drinking at the 'rec'

Figure 6 demonstrates that the outcomes of the drinking sessions at the 'rec' are very

⁴ This is because the effects of alcohol are dependent on a complex mix of: whether one has eaten or not; how much one has drunk; what one has drunk; individual expectations of drinking; drinking tolerance levels; frame of mind prior to drinking and; on the sex, height and weight of the individuals involved.

varied because they are dependent on a complex mix of different variables. This makes it very difficult to predict the outcomes of the middle girls' drinking activities. However, the variables that appeared to be most significant in influencing their drinking outcomes at the 'rec' appeared to be: the sex composition of the drinking group; financial resources; strength of alcohol being drunk; height and weight of individuals; drinking tolerances of individuals and; individual/group expectations. Furthermore, although all the above variables interlink to influence the final drinking outcomes of the drinking sessions, I suggest that the two most significant factors that contribute to the outcomes of the drinking sessions were limited finances and the fact that they were all 'active learner' drinkers who had very little experience of drinking alcohol. They did not, therefore, understand the varying strength of different drinks, and they were not fully prepared for the likely outcomes of drinking specific brands of drink.

The drinks industry are obliged to print the ABV (Percentage Alcohol by Volume) on all bottles and cans. Percentage Alcohol by Volume denotes the proportion of pure alcohol in a beverage. For example, if a particular beverage has a ABV of 15 and is sold in a one litre bottle it will contain 150 mls of pure alcohol. The middle girls did not understand this system and had no real idea of what they were drinking. Some of them were aware from advertising that specific brands were strong, for example, Tennants Super and Kestrel Super, but they had no idea that these particular cans of lagers were 4.5 ABV compared to ordinary strength lager which is generally 1.5 ABV per can. Sharing a few cans of Super Strength Tennants lager in a small group could lead to drunkenness. Equally, sharing a few cans of Heineken, Carling Black Label and so forth in the same sized group could result in relative sobriety.

'Cocktail mixed' drinks such as Taboo and Pina Colada caused similar confusion. Taboo and Pina Colada were 14.9% and 12.5% ABV respectively. Initially the middle girls had no idea that these drinks were so strong. Another factor which makes it difficult to predict the likely outcome of drinking sessions is the expectations of the drinkers. For example, if the middle girls were expecting to become drunk on lager, then this was often their presenting behaviour, regardless of the amount of alcohol they

had actually consumed. Despite, this I suggest that the outcomes of 'rec drinking sessions' fell into two main categories. These were: moderate intoxication and advanced intoxication. The actions that led to being moderately intoxicated were actually more multi-faceted than those that led to advanced drunkenness. This was because moderate intoxication could on occasions be entirely accidental. Moderate drunkenness was accidental when it was achieved as a result of 'testing' a variety of different drinks. This was especially true of the 'cocktail mixes' that they were experimenting with. Since I conducted my fieldwork, the range of 'cocktail mixes' that are available in supermarkets and off licenses have more than doubled. Most of these new drinks are known as 'alcopops'. (For further details about alcopops and their popularity amongst young people see Appendix VII).

Despite the recent introduction of 'alcopops', during the time that I was conducting my fieldwork, beers, lagers and ciders were by far the most popular drinks for young people to experiment with at the 'rec'. (This finding has been confirmed by the recent HEA Drinking Trends Survey [The Guardian, 17th January, 1997]). The purpose behind testing a range of alcoholic drinks was not solely to achieve any degree of intoxication (although intoxication was generally a very welcome by-product!). The purpose of 'testing sessions' was to experiment with the new tastes of various products in the safe environment of the 'rec'. Some of the products the middle girls purchased were very new. On several occasions the middle girls were buying brands of drink that none of us were aware of prior to finding them in off-licences. By testing a wide range of drinks at the 'rec' they were also able to make assessments about the type of drinks they would purchase in public settings.

Nicky: "Tasting and testing, that's what Becks and I call it...if we didn't try stuff up here we wouldn't know what were behind bar shelves and how it effects us like"

Becky: "Yea, can you imagine going into a pub or disco or something and saying oh what's that like then?, or what do you recommend?... you have to test stuff... also like you get to know what makes you pissed and that. Before we started on them cocktails (alcoholic lemonade) I would have thought that was kids stuff, but it really gets you like - don't it? So like you learn that it's good to drink to get pissed quickly and it's not too dear like, and it tastes better than a lot of beer and stuff"

Sarah: "You'd feel a right wazzock going to pubs and that if you hadn't tried different stuff out...it's good cos' it's cheaper like to buy stuff in the offy and try it out, then you don't waste your money in pubs and that do you? You know what you like and that, so you stick to it"

So in addition to them regarding their 'tastings' as pleasurable and fun, they were also regarded as a series of practical exercises that would allow them to appear experienced, sophisticated and knowledgeable about alcohol, when they entered into the public arena of organized leisure settings.

Moderate intoxication was a desired outcome when they decided to drink small amounts of alcohol that would allow them to experience the pleasurable effects of feeling relaxed and happy. A small amount of alcohol appeared to be no more than 3 units of alcohol. Moderate intoxication was both a planned and spontaneous 'rec' activity. It also appeared to be an activity that generally took place in a single sex group. The activity took place in mixed sex groups only very occasionally.

I(vi) "Relaxed, happy and glowing"

Often moderate drinking would take place after first having spent some time at the 'rec'. Eventually someone in the group might suggest that they should get some drink. Resources would be pooled and an individual or individuals were nominated to go and purchase the drink. (In mixed sexed groups the purchasers were invariably the middle girls). The middle girls might swop their clothes and make up at the 'rec' in an effort to construct an appearance that made them appear older. The appearance that they constructed was their image of a 'sensible mature woman'. On some occasions if they could not construct a suitable appearance with the resources at the 'rec', they would go home to reconstruct their appearances in the manner that they felt to be suitable. The Crofton middle girls modelled themselves on their school teacher who was in her 40s. They would disappear and reappear dressed in a plain blouse or jersey with a plain skirt and their 'doc' marten shoes on. Their hair would be tied back and they would put on blue or green eye-shadow and glasses. After the young women had purchased the alcohol they would return to their homes to change again, before they returned to the 'rec'. They felt that the clothes and make-up of a 'mature women' old enough to

buy drink, was incompatible with the jeans, leggings, baggy clothing and relaxed behaviour associated with 'hanging around' at the 'rec'.

During bouts of moderate drunkenness the middle girls stated that they were not "really drunk". When describing moderate drunkenness they used the phrases: "giggly," "tipsy", "a bit merry", "happy", "a bit pissed", "happy go lucky", "glowing", "not really drunk, just giggly", "contented", "smiley", "confident", "a bit silly", "just a bit tipsy", "a long way off steamin'", "just a bit overconfident", "extra talkative" and "just a bit drunk".

When they were drinking only a few drinks to 'feel more relaxed' their consumption of alcohol permitted them to behave in a much more confident manner than was generally the case. They became vocal, assertive and witty. They talked excitedly about past events: amusing scenarios at school; disco's they had attended; occasions that they had 'got off' with young men and previous legendary drinking sessions. They fantasized about possible future outings, holidays and events, and they shared their fantasies about favourite television, film and pop-stars. They were giggly, relaxed and generally having fun. All of them agreed that the feelings associated with moderate drunkenness were very pleasurable. Moderate intoxication led to 'lightening' their moods.

Kelly: "It lightens you up don't it, a few drinks, you can feel yourself just lightening up... relaxed like, not worrying about owt, just letting things go along - happy like"

Deborah: "You're right it does lightening you up don't it. It's gentle like, just nice really".

Liz: "Drinking sets the mood like, sitting down of an evening, talking with your mates, having a fag, having a drink and that, it just makes your feel relaxed like, calm... getting pissed isn't owt like getting a bit tipsy like, a bit tipsy just makes you glow a bit - it does though don't it... you just feel a bit lighter all over like. (*Me: Can you tell me a bit more about the ways in which you feel lighter?*) Well, it's hard ain't it. You feel lighter as though it's going round in your blood, down your arms and legs and that, moving round your body like, but you also feel sort of lighter in your head like, it's not buzzing or owt, like getting stoned or pissed, it's just sort of lighter, you ain't really thinking about much, just feeling relaxed and okay like"

By drinking moderate amounts of alcohol they were discovering that they could alter

their moods. They were successful in experiencing the positive aspects of alcohol because they were relaxed when they began drinking, and their expectation was to feel pleasantly relaxed and happy. They were expecting their moods to 'lighten'. They felt, therefore, that moderate intoxication was a positive mood enhancer. Moderate intoxication enabled them to feel 'happy', 'relaxed' and 'glowy'. These were very different feelings from those that they desired and experienced when they were drinking to become 'pissed' as will be demonstrated in the next section.

I(vii) "Pig stinking drunk"

To describe advanced drunkenness the middle girls used the phrases: "pig stinking drunk", "completely pissed", "really really pissed", "smashed brainless", "completely legless", "well ratted", "completely rat-arsed", "really steaming", "steamed out of my skull", "paralytic", "pissed shitless", "pissed brainless", "completely drunk", "really pissed", "pissed stupid", "ratted as hell", "completely ratted", "steamed shitless", "pissed out of my skull", "completely skull-less", "really really drunk", "ratted out of my skull", "smashed shitless" and "pissed out of my brains".

Advanced intoxication invariably took place in mixed sexed groups. The middle girls were aiming to achieve more than an enhanced feeling of well-being. They wanted to drink enough alcohol so that they could alter their state of consciousness and achieve an advanced stage of intoxication. When talking to them about the reasons why they liked getting drunk at the 'rec', they suggested that being drunk was a necessary prerequisite to becoming involved in a wide range of activities. They suggest that during advanced intoxication they were able to 'have a laugh'; 'join in with the lads', 'be a bit mad' and 'have a wicked time'. They enjoyed the experience of becoming drunk at the 'rec' because it allowed them to behave in ways that they had never experienced before. In these circumstances they drank in excess of 5-6 units of alcohol. During advanced intoxication they were very vocal, loud and sometimes quite aggressive towards each other as well as towards the young men.

One of the 'rec' activities that contributed towards advanced intoxication was their participation in a range of complex drinking games. Initially I thought that the

principle aim of the drinking games was to get the least sophisticated members of the group very drunk very quickly. This was because the more sophisticated members of the group understood the rules of the games better and had also practised the skills needed to avoid any possible humiliation. But gradually I came to realize that the young people's drinking games were much more complex than I had originally imagined. Because of this it was very difficult to categorize the 'rec drinking games'. The drinking games appeared to test alcohol consumption capacities, IQ skills, dexterity skills, and team skills. The games also encouraged unity amongst the players involved. This was because although teams wanted to beat each other, the overall emphasis of the drinking games was definitely on 'group enjoyment'.

The most popular drinking game that I observed was a game that the Crofton young people called 'grilling and roasting' and the Blummerstone young people called 'keep your pants on'. The young men and women would form two teams - 'setters' and 'doers'. A coin would be tossed to determine who would set the first task/question. The tasks/questions could be very simple or highly complex. Each team was allowed to challenge tasks/questions. This happened when team members felt that they had been set a task/question that was impossible to fulfill. In these cases the team that 'set' the task/question would have to perform the task or answer the question. If they were successful the team who had challenged them would be given two forfeits instead of one. If they were unsuccessful in performing the task/question, they would receive three forfeits. This game caused many loud arguments and much boisterous fighting between the mixed sexed teams. The teams appeared to be fairly evenly matched - although both teams believed themselves to be the 'best'.

Getting drunk and having a good time was the desired outcome of 'rec drinking games'. Roisin, Christine and Kelly explain:

- Roisin: "Sometimes you just go to get pissed as arseholes, it don't matter if you get the questions and that all wrong, that's all part of the laugh"
- Chris: "You get completely ratted, really steaming like... it don't matter cos' that's what everyone is doing"
- Kelly: "You push yourself to the limits... see how much you can take, you know you are going to get smashed brainless, but it don't matter, that's what you do"

Becky, Kelly and Sarah describe a further dimension to the drinking games:

- Becky: "You get pissed cos' you can do things you'd never ever do when you were sober... it don't matter what you do or what you say like, when you're pissed no-one expects anything of you like, I'd never say stuff like I do... flaunting meself and that... I'd die wi' embarrassment, you can't, well, you don't like, but up there it don't matter, it's all just a laugh and that"
- Sarah: "You can act different like to how you normally do... be gobby, dead loud, no one gives a damn... you can just do as you want, be more yourself like... that forfeit that I had to toss me knickers in the air, I just did, didn't really think about it, you don't... just do it and don't worry like".
- Kelly: "It makes you cringe later on, you think did I really do that... it's brill though because you really don't care at the time and you know that no-one else will care either... you all have to be as drunk though, it wouldn't be much good if some of you were sober... you do and say things that you've never done before. I give Kevin and them some right lip, I'm dead gobby like, I don't hardly speak to them when I'm sober"

Getting drunk and losing control helps the middle girls to act in ways that they would normally never consider. They could challenge young men on many different levels. They could also compete with the young men's drinking capacities to demonstrate that they were experienced drinkers and had equivalent alcohol tolerance levels.

- Deborah: "It's different drinking with the lads, you drink more, that's part of it... keeping up with the lads, show 'em what we're made of"
- Kelly: "When it's just us on our own, we have a good laugh... but with the boys you act different like... I 'spose we try to impress them like... keep up with their drinking and that... yet other times we don't, even when the boys are winding us up and that, we just have a bloody good laugh... it just depends really on what everybody is doing like, how you're feeling and that"
- Cath: "There's no rules to it like... it just depends, you go out to have a bloody good time... you know you're going to end up out of your head, sometimes the lads make it, other times they don't we just get on wi' it ourselves, just us lot getting legless... we know we can out-drink them anyway"

They felt that they could defend themselves against the young men's offensive behaviour. They were also able to join in with the games and general 'horseplay' from which they were generally excluded in their homes, schools, youth centres and other venues. In other words, they were beginning to interact with young men in ways that they would normally never consider:

- Deborah: "It's different up at the `rec', specially when you really been drinking... Jason and that lot, we give `em as good as they give us... we give `em even more grief at the `rec' than they give us... they can be quite funny like, not like the normal pains they are... like you behave differently as well, you're not all embarrassed like"
- Becky: "At the youth club, Wayne and them are complete tossers, they are, but at the `rec' they're different, more equal like... they have a go at us, we get back at them... we stand up to them better when we're drunk, it makes us more even... like it's not just them against us, we're doing it together"
- Keeley: "It's the booze, it gives you more confidence, when you've been drinking you don't care what you do and say like you usually do like"

Many of the middle and older girls began their sexual explorations in the context of the `rec':

- Liz: "I get off with Paul regularly like at the `rec', but we don't go out together or owt... just end up snogging and fumbling about when we're pissed"

Catherine, Lisa and Becky expand further:

- Cath: "The pair of `em, they're too embarrassed to say owt to each other unless they are three parts pissed.. they're snogging all night long, welded together they are, then the next day they ignore each other... pathetic ain't it?"
- Lisa: "Catherine's just the bloody same with Mark, they're together when they're pissed as well, hands everywhere, down clothes, up clothes like a pair of octopus... it's embarrassing to watch, it is what these two do, tongues down the back of throats, swallowing tonsils, clothes up around their necks, then next day... they don't say owt when they're sober"
- Becky: "They (the young men) are only fanciable when you're pissed... who would want to cop off with any of them sober?" (Becky and Keeley both put their fingers in their mouths as though they were making themselves sick)

The `rec' drinking games thus served a variety of functions for the young women who chose to become involved in them. First, they offered a fairly `safe environment' to get to know members of the opposite sex in ways rarely possible within their wider social worlds; the environment was considered to be safe because the contents of the interaction were decided by the rules of the drinking games that the young women had helped to develop. Second, the rules of the games were such that the centre of

attention is more evenly distributed between the different sexed players than would normally be the case in the more general social gatherings where young men and young women are present. Third, flirting and establishing relationships with the opposite sex were made easier by concentrating systematically on a certain person when 'choosing' who is going to drink or perform certain tasks. Fourth, all the games enabled and encouraged the participants to get drunk rapidly, hence all the actions mentioned above were reinforced due to the disinhibition effects attributed to the alcohol consumed.

It is clear from the findings presented in this chapter, that drinking large amounts of alcohol was enabling the middle girls to behave in ways that they would never normally consider. They were also enjoying the opportunity to please themselves, in their own terms, within a 'space' that had been appropriated for young people by young people.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of young people 'hanging around' in open spaces is generally viewed as a social problem. Many adults involved with young people try to enforce constant activities to prevent boredom, which it is assumed leads to 'hanging around' and thus to broader social problems. I suggest that this view fails to recognise the importance that young people and young women in particular, have attached to the 'liminal spaces' that they have created for themselves.

The accounts that have been presented here demonstrate how the 'recs' provide important opportunities for the middle girls (and many other young people) to explore and develop a wide range of activities and feelings that they do not encounter in their day to day lives. They were able to: observe peer behaviour in a setting away from adult surveillance and control; rehearse a variety of different behaviours that are associated with adult status (smoking, drinking and sexual experimentation); and begin developing a range of different social competencies (how to act in a group, how to chat each other up and so forth).

This chapter has also suggested that the consumption of alcohol at 'recs' fulfils a

variety of different needs in the middle girls' continuing social development. Drinking alcohol exposed them to experiences that they had never encountered in any other type of setting. They felt that drinking moderate amounts of alcohol enhanced their moods; they became happy, relaxed, witty and confident. Drinking larger amounts of alcohol made them feel empowered; when they became intoxicated they felt able to challenge young men, fight with them on a more equal footing, tease and taunt them, and begin sexual explorations with them without feeling embarrassed. None of the above activities were options for sober young women. Sober young women knew that they were supposed to behave in a 'feminine manner'. Now that this chapter has provided an account of the middle girls' 'rec' drinking sessions, the next chapter will examine the older girls' attempts to join in with a range of activities that are available in a variety of licensed public leisure settings.

CHAPTER SIX

'GOING OUT ON THE RAZ' AND 'ESCAPING'

The last chapter has demonstrated the ways in which the 'rec' provided the middle girls with a very new type of landscape. The 'liminal microculture' of the 'rec' provided them with an opportunity both to 'escape' from adult surveillance and to create a 'space' which allowed them to explore and develop a range of different experiences. One of these new experiences was drinking alcohol. The middle girls enjoyed the pleasurable effect of being tipsy, and the disinhibition associated with drinking large quantities of alcohol. Disinhibition was interpreted by them as an empowering experience. This was because they felt able to reject the 'feminine behaviour codes' that generally restricted their behaviour. When they were intoxicated they felt that they were able to enjoy themselves and behave in ways that they would never consider when sober. Although most of the middle girls' activities at the 'rec' were specific to that setting, some of them also suggested that their experiences at the 'rec' would help prepare them for entry into a variety of licensed leisure settings. They assumed that their knowledge of alcohol and their experience of its differing effects, would allow them to feel comfortable and confident in the arena of public leisure settings, thus avoiding the potential of embarrassment or humiliation.

I GETTING READY TO FACE THE OUTSIDE WORLD

In this chapter I intend to examine the ways in which the older girls' drinking careers continue to develop after they have left behind the 'liminal space' of the 'rec'. I will demonstrate the ways in which drinking alcohol is used as a 'mood setter', 'confidence booster' and disinhibitor for visiting a range of public licensed leisure settings. I will also identify the specific drinking rituals that enable the older girls to make the transition from sober to 'lightened up'; from 'lightened up' to 'ready for action'; and from 'ready for action' to 'let rip'. I will suggest that although there are no striking differences that divide one phase of the older girls' drinking from the next, it is possible to identify qualitative differences in the purposes of their drinking; the rhythm of their consumption patterns; and the behaviour and activities that they become involved in. I will also demonstrate the ways in which the young women's complex drinking

strategies enable them to behave in ways that challenge and subvert hegemonic notions of traditional 'feminine scripts' and gender relations. This chapter is divided into five sections: Section I - 'Getting ready and getting in the mood'; Section II - 'On the raz, lightened up and ready for action'; Section III - 'Ready to let rip'; Section IV - 'On holiday away from it all' and Section V - Raves a new phenomenon. Although the young women who are the focus of this chapter are the 'legal drinking' older girls, it is important to note that some of the middle girls were also beginning to attend raves and night clubs.

During the course of my fieldwork I visited a wide range of licensed leisure settings with the middle and older girls. Table 3 illustrates the range of settings and the frequency of my visits.

	Middle girls	Older girls
working men's clubs	1	1
traditional pubs	3	39
fun pubs	1	19
nightclubs	2	12
raves	2	2

Table 3. Leisure setting visits (Youth centre organized visits are included in this table)

It is immediately clear that the older girls were accessing many more licensed premises than the middle girls. However, the number of visits made to a specific venue should not be taken at face value. For example, by far the most popular public activity for all the middle and older girls was raves. But because raves were expensive they were not able to visit them as often as other licensed premises. (Raves were a fairly new licensed phenomena that were specifically targeted at the under 18s in the region where my research took place). Furthermore, the older girls much preferred 'fun pubs' to traditional 'pubs', but because there were only two 'fun pubs' in the city where my research took place, traditional 'pubs' were visited much more often. Before I go on to examine the range of activities that the older girls became involved in, it is important to realize that their 'nights out on the town' were confined almost exclusively to

weekends. This restriction was due to very limited finances. Researchers such as Gillespie et al (1992, p115) also support this by suggesting that 'weekdays are usually associated with boredom and putting in time until the next planned weekend booze-up'.

I(i) "Getting in the mood"

All human beings like to be prepared for their entrance into any new setting. As long ago as 1972 Michael Argyle suggested that there are many social situations which we encounter where other people can be regarded as a kind of audience and where one's performances may be assessed (Argyle, 1972, p160). It comes as no surprise, therefore, to discover that a prolonged and complex planning and preparation process was a very important and integral component to the older girls being prepared to enter into the public world. Whether they were arranging an holiday, a night at a Karaoke, a Disco, a Rave or a fun pub, it would invariably take a long time to plan the event. Firstly, an appropriate time or day was chosen, then they would begin to save their money. As I have already stated in chapter 3 none of them earned very much money. Andrea, Carole and Paula worked as 'cutters' at the local jeans factory; Kerry and Carla worked as 'machinists' in the local lace factory; and Jo worked as a 'shop assistant' in the local 'mini-market'. All the other older girls were unemployed. By 1991-1992 when my research was taking place, unemployment was concentrated mainly amongst manual workers within the area (Pissarides and Wadsworth, 1992). Those not in regular employment tried to take on baby sitting, cleaning, waitress work, washing up and anything else that would pay them 'cash in hand'. As Winship has suggested 'working class young women get the invisible work, they are the workers who do the menial and monotonous jobs' (Winship, 1981, p14).

Because the older girls could not afford to buy many new clothes they would spend a great deal of time in each others homes swapping clothes and make-up in preparation for the planned event. Several of them jointly owned items of clothing. This helped to make otherwise expensive items of clothing become more accessible. While they tried on each other's clothes they would also fantasize about what might happen on the night of the event that they were organizing. On the evening that the older girls were going to attend the planned event, they would invariably gather in a designated home, so that

they could become involved in the extensive experimentations with clothes and make-up. Stafford (1991) suggests that a characteristic of all girls, is the amount of time they put into constructing their appearances (Stafford, 1991, p88). The older girls suggest that getting ready was about more than merely constructing appropriate appearances. 'Getting ready' also gave them an opportunity to fantasize with each other about the possible scenarios of their evenings entertainment. In other words, they were fantasizing that 'excitement was just around the corner'. Kerry-Ann and Natasha explain:

Kerry-

Ann: "It's all part of it isn't it, getting ready and that, it gets you in the mood for the night like... you're getting ready... you go over what happened before and that, it builds it all up like... it's part of the mood like"

Natasha: "You make out that you're going be drop dead gorgeous like...you're hair is just so, you're make-up and that... drinking helps, it loosens you up, makes you relaxed like, so by the time you're ready to go, you're buzzing all confident like..."

The older girls' extensive preparations appeared to serve three main purposes in their routines for getting ready for a 'night out on the town'. First, the preparations allowed them to meet together to construct an 'appropriate' appearance for their evening out. A 'night on the raz' was significantly different from their everyday activities. It was, therefore, an event to be carefully prepared and dressed for. Second, during their preparations the young women could fantasize with each other about 'what might be'. Prior to meeting up in each others homes they spent a lot of time fantasizing about the event they would be attending. They were looking forward to their brief 'escape' from the predictability of their daily lives. Third, the preparations allowed them to drink alcohol in the confines of their homes, and this helped them to 'lighten up', 'feel more confident' and to 'get in the mood' for going out.

Drinking to feel 'in the mood' and 'more confident', was, therefore, a vital and integral component of the older girls' extensive preparations for 'going out on the town'. They were drinking to build themselves up to do something outside of their normal activities. All of them looked forward to their 'nights out on the raz'. They regarded their nights out as both an 'escape' from the physical and social confinement of their

everyday life, as well as a way of 'getting out' of themselves. They talked about being able to: "let your hair down"; "escape from everything"; "do your own thing"; and "live a bit" when they were 'out on the raz'. Catherine and Jo explain:

Jo: "You wouldn't go into town dead sober like, you just don't, a few drinks home here like, gets you in the mood and gives you confidence like... I couldn't walk into Harvey's (a 'fun pub') sober like, I'd die..."

Cath: "Drinking is part of getting ready ain't it, it lightens you up... It gives you a buzz don't it... singing along to a tape and that... you don't have to be really pissed like, but you **definitely** need to be a bit pissed like..."

On the four occasions that I was with the older girls in their homes prior to going out 'on the raz', I observed: three sharing a large bottle of wine (15 units); two sharing a large bottle of cider (6 units) and 2 cans of lager (3 units); four sharing 4 cans of extra strength lager (16 units); and four sharing a bottle of taboo (20 units). The alcohol was consumed over the course of several hours. On two occasions that I attended these sessions the 'preparations for going out' took over three and a half hours. I was reassured by others that this was a 'normal' amount of time to get ready 'for a night out on the raz'. After the extensive preparations, the next stage of a 'night out on the raz' began by meeting up with friends in a chosen location, then they would take a bus into the town. On the bus many debates regarding where to begin their night out would take place. At this stage of the evening the older girls were louder than normal, giggly and excitable. In general, the group size appeared to vary between five and nine young women.

Although they stated that they only needed to become 'a bit pissed' to be able to approach a public leisure environment with confidence, my fieldwork observations suggested that even when they were tipsy they still found it difficult to walk into a city 'pub' or club. On the occasions that I attended the venues with them they insisted that I entered first. When talking to them about their reluctance to enter 'pubs' and clubs when they were not "really drunk", they told me that they felt that everyone would be looking at them to scrutinize and criticise their appearance. Although they agreed that men and women 'surveyed' each other, they felt very disempowered by the 'male gaze' that they perceived to be everywhere.

I(ii) Facing up to the male gaze

The feeling that they were being scrutinized by men was especially evident in the early stages of their evenings out. On entering bars they tried to find chairs to sit down and "to hide away from stares and glares". Often there were not enough seats for all them to sit down. In these circumstances they looked extremely uncomfortable standing up. They would often stand with rounded shoulders with their arms crossed over their chests or stomachs. The body postures that they adopted reflected the way they felt about themselves and their bodies. Clare and Gerry explain:

Clare: "I'm covering up me boobs... it's this top, it makes me look even bigger than I am"

Gerry: "Look at the size of my belly, if yours were half way as big as mine, you'd tie your coat round yer middle too... look at those perfect fucking stick insects (a group of slim young women)... I'm so fucking big and awkward"

Clare: "That's what girls are meant to look like, (pointing to the group of slim young women) we ain't never gonna be perfect babes... depressing ain't it... "

The older girls were acutely aware of themselves being viewed by men as 'subjects' and 'objects'. Clare and Natasha explain:

Clare: "Men just go about their business don't they, you see a man walking down a street and all you see is a man walking down the street like, a woman walks down the street and men and women check their clothes, check their figures and hair and that, you're always on inspection to everyone all the time..."

Natasha: "Men don't get inspected like we do, they don't unless they're real hunks or something, it's different for blokes, easier like, they ain't on show all the time like girls are... and it ain't the same girls looking at blokes, not so embarrassing like..."

Clare: "Men don't get embarrassed if you check 'em over, they like it, a bit of attention like, it's different for a girl, it makes you feel uncomfortable like... it's more personal... 'Cor look at the pair of tits on that' it's embarrassing ain't it, but if you said 'oh look at the size of the cock on that, they'd love it wouldn't they? they'd be even worse"

John Berger et al (1972) suggested that:

"to be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men... a woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself... from earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continuously"

(Berger et al, 1972, p46).

It is further noted:

"She has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life" (Berger et al, 1972, p46).

Argyle and Williams (1969, p140) have analyzed the feeling of being observed as "a cognitive set produced by the nature of the relationship". They further suggest that:

"people who feel observed have in the past been stared down by others, and adopted a low level of looking at themselves, ie, their feelings of being observed are based on real experiences of being looked at in the past" (1969, p410).

Like Berger et al (1972, p9), the older girls were well aware that "men survey women before treating them". Henley (1977) also supports the older girls' feelings by suggesting that:

"in a society in which women are ogled, whistled at and pinched while going about their daily lives... and where women's bodies are presented revealingly clad and accessible to touch like a community property is it any wonder that women feel observed? They are!" (Henley, 1986, p164).

I(iii) Getting pissed and gaining confidence

It was only the onset of advanced intoxication that enabled the older girls to lose their anxieties and inhibitions. They appeared to have to drink a great deal of alcohol before they felt empowered and disinhibited. Furthermore, they appeared to describe the effects of their consumption of alcohol in very different ways to those of adults in general. On several occasions the older girls insisted that they were only 'tipsy' or 'a bit pissed' when they had in fact drunk in excess of 7-8 units of alcohol. At this level of Blood Alcohol Level (BAL) alcohol specialists would generally predict 'loss of self-control, quarrelsomeness, slurred speech and falling over' (Leicestershire Community Drug and Alcohol Services, 1993). This was certainly not the case for those who took part in my research. Furthermore, my observation of the older girls' associated 'drunken behaviour' appeared to support their claims.

Table 4 (see page 179) illustrates the predicted effects of drinking specific amounts of

alcohol. These predicted effects have been worked out by alcohol specialists. The table can only be considered an approximate guide because it is based on 'number of drinks consumed'. There is no reference to the strength of drinks. In the absence of any quantification I have assumed that one pint of beer, two spirits or two wines are equal to two units of alcohol approximately.

A	B	
	No. of drinks	Effects predicted by alcohol specialists*
	1 pint of beer or 2 spirits/wines	likelihood of having an accident begins to increase
	1.5 pints of beer or 3 spirits/wines	impairment of judgement and inhibition
	2.5 pints of beer or 5 spirits/wines	impairment of motor skills, immediate loss of driving license
	5 pints of beer or 10 spirits/wines	quarrelsome, slurred speech, falling over
	6 pints of beer or 12 spirits/wines	double vision and memory loss
	8 pints of beer or 3/4 bottle of spirits or over 2 bottles of wine	sleepiness, oblivion
	1 bottle of spirits	coma, death possible

Young women's behaviour on 'nights on the raz'	Frequency experienced
talking louder, otherwise behaviour as sober	every time 'on the raz'
giggly, excitable and talkative	" " ^ lightening up v
more vocal, assertive and confident	" " ^ ready for action v
exuberance, loss of self control, join in with 'fun pub activities'	" " ^ let rip v
unsteady on feet, fall over trying to dance too quickly, slurred speech	" " ^ let rip v
vomiting, irrational behaviour, memory loss, emotional, incoherent and rambling	generally only on celebratory occasions and holidays, not every time 'on the raz'
only one young women admitted to hospital with alcohol poisoning - outcome, long term liver damage	once

Table 4. Blood Alcohol Levels (BAL) and Predicted Effects of Drinking

Reproduced with permission from: *Leicestershire Drug And Alcohol Services, 1993

The table demonstrates very clearly that the predicted behavioural outcomes expected by alcohol specialists are very different from the older girls' experience of drinking and my fieldwork observations. On several occasions the older girls had consumed in excess of 3 units of alcohol prior to leaving their homes for their 'nights out on the town'. Yet they showed no signs of impairment of judgement and inhibition. They were merely more talkative and louder. They regularly consumed more than 7 units prior to becoming involved in 'pub' activities, yet in these circumstances they were certainly not slurring their speech or quarrelsome. Instead they were experiencing a sense of exuberance and loss of control. Furthermore, I observed older girls drink in excess of 12 units of alcohol when they experienced no memory loss or double vision on many occasions. I did observe several older girls who had drunk in excess of 12 units unsteady on their feet when they were trying to dance quickly, but despite this, their behaviour did not sit comfortably with the 'predicted effects' of the alcohol specialists.

Intoxication enabled the older girls to relax and forget about their appearance and their self-consciousness. Paul Willis (1990) suggests that young women walk a tightrope between an individual sense of themselves, and a construction which obeys the rules of what a woman is meant to look like. This certainly appeared to be so for those in my group. They were often highly critical of the beautiful fashion and glamour images that they were surrounded by, yet at the same time, they also tried very hard to adhere to fashionable styles that were sometimes inappropriate to their body shapes and sizes. Going out in newly purchased clothes was often, therefore, a nerve wracking experience for them. It is not surprising, then, that the older girls felt that alcohol was a useful aid in helping them to feel less self conscious when entering a variety of licensed premises. But as I have already suggested, this particular drinking strategy was not always completely successful. They often still felt very self-conscious, even after they had been drinking to 'lightening up' and boost their confidence. However, this did not appear to be so when they were away on holiday. The reasons for this will be examined in Section IV of this chapter.

II 'ON THE RAZ, LIGHTENED UP AND READY FOR ACTION'

I have already outlined in chapter 4 the reasons why most of the young women do not like visiting traditional 'pubs'. They felt that pubs were a very male dominated environment, and they resented the socially constructed regulations to which they were supposed to adhere. However, the older girls often visited traditional 'pubs' on their 'pub crawls' when they were 'painting the town red'. This was because of the limited choice of alternatives in the city in which my research was based. They enjoyed visiting the two 'fun pubs'¹ in the city, but they were located at opposite ends of the city thus making it difficult to liaise between the two. Visits to traditional 'pubs' and especially traditional 'pubs' with 'Karaoke'² evenings were, therefore, the most frequent strategies developed by the older girls when they initially arrived in town after their home based 'lightening up' drinking sessions.

Although they were often still very self conscious when they entered traditional city 'pubs', fun 'pubs' and so forth, they did find the venues less intimidating than the local 'pubs' and other 'pubs' that they had visited on youth centre excursions. This was because most people drinking in the city centre 'pubs' at the weekends, also appeared to be drinking with the intention of becoming drunk. Furthermore, like the older girls, they were also drinking their drinks fairly quickly as part of a more general 'pub crawl' or as an activity prior to going onto a night club. As Andrea states:

¹ 'Fun pubs' are becoming increasingly popular throughout England. The identifiable characteristics of 'fun pubs' are: very loud music; flashing lights; giant video screens; at least one stage; often a resident DJ; and the opportunity to become involved in a variety of 'pub games'. Examples of 'pub games' are: 'Boxed in' where two opponents 'box' in a rubber ring with huge (three feet in size) rubber gloves and; 'Barfly', where individuals are put into velcro suits and are encouraged to throw themselves onto velcro clad walls, seeing what height they can reach on the wall. 'Fun pubs' also have a variety of competitions that take place, often simultaneously. Examples of the competitions that take place are; 'wet T-shirt' competitions for women, and 'sexy boxer shorts' competitions for men.

Postscript Since my fieldwork took place one of the 'fun pubs' has closed down and has re-opened as a 'sports theme bar'. Very few young women now visit this 'pub'.

² The Karaoke machine is a Japanese import. A Karaoke machine plays audio cassettes of songs that are combined with video film images. The latter are projected onto a large screen above the stage. Superimposed onto the images are the words of the song. Thus both the performer and the audience are able to see images and the words of the selected song. The performer goes on the stage, picks up the microphone, which is attached to the Karaoke machine, looks at the screen and sings along to the accompanying musical audio cassette.

"most people go out on the town on a Friday or Saturday to dress up, loosen up, forget everything and to get really drunk...".

II(i) Pub crawls, 'fun pubs' and Karaoke

The older girls only became involved in the variety of activities in the 'fun pubs' and sang at Karaoke evenings when they considered that they had drunk enough to be 'ready for action'. However, there was never any striking moment dividing their 'lightening up' drinking from their 'ready for action' drinking. It just became evident that they were no longer drinking to 'get in the mood' and to encourage each other to do something outside the normal. Instead it was apparent that they were drinking to get drunk; they began to drink more quickly; they were much louder; and they clearly wanted to get on with the evenings activities. In other words, there appeared to be a qualitative change in the purpose of their drinking and in the rhythm of their consumption, once that they had begun to drink to 'get ready for action'. Generally, this state was achieved after having drunk in excess of 5-7 units of alcohol. Prior to making the transition from 'lightened up' to 'ready for action', they lacked the confidence to become involved in fun pub activities. They were far too concerned that they might make fools of themselves and be judged by other people. Catherine explains:

"If I wanted to go on bloody stage so everyone could stare at me, I'd join a bloody Circus... I ain't going up there sober... not in a million and six bloody years..."

Once they had made the transition from 'lightened up' to 'ready for action' they would invariably take pride in the skills needed in a variety of performances taking place at the 'fun pubs' and 'Karaoke' evenings. They felt that their dexterity, skills and singing talent equally matched those of other performers. When they were 'ready for action' the older girls also began to reject the usual behaviour codes that they felt they had to adhere to. They were, for example, very vocal and loud when they were walking between the different venues. They would encourage each other to shout out to: passing cars; groups of young men; and joke with the 'bouncers' on the doors of the various locations that we passed. They also shouted and laughed loudly in the venues that they visited. These were all activities that they would generally not become involved in unless they were highly intoxicated.

On 'pub crawls' the visits to each venue were invariably short. Generally, the visits only allowed one drink or possibly two drinks at each location. The purpose of the 'pub crawls' were to: 'check out' various locations; and to get drunk as quickly as possible. Over the period of my fieldwork, the older girls became more familiar and experienced with various venues, so that a specific 'pub crawl' route gradually developed. 'Suitable venues' were invariably those that played loud music and were full of young people. The most popular 'pubs' also offered special rates on specific drinks. If they found themselves in a location that they did not like, they would drink their drinks very quickly and move onto another bar. Generally, they purchased lagers on their pub crawls. They did not drink spirits very often because they were too expensive. But on special occasions such as 18th or 21st birthday celebrations, or while on holiday, they liked to try a variety of exotic drinks and cocktails in the bars that they visited.

Special occasions, then, allowed the older girls to try a variety of exotic spirits and cocktails. Their favourite exotic drinks were: Southern Comfort; Cointreau; Jack Daniels; Tequila Sunrise; Harvey Wallbanger; Daiquiris; Black Russian and Margaritas. As well as drinking these drinks to get drunk, they were also drinking them because the tastes provided them with a great deal of pleasure. Jo and Carla explain:

- Jo: "This Tequila is brilliant, it makes you tingle all over... I feel all warm and glowy... it's amazing, brilliant..."
- Carla: "I could drink these (Strawberry Daiquiri) all the time... you can taste everything like, the sugar round the rim all crunchy like, it gets round your teeth, your tongue tingles the strawberries, the cream, the rum, the lemon... if sex were like these..."

II(ii) Round buying, drinking games and eating out

The older girls often pooled their money on their 'nights out on the town'. When they did not do so they would divide up into 'round buying groups'. In a group of six to eight young women there would be about three different 'round buying groups'. These would often deteriorate during the course of the night. This was generally due to advanced intoxication and dwindling finances. If a 'round buying group' ran out of money, the other 'round buying groups' would often 'pool' their money to ensure that everyone could continue with the groups' drinking activities. (On several 'nights out

on the raz' they spent all of their money on drink, not leaving enough to get a bus or taxi home. On the occasions that I was with them, I paid for them to get home. On the occasions that I was not, they often had to 'thumb a lift' or walk home. Because they were intoxicated they did not think about the potential dangers involved in such strategies. It was only on the morning after, when they were sober, that they were fully aware of the risks they had taken the night before).

A variety of games were often constructed on their 'pub crawls'. The purpose of the games was to: ascertain who would be buying the rounds; to decide what drinks they would buy; and to determine who would be drinking the largest quantities of the drinks. Catherine, Clare, Carole, and Kerry discuss the rules for one of their pub crawls:

- Cath: "I'll go in first, I guess it'll be a bloke serving the bar, there will be sport on the satellite and the first person in after us will be a bloke"
- Clare: "If you get one or two out of three, you get to choose what we're drinking, and you can have a double, and I buy them, if you get them all wrong you have to buy them as well"
- Kerry: "Carole and I will do the next one, then you two can go again..."

(When we entered the bar, a man was serving behind the bar, and wrestling was on the television. Catherine and Clare became very drunk on this particular evening, they both consumed more than 12 units of alcohol).

During the course of my fieldwork, I observed a variety of 'drinking games' which were made up in a variety of different locations. Like the middle girls' 'rec drinking games' the 'raz drinking games' served several functions. First, they often determined what individuals should drink, how much they should drink and who should be paying for the drink. Second, the games often provided an activity to become involved in the bars that they visited. Becoming involved actively in a drinking game in a traditional 'pub' was by far a preferable activity for them than merely 'hanging around' and feeling self-conscious. Third the drinking games were invariably 'consumption games' that provided an opportunity to compete with each other to see who was able to consume most alcohol without showing overt physical signs of intoxication.

As well as incorporating 'drinking games', the pub crawls also incorporated locating a

"decent trougling place" (restaurant) especially if they were celebrating special occasions such as birthdays or when they were on holiday. They ate in a variety of bars and in franchised pizza restaurants. They enjoyed eating out and appreciated the opportunity to try out a variety of foods that they had not experienced before. Eating was a pleasure they generally denied themselves. Natasha, Kelly and Carla explain:

Kelly: "It's brilliant ain't it, lying about all day, not a care in the world, and eating and drinking ourselves stupid... do we care about the size or our bellies? No, definitely not, we can forget about them because we're on our hols"

Natasha: "I'm always trying to diet me... mealtimes in our house are awful, does yer head in... It's brilliant just been able to go out and order what you like and that... but it ain't real life is it?"

Carla: "Doing what we please, when we please and with no-one to please `cept ourselves, brilliant... when I get there I'm going to stuff my face... drinking, bopping, sleeping, owt we want with no hassle"

Susie Orbach (1978) claims that the guilt connected with eating has become very severe for women over the last few decades. Similarly, Rosalind Coward (1984) argues that this guilt has arisen from the growing pressure towards the ideal shape of women. I suggest that the older girls' celebratory nights out and their holidays, permitted them to become involved in a variety of different oral pleasures that they generally denied themselves. They drank a variety of exotic drinks; they ate a wide variety, and large quantities of food; they smoked cigarettes and spliffs; and they shouted and sang in public. Drinking bouts; eating hearty meals; smoking; and shouting in public are generally perceived to be masculine activities by the older girls. They realized that it was not acceptable for them to become involved in such a range of oral pleasures. But because they were using their 'nights out on the town' as an escape and as 'time out' from real life, they felt that they were able to transgress conventional behaviour codes which included being able to eat, drink, smoke, sing and dance as much as they wanted. Coward (1984) suggests that:

"Sexual relations are arranged in our society in such a way that men can take pleasure from the world into their mouths... But for women the pursuit of oral pleasure runs up against prohibitions and controls, against social prescriptions about feeding and food, against cultural prescriptions about women's appetite and women's duty to give out... When women attempt to lay claim to the pleasures of the mouth, they are often constricted by anxiety about transgressing the appropriate expression of female desire" (Coward, 1984, p121-122).

Pub crawls, drinking games, visits to 'fun pubs' and eating in restaurants are activities that provided the older girls with a great deal of pleasure when they were getting 'ready for action' on their 'nights out on the raz'. All of these activities took place prior to moving onto a disco or nightclub, where they felt that they 'could let rip'. All of those who visited licensed leisure settings felt that they had to become involved in drinking at home to lighten up, and drinking on pub crawls to 'get ready for action', before they were finally ready 'to let rip' at Night clubs. The only exception to this rule was their involvement with 'raves'. This will be examined in section V of this chapter. Prior to this it is important to examine the drinking strategies that the older girls developed to 'let rip' on their 'nights on the raz'.

III 'READY TO LET RIP'

When venturing out for a 'night on the raz', the older girls' drinking behaviours appeared to follow an identifiable 'processual pattern' (Turner, 1969, p33). Turner (1969) indicates that a processual pattern describes the passage of participants through different phases of rituals. Similarly, I am suggesting that the older girls' strategies for 'going out on the raz' were highly ritualistic. The drinking rituals that they adopted appeared to follow a three phased processual pattern. The first phase of their drinking processual pattern took place at home and consisted of their passage from sober to 'lightened up'. This state was achieved by drinking approximately 1-3 units of alcohol. During this phase alcohol was being drunk as a 'mood enhancer'. The second phase of the drinking processual pattern consisted of their passage from 'lightened up' to 'ready for action'. This passage generally took place during the 'pub crawls'. They would gradually lose their inhibitions and become overtly confident, noisy and gregarious. They began to jeer at young men, shout at taxi drivers, pub bouncers and so forth. This state was achieved by drinking 5-7 units of alcohol approximately. The third phase of their drinking processual pattern consisted of their passage from 'ready for action' to 'let rip'.

Like the transition from 'lightened up' to 'ready for action', the passage from 'ready for action' to 'let rip' was not accompanied by any particular striking or specific moment. Instead it appeared as a qualitative change in the purpose and rhythm of their drinking,

as well as a change in the way that they behaved. They were no longer afraid of being seen and being 'judged' by other people. They were also no longer intimidated by young men's overtly sexist behaviour towards them. They felt empowered and took pleasure from entering into both vocal and physical interactions with young men. These interactions frequently challenged the traditional heterosexual power relations of the bar and the dance floor. The transition from 'ready to action' to 'letting rip' did not appear to be achieved until they had drunk in excess of 8-10 units of alcohol approximately. During the young women's 'letting rip' phase of their drinking ritual they felt able, therefore, to challenge and subvert the hegemonic 'feminine behaviour codes' and gender relations that they encountered in a range of night clubs. However, their feelings of pleasure and power were fairly short-lived and only really operated within the 'liminal spaces' of the bars and night clubs that they had shared with other drunken people. Once they left the confines of the 'pubs' and nightclubs that they were 'letting rip' within, they soon became silenced and ignored.

III(i) "We don't do dancing unless we're pissed"

In night clubs dancing and displays of skill, energy and sensuality are expected. Yet the older girls did not feel confident to dance unless they were highly intoxicated and disinhibited. Cowan (1990) suggests that dancing is about providing opportunities to 'let go'. The young women who took part in my research are used to being defined by others by the ways in which they dress, present themselves and use their bodies. It becomes apparent, therefore, that the expectations of dancing actually contradict the types of behaviour that women are generally praised for: self-control; restraint; and limited public visibility. As Berger et al (1972) suggest:

"every one of her actions - whatever its direct purpose or motivation - is also read as an indication of how she would like to be treated" (Berger et al, 1972, p47).

The very public arena of the dance floor is a very threatening environment for young women. It is a threatening environment because they know that their 'performances' will be surveyed by others and judgements will be made about 'the sort of women they are'. It is not surprising, therefore, that the older girls would not enter the public arena of the dance floor until they were highly intoxicated and disinhibited enough not to

worry about the ways in which their 'performances' may be interpreted. Kelly and Catherine explain:

Kelly: "When you're completely ratted you feel so fucking brilliant, dead in control like... You just think fuck it... I'm enjoying meself..."

Cath: "You just feel that nowt matters... you don't care a toss what folk think, they can call me 'queen of the slags' anytime they want cos' I'm just enjoying meself and doing owt I want"

Generally, women in contemporary society are encouraged to be in control of themselves, to be lacking control is often frowned upon. It is rather ironic, therefore, that the older girls felt in control and confident enough to become involved in a range of pleasurable public activities, only after they had drunk large quantities of alcohol, by which time they were not in control of themselves at all!

When 'letting rip' the older girls were not afraid of being noticed and being stared at. They were also not afraid of being seen 'bopping' or 'chatting up' young men. Other researchers (McRobbie, 1984; Willis, 1990) have suggested that young people constantly experiment with dance forms on the dance floor to express themselves. This was only so for the young women in my group, when they were safely in the confines of their bedrooms or a girls' only youth centre event! Coward (1984) suggests that parties and discos are:

"modern carnivals that provide the chance to transgress the normal rules of behaviour... when you can expect to do 'excessive' things like drink too much, yet be forgiven' (Coward, 1984, p146).

The older girls only felt able to play an active part in these 'modern carnivals' if they had drunk large quantities of alcohol. It was the disinhibition associated with advanced intoxication that enabled them to participate in the highly visible performances on the dance floors of the night clubs that they visited. Clare, Natasha and Kerry explain:

Clare: "I don't do dancing, unless I'm really pissed like... I won't go over to a lad I fancied unless I was pissed... being pissed, you can do what the hell you like, you don't care what you're doing or saying... you don't have to be all girlie and stupid... then when you remember it, you start cringing thinking how could I!"

Natasha: "Drinking makes it a bit more even like... we do what we want".

Kerry: "We ain't slags... lads think you're a right dog if you do all the

running like...they don't like girls to be forward like... they think you're a tart `cos they like to make all the moves flirting and bopping and that, drawing attention to yerself and that... I'd never chat up anyone sober, **never ever**, I really have to be pissed to do it".

When the older girls were 'letting rip' on the dance floor, they would stand around the dance floor observing the young men closely. These observations often involved loud conversations that they intended the men to overhear. In these circumstances, they were no longer controlling or restricting their bodies to behave in a 'feminine way'. If men barged by them, touched them or patronized them, they would fight back and assert their rights. If they saw a group of young men whom they 'fancied' they would go over to 'chat them up' and ask them to dance. They would never consider these type of activities unless they were highly intoxicated. Their behaviour was very different from their behaviour when they were 'lightening up' or 'getting ready for action'. When they were 'letting rip' they were powerfully challenging notions of 'feminine behaviour codes' and traditional gender relations.

The older girls were pleasing themselves in their own terms and did not worry about any possible consequences. Kelly, for example, who when not drunk was generally very shy and would go red if men tried to speak to her, began to initiate a conversation with a man who she thought was 'tasty'. We watched her stride confidently across the dance floor to the bar where the man was standing with his four friends. As well as asking him to dance she also asked his friends to dance with Natasha, Catherine and Clare. As soon as they began dancing with the young men, they began flirting overtly with them and touching them in very sexual ways. Natasha fondled one young man's bottom while Clare began rubbing herself against the young man that she was with. The young men looked very bewildered when the older girls left them as soon as the record stopped. They immediately accused them of being 'slags' and 'prick teasers'. The older girls ignored the men's comments. They were experiencing a great deal of pleasure as they were 'letting rip' and taking control of a public space in ways that were generally not accessible to them.

When the older girls were highly intoxicated and disinhibited they felt empowered to

challenge the hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations that generally prevented them from experiencing power and pleasure in licensed leisure settings. Clare and Catherine explain the imbalance of power that they perceive men and women have in most pubs and discos; Clare talks about trying to play by mens' rules, while Catherine talks about not dancing unless she is drunk:

- Clare: "Men see 'pubs', clubs and that as sort of theirs don't they? They set the rules like, if you go in them then you get what you deserve like... They're (men) allowed to pinch yer arse, touch up yer tits, do owt they like, it's what we've got to put up with, if we do owt like that to them then we're after them... we give 'em lip back we're tarts or dogs asking for it, we're begging to be fucked by them"
- Cath: "Bopping at the Centre (Youth Centre) is about like feeling okay and that... bopping at discos is completely different, it ain't the same, you're being eyed up, sized up and that watched like... if you're pissed, you don't care you want to be eyed up, like you're in control like, when you're not pissed you're not are you? It's really embarrassing like, cringe making, I hate it... you're just meat on show like"

Clare's perceptive comments are supported by Henley (1986) and Hey (1986). Henley suggests that:

"women who have attempted to equalize nonverbal behaviour with men have often gotten a much more sexual response than they bargained for... a touch, a stare, a loosening of demeanour... all are perceived as sexiness in women" (Henley, 1986, p197).

The young women in my sample group were very aware that their movements in public places, and especially so in such places as 'pubs', discos and clubs, would be interpreted sexually. As Liz Stanley has described in her working paper 'Searching for Moral Ethnography':

"women become characterised not just by the company they keep but also by the places they keep it in. In other words, by being in 'a pub like that', I had become a discreditable type of woman, either a woman 'like that' or at least someone who didn't know better than to be there. Fair game" (Stanley, 1988, p84).

Is it any wonder then, that the older girls lacked the confidence to express themselves unless they were highly intoxicated? I suggest that the repeated experience of having ones movements and gestures interpreted sexually, will obviously inhibit young women, and women in general, from developing powerful postures or gestures in a range of public places.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the older girls had developed a series of ritualized drinking patterns that enabled them, through disinhibition, to reject hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations. Once the older girls had become highly intoxicated they were no longer afraid to get up and dance, or to be seen and to be noticed. They commanded a vast area on the dance floor. They were loud, they were highly energetic and they made themselves highly visible. They danced provocatively. On some occasions they would entice young men to join them, at others they ensured that young men would be excluded from their exclusive group. McRobbie (1984) suggests that dance and music are associated with being temporarily out of control, or out of the reaches of controlling forces (McRobbie, 1984, p134). The older girls' behaviour on the dance floor when they were 'letting rip' appeared to be very much supporting this position. They appeared to be out of control because they were doing things that they were generally encouraged not to. Yet at the same time, they felt that they were very much in control. By 'letting rip' they no longer felt constrained or restricted and this felt very good. At long last they were free from the oppressive and subordinate positions that they generally occupied in their day to day lives. They were drunk; they were out of control; and they did not care. They were dancing to please themselves; they were dancing for enjoyment, and for pleasure. They were no longer concerned about their appearances, reputations and so forth. They did not care about what people thought of them. Their behaviour was reminiscent of that observed by Eleni Papagaroufuli (1992) when she suggests that Greek women were drinking alcohol in bars because they were enjoying the right to express and please themselves the way they wished, rather than the way their society was about to preordain for them (Papagaroufuli, 1992, p67). When the older girls were 'letting rip' on their 'nights out on the raz' it was as though they were able to redefine their femininity, their sexuality, their actions and their power within the social world.

The older girls continued to 'let rip' on their 'nights out on the raz' until they began to sober up. On several occasions after visiting a nightclub they continued to parade around the city centre 'looking for action' until 3 o'clock in the morning. Occasionally, they were successful and found other people doing the same, so they would join forces to sing and become involved in drunken banter. More generally, they were

unsuccessful and had to find their way home instead. In these circumstances they soon became silenced and ignored again. As I have already suggested, once outside the 'liminal space' that they had shared with other drunks, they lost both the power and the pleasure that they had experienced. The older girls' drunken behaviour was viewed by outsiders, such as the male taxi drivers, bus drivers and the Kebab shop workers that they encountered, as 'disgusting' and 'out of order'. This was also the case when other members of the public witnessed them vomiting or relieving themselves on street corners or in alley ways. In other words, the consumption of alcohol had only enabled the older girls to 'escape' for a very brief time. 'Escapes' from the reality of their everyday lives was very important to the older girls, yet the only other activities that provided them with 'escapes' appeared to be their holidays and attending raves. These activities are, therefore, the focus of the last two sections of this chapter. First I will examine holidays.

IV ON HOLIDAY AWAY FROM IT ALL

Only a few of the young women were fortunate enough to go away on summer holidays³. Those that did spent many weeks planning and fantasizing about their holidays. For the older girls their holiday appeared to represent a 'free area' where they could act out their fantasies (Cohen and Taylor, 1976, p95). The older girls were very excited about the endless possibilities that a 'new landscape' would offer them.

Clare: "It's the first time I've been away with mates like... it's going to be brilliant, it's got to be, away from here, no hassle, just us, no-one telling us what to do, doing what we like, going out, staying out getting pissed and stoned... it's going to be fucking brilliant".

Kelly: "No babysitting problems and that... I've never left him (her little boy) before like, so if I do go out I always have to get back soberish to collect him like, or Mam goes on and on about me not been responsible and that... being able to go out and just get plastered without any worries will be brilliant... I can't wait".

³ During the course of my fieldwork, six of the sample group went away on holiday with their families. Four middle girls and two of the young girls. Nine older girls went on holiday with their friends. Carole and Paula both went on their first holiday abroad in 1992. They went to Tenerife for a week with two young women with whom they worked. Some of the other older girls went on 'Off Season 5 Day Breaks' at English Holiday Camps. (These were available during May, June and late September). In April 1992, Kelly, Clare, Kerry-Ann, Natasha, Carla and Jo asked Lorraine (Blummerstone youth worker) and I if we would like to go with them on one of these 'breaks'. We spent 5 days at a Skegness holiday camp in June 1992.

Carla: "I've spent loads of money on clothes and that, Jo, Tash and me spent a fortune from the catalogue... we chose stuff we all liked so we can swop and change like... I dream about it every night, to get to sleep like... it won't be like hanging around here of a night".

The major attraction of holidays appeared to be that they represented an opportunity to feel and behave very differently. Holidays represented a 'complete escape'. Kelly, Clare and Carla explain:

Kelly: "Holidays are the only time you can really escape, when you're away nowt else matters, you can enjoy yourself, there's no hassle, no-one knows us, so we can do what we want, it's just a total escape for a few days, our own little world like, so you got to make the most of it... we can get totally blasted and no-one will care".

Clare: "We're just playing like, playing at been someone else somewhere else, no rules, no hassles 'cos it ain't real life... but just for a few days it can be see, just bumming around... doing what we want to do, be able to be different like, no-one telling us off and that and getting rat arsed every night...".

Carla: "No-one gives a toss do they? They just think god look at them drunken slags aren't they disgusting... we don't give a shit... don't care a toss what anyone thinks, we don't know 'em, we ain't going to see them again, well, I bloody hope not anyway, so it don't matter do it? We can do what we want... be right cows if we want like"

They felt that, because they were away from their home localities, their reputations would remain intact regardless of the type of activities that they became involved in. Yet despite this they only really ventured outside of their chalets in the evenings after they had spent a long time getting ready, and after they had drunk alcohol. During the day time they did not get involved in any of the activities offered by the holiday camp. Lorraine (Blummerstone youth worker) and I tried to get them to join us when we went swimming, windsurfing and cycling but they would not. They did not want to make a fool of themselves. They did not want to be seen in swimming costumes or on bicycles. The older girls' daily lives on holiday were, therefore, remarkably similar to their daily lives at home; except that they allowed themselves to eat large meals every day and they spent most of every afternoon getting ready for their nightly pub crawls.

The older girls' holiday routines consisted of them staying in bed until 11.00-12.00 am, when they got up and cooked themselves a large 'brunch'. After brunch they had baths

and showers. Then they spent most of the afternoon ironing, washing, chatting, watching the television, listening to tapes and drinking alcohol. They did not venture outside of their chalets until they had styled their hair, put on their full make up and had drunk some alcohol. On one afternoon they did venture into town with us to do some shopping, but it took them over two hours to get dressed and made-up for this excursion. They also joined us for a cycle ride on the last day at the holiday camp, but this was only because they had run out of electricity tokens and did not want to purchase any more prior to going home. Going for a cycle ride was, therefore, a better option than staying in with no access to the television, tape-recorder, and other electrical appliances that played a vital part in their extensive preparation rituals.

Despite the length of time that they spent preparing for their 'holiday nights out' they did not consume as much alcohol as they did when going out in their home city. Prior to their nightly holiday 'pub crawls' they generally consumed less than two units of alcohol. This was considerably less than they did at home. Clare, Natasha and Jo explain:

- Clare: "I probably would go out without having a drink tonight because we're away from home like... but it wouldn't be such a laugh... I'm different wi' drink inside me like, I don't care and worry so much about what people think and that... like they groovers (attractive young men) last night, I thought wow, and just went up there, chatting, flirting and that, I'd **never ever** do that sober"
- Jo: "Drinking and that before sets you off... then later on you don't worry about what you're doing... it don't matter, we can be right sluts 'cos no-one knows us, everyone can get stuffed".
- Natasha: "If I were out sober I'd be quiet as a fucking mouse... a few drinks and I'm everyone's friend, talk, I don't stop me, when I've been drinking... it's a different world in't it... it's a bit of a escape in't it?".

When they were on holiday, therefore, they did not feel that they needed to consume as much alcohol to give them the confidence to 'go out on the raz'. Undoubtedly, they were still self-conscious when they entered various bars, but they were much more confident than was generally the case. They no longer waited for Lorraine or I to make the first entry. They were also much more likely to 'chat up' young men in these venues. This was something they would never do in the city based pubs and clubs that we visited. After one such event Natasha commented:

"Weren't I brave? I'd never do that at home, **never ever**, I'd sooner die... I thought 'to hell with it I quite fancy him'..." (The young men that Natasha talked to joined us and stayed with us on our visits to 4 different bars. But eventually the young women decided to abandon them because they 'fancied' a different group of young men. Much later in the evening, we met up with the original group of young men in a late night club. Lorraine and I returned to our chalets at 3.30am, the young women returned to the young men's chalets, (they were in the chalets below us at the holiday camp). The young women returned to our chalets at 5.30am. They spent all of the next day trying to avoid the young men. They were too embarrassed to face them. The young men checked out of the holiday camp the next day. The young women successfully avoided them).

So even when the older girls are away from the confines of their daily settings, they still rely on alcohol to enable them to enter confidently a variety of public settings. When they were not intoxicated on their holiday they experienced the same range of insecurities and fears about the potential embarrassment or humiliation that they may encounter when entering into the public domain. Despite this however, their holiday 'lightening up' drinking strategies did appear to be more effective than their home based 'lightening up' strategies. This was because they were away from their homes and localities and were, therefore, less worried about their 'reputations'. The only other venue that appeared to offer them a space where they did not have to worry about their behaviour and reputations was 'raves'. They appeared to be quite happy to attend 'raves' without being intoxicated. During the time that I was conducting my research I became aware that raves were providing young people with a very new, exciting and possibly unique environment. The purpose of the last section of this chapter is to describe and identify the very unique spaces and experiences provided by raves.

V RAVES; A NEW PHENOMENA

Prior to embarking on my ethnographic fieldwork, I had thought that 'raves' were aimed at an older age group than 16-20 year olds. But during the course of my research, I discovered that this was the very age group that many night club owners

were targeting⁴. I also discovered that during the early 1990s 'rave' organizers had been very effective in changing the status of 'raves' from a more or less elite underground subculture, to a much more socially diverse, consumerist popular leisure culture. 'Raves' have their origins in the 'acid house' gay clubs that were around in the mid 1980's. Nick Dorn (1991) suggests that they were a split off from gay energy dancing (Dorn et al, 1991). The respondent Abby in *Traffickers*, (Dorn et al, 1991) suggests that the clubs gays went to, what they wore, the music they listened to, and taking ecstasy were all tightly interlinked. The acid house club scene was discrete and very much a closed group confined to a limited range of specific environments. But since the mid 1980s the 'rave' phenomena has exploded into something very different.

'Raves' are now a unique phenomena which have a universal appeal to young people. Many of the middle girls and older girls endeavoured to attend 'raves' as often as their finances permitted. Rietveld (1991) suggests that 'raves' have blurred the boundaries between previous disparate groups such as football fans and various pop music 'tribes'. Russell Newcombe (1992) argues that although ravers appear to be predominantly working class in the northern parts of Britain, group membership and shared beliefs are not as important as in other cultures (Newcombe, 1992, p22). The hallmark of raves is, therefore, that people of different ages, occupational groups, sexualities, subcultures and races dance together. In other words the general rigid demarcation that runs along class, sex, age and ethnicity is blurred, as is sexual preference, thus making the atmosphere at 'raves' much less homogenously heterosexual than is the case in other public leisure settings that young people visit. In general, the middle and older girls attended 'raves' to achieve 'a totally different and new experience'. Frequently, this new experience involved an altered state of consciousness, which encouraged them to behave in ways that they had not previously considered or encountered. However,

⁴ Night clubs are very quiet venues during the week. In general, the most popular nights for people to attend night clubs are Fridays and Saturdays. Normally, the 'Under Eighteens' are not encouraged to enter night clubs. This was not the case for 'raves'. A variety of night clubs throughout the county in which my research was taking place advertised 'raves' for 'fifteens and over' on weekday evenings. When I attended these raves with the young women I became aware that fifteen year olds were being served a diverse range of drinks that contained alcohol. Furthermore, the young women were able to purchase a variety of illegal drugs, such as amphetamines, ecstasy and LSD.

drinking alcohol was not a 'necessary component' of 'raves'.

V(i) "Raves are a totally excellent scene"

In chapter 5 'Creating Free Spaces' I described how I had to learn to talk in a way that I had forgotten entirely; I had to learn new word games, rhymes and so forth when participating in the middle girls' 'rec' activities. When I began attending raves, it was as though I had to learn another whole new language! When I asked the middle and older girls why raves were so good I received a variety of responses which suggested that they found it very difficult to separate out the elements of the dance/drugs experience - music, drugs, dancing, togetherness - and to ascribe to one a greater importance. Sounds and body language were as important as words in their accounts of attending raves.

- Kelly: "It's just the buzz like, (arms outstretching and encircling her body as though she is making herself warm) the drugs, the lights and the music (shaking her arm in a definite beat) it's got to be real techno stuff not namby pamby bubble beat" (The music played at raves is known as Techno to ravers, therefore, most chart techno is known derisively as bubble beat).
- Deborah: "The gear (drugs) especially New Yorkers and White Doves (Ecstasy⁵) the music and the smoke machines... it's just **excellent**, (closes her eyes) totally wicked (really good), and totally safe... Raves are just the best, the people... it's just WOW".
- Cath: "The E's (Ecstasy), the Whizz (Amphetamines⁶), the music and the lights, it's just wicked (really good)".
- Lisa: "It's a complete escape like, but it's really real, it's mental (a really good experience) the Bombers (Ecstasy) they're brilliant... (unclear) all at the same time everything is brilliant and ARGH and WOW, it's

⁵ Ecstasy is a drug called MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), a natural version is found in nutmeg and oil of sassafras. It was first discovered in 1912, and patented as an appetite suppressant in 1914 by a German company. It has never been produced on a commercial basis by a drug company, but was used in the 1970's by American psychotherapists as an aid to therapy before being outlawed in the mid 1980's. Ecstasy is a stimulant drug with some of the properties of LSD but it does not usually cause hallucinations. The drug has an ability to make people feel closer emotionally to those around them. It usually comes in the form of capsules, tablets, or more rarely powder (Release, 1991).

⁶ Amphetamines are synthetic stimulants which act on the central nervous system to arouse the user in much the same way as the body's natural adrenalin. Like all stimulant drugs, amphetamines produce feelings of exhilaration, increased energy, a sense of wellbeing, power and confidence, enhanced ability to concentrate and a marked reduction in the need for sleep and food. Amphetamines tend to intensify users' feelings and emotions about themselves and the world around them (ISDD, 1993).

- everything, the music and the lights and the drugs, the place, everything".
- Liz: "The totally excellent experience, it's unreal, better than anything else you can do".
- Becky: "Everything about it, it's totally excellent, like nothing else".

Sheila Henderson (1993) suggests:

"for many young people the fun and the drugs are merged in a positive reality, not an escape from reality" (Henderson, 1993, p12).

The middle and older girls that I observed at raves, and those that I interviewed in the youth centres, appeared to support this notion. For many of them the rave experience was one of the few positive 'public experiences' that they had encountered. Raves offered them a social space in which to explore a range of sensual and sexualized pleasures. Yet at raves pursuing sex or being pursued for sex was downplayed. Newcombe (1992) suggests that at raves attitude is more important than appearance. He further states that friendliness, sensuality and 'body language' are valued more than trendiness, sexual displays or long conversations (Newcombe, 1992, p22). However, he does not give any reasons as to why this is the case. Perhaps it is because raves were taking off at the same time as concern about the spread of HIV and AIDs was increasing. Early acid house and rave attenders may have been, therefore, seeking alternative sensual pleasures to 'one night stands' that are often an integral part of the general 'gay' or 'straight' club scene.

The most popular substances to be used at raves were ecstasy, amphetamines and LSD⁷, but some of the middle and older girls said that they also used cannabis. It was easy to buy ecstasy, amphetamines and LSD at many of the raves. But cannabis did

⁷ LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide) is a powerful hallucinogenic drug which usually comes either in the form of small pills (microdots), or as 'tabs' of impregnated paper. Only a very small amount of the LSD is necessary for the drug to have its effect (usually called a trip). Nevertheless it is difficult to gauge how intense the experience will be as strength varies from batch to batch and the drug's effects differ from person to person. The effects of LSD can last anything between 5 and 24 hours, although 6 to 12 is most usual. LSD powerfully changes perceptions. Familiar objects and people may at one moment appear inexplicably funny, in another frightening. Sense of time can become distorted, music can be heard more acutely and strange patterns seen, although it is rare to have true hallucinations. LSD use is often an intense experience, the effects are to some degree dependent on the mood of the person taking it and the surroundings in which it is taken (Release, 1991).

not seem to be available for purchase⁸. Main findings from the 1992 British Crime Survey (Merseyside Drugs Team, 1994) suggested that 28% of young people aged 16-29 years had tried an illegal drug. Based on my observations at the raves I attended both during my fieldwork, and during the course of my professional duties as a 'drug and alcohol officer', I suggest that as many as 75% of young people attending were taking illegal drugs. It would appear, therefore, that Ecstasy has offered many young people an entirely new culture. Young men and young women are encouraged to participate equally in this culture. Furthermore, most components of this culture - the clothes, clubs, music and drugs - have now been assimilated into mainstream popular culture⁹ (ISDD, 1992).

V(ii) "Raves are about having a good time without all that boy/girl crap"

Like the middle and older girls, I had never experienced an environment which was anything like a rave. At raves hegemonic gender relations are almost eradicated. Young men and young women do not go to rave with the intention of flirting with the opposite sex. Instead the young people attend them to experience a range of individual pleasures that are related to the music, the lights, the atmosphere and the substances that they may be taking. Furthermore, many of the young people who attend raves chose not to drink alcohol there. This was often because they were taking a range of other substances and did not want to put themselves at risk. But it was also because

⁸ I suggest, therefore, that the drug dealers only introduced substances to the 'raves' that could be sold in individual portions and that could be immediately consumed on the premises. Unlike ecstasy, amphetamines and LSD, cannabis is never sold or purchased in individual portions. It was not, therefore, generally available for purchase at 'raves'.

⁹ Since completing my fieldwork in 1993 raves have become big business for many nightclubs throughout Britain. The raves that I attended were generally small scale and attended by young people aged 15-25 years old. At all the raves that I attended I certainly appeared to be the oldest person there. Furthermore, although illegal substances were available, supplies invariably seemed to be limited. Dealers were young people and it appeared that they were part of a small scale concern. Since then the rave scene has changed dramatically. In 1996 some of the older young women invited Lorraine and I to a rave "for old times sake". It was very apparent that raves and illegal substances are now very big business. Middle aged men were conspicuous inside and outside the venues. It was certainly them who controlled the sale of illegal substances. We were frisked very vigorously before being allowed to enter the rave and our plastic bottles of water were confiscated. Once inside we discovered that small bottles of water were £3.50 each and if attenders bought 4 bottles they received a free Popper. At the rave we were offered ecstasy at £20 a tablet and a tab of LSD for £15. The age group attending the rave was no longer 15+, it appeared instead to be mainly 20-35 year olds.

some of them did not feel that they needed to drink in a rave environment to obtain pleasurable experiences. Catherine and Becky explain:

- Cath: "You drink alcohol the first few times, like you don't know about the gear (drugs), and where to get it from, but once you been a few times, you leave the grog (alcohol) and stick to the gear... they don't mix see, grog spoils the gear, you don't get such a buzz" (a good experience)... the only time I drink at 'raves' is when I'm broke and can't afford the gear like...".
- Becky: "You don't have to take owt like... not if you're just into the whole experience like... it's not like normal discos and that, coping off, it ain't like that, you get real close to people, like you're all experiencing something good together like... you don't need to be out of it... don't need gear... that's why it's so good like".

Raves provided, therefore, a range of new and very different experiences. Raves also provided the middle and older girls with an opportunity to try new substances; substances to which they had previously not had access. These new substances' were providing the opportunity to obtain a range of pleasurable experiences:

- Sarah: "The gear gives you warm dreamy feelings, like you just don't want it to stop".
- Becky: "Good acid (LSD) is brilliant, totally brilliant, you really do get into a new dimension... it's like nothing else on earth".
- Cath: "Once you've done it, (used drugs) you know you have to have another go, like you want to feel like that again... you feel warm, calm, strong like, good, it's amazing... trouble is we ain't got the cash"¹⁰.

Raves also provided a very different and exciting environment. It was very exciting entering a rave and was very different from entering a conventional 'disco'. When a young person walks into a rave they are immediately aware of a very different atmosphere. There are huge quantities of bright multi-coloured flashing lights, numerous smoke machines, and the very loud pulsating rave rhythm beating out over very powerful sound systems. Rave music ranges from 120 to 140 beats a minute.

¹⁰ The young women did not attend 'raves' as often as they would have like to. 'Raves' were too expensive. In 1992 tickets for the 'Raindance Raves' cost £25.00 per ticket. Smaller 'raves' generally charged entrance fees of between £5- £10. Tablets of ecstasy cost £12.50- £16.00, a 'twist' (individual portion), of amphetamines cost £10-£15.00. A 'tab' (individual portion), of LSD cost £8-£12. Most of the young women from Crofton and Blummerstone said that they had attended three or four raves. Catherine and Nicky were the exceptions, they had both attended six raves. Only four of the young women, Catherine, Nicky, Kelly and Deborah had attended a 'Raindance Rave', and they had all been once.

Even without the use of substances, participants can feel the deep vibrations of the music from wherever they are standing or sitting. The other noticeable difference is that participants of the rave actively greet new arrivals in a very open and friendly manner. This is a very stark contrast to the behaviour and attitudes that the young women generally encounter when entering public leisure settings. Deborah, Catherine, Kelly and Becky explain why raves are such popular venues for young people:

- Deborah: "Discos and that it's always the same... the lads hang around and stare, eye you up like... make comments as you walk past, grab you and that... 'raves' aren't like that, they're different" .
- Cath: "Everybody is dead friendly, you hug and touch folk, but it's not like at discos and that, it's sound, everyone is the same it's amazing, it's like you are part of the music, the lights and stuff... nothing else matters and you want it to go on and on".
- Kelly: "Nothing makes you feel like raves, they're brilliant, even if you haven't got any gear".
- Becky: "It's all so different, there's no rules like, you just get into it and talk to everybody... like I'd never talk to a hunk (good looking young man), at a disco or owt, but at a 'rave' you can just be yerself...the boys all dance and that, not like hogging the floor and that, they don't push us round like, look out for each other... it don't matter if your raving or chilling out, you know it's dead safe like... it's not about copping off (finding someone to have sex with) with anyone... honest it's unreal".

In other words, raves provided an environment in which they felt comfortable. I suggest that two main factors contributed towards this. First, young women (and young men), went to the raves anticipating and expecting new experiences, so they were ready to behave differently towards each other. Second, the substances taken pre-disposed young men to behave in different ways than was generally the case, hence the middle and older girls did not feel intimidated by them. This was a very new experience because they were generally used to feeling ill at ease and unable to communicate with young men unless they were highly intoxicated. Prior to going to conventional nightclubs/discos, they felt that they needed to consume enough alcohol to make the transition from 'ready for action' 'to let rip'. This was because prior to 'letting rip' they did not feel empowered enough to enter the dance floor on an equal footing with young men. This was never a concern at raves because they did not feel that they were on show, and they did not feel that they were subjected to hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations. This, then, was very different from how

they felt when they attended night clubs on their 'nights on the raz'.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate the ways in which the older girls utilize the effects of alcohol as a 'mood setter', a 'confidence booster' and as a disinhibitor that enables them to engage in a range of activities that they would generally never consider. I have suggested that when the older girls are out 'on the raz' their drinking patterns follow a processual pattern that has three fairly distinct phases: 'lightening up'; 'getting ready for action' and finally 'letting rip'. I further suggested that it was only when the young women were 'letting rip' that they felt able to challenge the hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations that they encountered on a daily basis. I then suggested that there were two exceptions to this ritualistic drinking pattern; holidays and raves. First I examined holidays and suggested that because they provided an alternative 'landscape', the older girls are less concerned about their reputations. I then examined the very unique space that raves provided young people and identified some of the reasons why both the middle and older girls felt much less threatened and more empowered in raves than in traditional nightclubs.

Throughout this chapter I have shown the ways in which the older girls obtain a great deal of pleasure when drinking alcohol. I have also demonstrated the ways in which they often feel empowered as a result of the disinhibiting effects of their intoxication. In the next chapter I will examine these elements of drinking alcohol in much more detail. I will also focus on specific dimensions and themes in the young women's lives that appear to play a significant role in the development of their drinking patterns.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MEANINGS OF THE YOUNG WOMEN'S DRINKING

The last four chapters have presented a detailed account of the structural and cultural milieu of three groups of working class young women aged twelve to twenty-one from Central England. Now I intend to build upon the material that has already been presented so that I can develop an in-depth analysis of the meanings of their drinking activities. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to demonstrate the ways in which the young women's drinking activities can be interpreted as a facet of their grass roots struggle against the social position in which they find themselves. This chapter will pull together various disparate dimensions and themes that appear to play a significant role in the development of the young women's drinking patterns. I will contend that the development of their drinking activities should be understood as being intricately related to their experience of growing up as females in the 1990s.

The chapter is divided into six sections. Section I, Young, middle and older girls' acquisition of alcohol, examines the spatial and temporal restrictions imposed upon the different groups of young women. Section II, Feminine identities and feminine scripts, reminds us of the ways in which the young women feel about themselves generally. Section III, The development of symbolic drinking patterns, links the young women's general feelings about themselves, and their social positions, to their developing drinking patterns. Section IV, Extending liminality and developing fantasies, analyses the young women's 'escapes'. Section V, Dealing with reality, and seeking oblivion at home, analyses home-based 'mindscaping activities'. Finally, Section VI, Making connections; issues of power and pleasure, makes sense of the young women's drinking patterns within what Foucault describes as 'games' or 'perpetual spirals of power and pleasure' (Foucault, 1978, p45).

I YOUNG, MIDDLE AND OLDER GIRLS' ACQUISITION OF ALCOHOL

So far this thesis has introduced the drinking activities of three different age groups of young women based in three geographical locations: Abraxus, Crofton and

Blummerstone. Table 5 The Young Women's Drinking Career Profile, summarizes the way in which I have demonstrated that the young women's drinking activities become more complex as they become more experienced drinkers. Although tabular presentations are unable to represent all aspects of the data, I suggest that Table 5 (overleaf) provides a fairly succinct summary profile of the young women's drinking careers.

	Young girls (Novice drinkers)	Middle girls (Active learner drinkers)	Older girls (Legal drinkers)	
Drinking Location	Private Settings - under parental supervision - illicit peer-led experiments	Liminal Setting of 'Rec' Very Limited Range of Licensed Settings	A Wide Range of Public Licensed Settings	Home Settings
Drinking Intentions	- experimenting with an adult activity - challenging adult authority by becoming involved in an illegal activity	-experimenting with an adult activity - challenging adult authority by becoming involved in an illegal adult activity - get drunk to have a good time - drinking alcohol is linked with the notion that 'anything might happen' - experimenting with the tastes and effects of alcohol	- get drunk to have a good time - drinking alcohol is linked with the notion that 'anything might happen' - escape from the limitations of everyday life	- get drunk to block things out
Experiences and Effects	- do not like the taste of alcohol - enjoy the effects of moderate intoxication	- varying stages of drunkenness - drinking and intoxication experienced as a pleasurable activity - many types of alcohol taste good - alcohol experienced as a mood enhancer and a disinhibitor - a feeling of 'collective community' among drinking group - opportunity to behave in any way they want	- varying stages of drunkenness - drinking and intoxication experienced as a pleasurable activity - alcohol experienced as a mood enhancer and a disinhibitor - feeling of 'collective community' amongst drinking group - opportunity to behave in any way they want	- feeling of 'collective community' amongst drinking group - advanced drunkenness which depresses brain activity

Table 5. The young women's drinking career profile

The table demonstrates the ways in which the young girl novice drinkers have very

limited access to, and experience of, drinking alcohol. They are merely experimenting with an adult activity. They have few clear ideas as to why they are drinking, but they do think that part of the attraction is because they know they should not be doing it. Their limited access and experience contrast sharply with the experience of the middle girl active learner drinkers. The middle girls were enjoying the tastes and sensations from experimenting with a range of drinks that they had previously not encountered. Drinking alcohol provided them with endless possibilities for fun and excitement. They felt that their 'rec' drinking sessions provided an atmosphere which allowed 'anything to happen'. Thus the anticipation of the event was almost as important as the drinking event itself.

The middle girls also discovered that many alcoholic drinks actually tasted very nice. Drinking alcohol provided them with a range of new and pleasurable sensations. They enjoyed the effects of disinhibition. Drinking alcohol gave them the confidence to become involved in a range of new activities. Joining in with a range of activities such as drinking games, fighting and so forth provided the middle girls with a feeling of 'collective community' within their mixed sexed drinking groups. In other words, the 'active learner drinkers' had discovered that drinking alcohol provided them with 'time out' from their everyday lives, roles and 'scripts'. Drinking alcohol also allowed them to have fun and to experience pleasure.

As the young women become eighteen, or are able to 'pass' as an over eighteen, their access to alcohol increases dramatically. They are no longer confined to stealing drinks from home and buying alcohol from small off licences. Their access to alcohol is only constrained by their limited finances. As the young women become older and more experienced drinkers they continue to utilize alcohol as a way of obtaining fun and pleasure. Drinking alcohol becomes inextricably linked to 'escaping' from the realities of everyday life. Increasingly however, some of the older girls were beginning to be dissatisfied with the 'escapes' that nights out 'on the raz' offered. This was especially so for the unemployed older girls. As a consequence, this group of young women had begun to become involved in a new and different drinking activity, 'drinking to block things out'. Those who were taking part in this activity were

becoming disillusioned with the notion that drinking created the opportunity for 'anything to happen'. These older girls stayed at home and drank alcohol to achieve oblivion. In these circumstances it was the actual drunkenness, and not the associated drunken activities, that were providing the older girls with an 'escape' from their everyday lives. In this context, therefore, the older girls are utilizing alcohol as an anaesthetic to numb their anxieties, fears, frustration and pain.

Now that I have summarized the intentional drinking activities of the young women in my group, the purpose of the remaining sections in this chapter is to develop a more sophisticated conceptual analysis of their drinking activities. I will do this by making links and connections with issues and themes that appear to be significant in the development of their drinking patterns. Once I have done this I will be in a better position to comment on the highly symbolic ways in which working class young women in the 1990s are drinking alcohol both in public and private settings. The first issue that I wish to analyse is the young women's lack of confidence in their developing feminine identities. This is important because throughout the thesis I have demonstrated the ways in which they invariably utilize alcohol as a 'confidence booster'.

II FEMININE IDENTITIES AND FEMININE 'SCRIPTS'

The previous four chapters have examined the many limitations and restrictions that were imposed on the young women's lives. I have explored their activities during different stages of their lives at home, at school, and in a variety of public leisure settings. One of the most consistent features throughout the range of situations and circumstances that I have examined, is the young women's lack of confidence in themselves. Young women in the 1990s are bombarded with glamorous images of women who are extremely thin and 'conventionally' beautiful. Those who took part in my research knew that they did not look like these images that surrounded them. They were not thin, they did not have flawless skin or perfect glossy hair. However, they did spend many hours in a day trying to achieve glossy hair, scrubbed complexions, immaculate appearances and perfect bodies for their entry into the outside public world.

The young women were very aware that there was a very definite ideal of the perfect female form. They also were well aware that they did not conform to this cultural ideal. Angela McRobbie suggests it is these images and the market for beauty products which do the job of both anchoring femininity and unsettling and undermining it (McRobbie, 1991, p176). A good example of this is the way that the young women talked constantly about trying to improve their 'problem areas': fat thighs; flabby stomachs; spotty faces; small breasts; large breasts and so forth. In other words, many of them felt inadequate because they did not measure up to the 'culturally expected norm'. This fractured sense of self is unlikely to encourage a positive attitude about one's feminine identity. Consequently, many of the young women had developed a very punitive relationship with their bodies; most of the middle and older girls were dieting constantly. Furthermore, they had developed all sorts of methods to cover up and disguise their bodies. They did this because they disliked the ways in which their bodies did not measure up to the culturally expected female norm.

The young women also lacked confidence in their feminine identities, because they were aware that within their social worlds, and within society more generally, girls and women are perceived as 'second rate citizens' when compared to boys and men. As Jean Spence (1990) has suggested:

"For young men, youth implies a freedom from the restraints and dependence of childhood without the burden of the responsibilities of manhood. It is a time to explore the possibilities of male power, control and domination, to challenge authority, to test how much of the world they can claim as their own and to indulge in sexual experiment. For young women the situation is entirely different. Adolescent femininity involves, not a freedom from the restraints of childhood, but acceptance of the 'apparent inevitability of subordination'" (Spence, 1990, p72-73).

It is not surprising, therefore, that none of the young women demonstrated any confidence in their feminine identities. Attending girls' only groups within their youth centres had done little to improve their self confidence. Jean Spence suggests that girls' groups are meant to help young women recognise their subordinate positions while seeking to develop practices which will question received 'truths' of gender inequality (Spence, 1990, p81-82). Clearly this was not happening with the young women in my group. They seemed to be experiencing youth simply as a period of

restriction and repression.

In an earlier chapter I have depicted the problems that all the young women encountered when they tried to gain access to their youth centres. I also indicated the ways in which the middle and older girls often felt that they were not welcome in a variety of 'pubs', restaurants and other public leisure facilities which appear to be dominated by the presence of men. Pearce (1996) suggests that it is still generally assumed that women and girls frequent familiar, 'private' indoor spaces such as their homes, friends homes and local shops, while it is men who occupy 'public' outdoor and indoor spaces such as streets, estates, pubs and clubs. All the young women in my group, felt, therefore, that they were generally competing with boys and young men in an effort to gain access to most public spaces. Nancy Henley (1986) refers to this phenomena as the 'incredible shrinking woman syndrome' she suggests that

"we can observe that in general, females in our society have control over less territory, and less desirable territory than do males" (Henley, 1986, p36).

Henley also argues it is not only women's territory and personal space that has to be controlled, but also their bodily demeanour must also be restrained and restricted spatially (Henley, 1986, p38). So how does this relate to young women's drinking activities? I contend that the young women learn at an early age that alcohol can be a very effective means of 'escaping' from highly circumscribed notions of 'femininity'. Drunken young women do not have to behave in a feminine way; they take up space, they are vocal and highly visible. The young women's developing drinking patterns must be understood, therefore, as creative and symbolic acts of resistance.

III THE DEVELOPMENT OF SYMBOLIC DRINKING PATTERNS

The idea that drinking alcohol is a symbolic activity is not new. Anthropologists have, for a long time, asserted this for a variety of adult social groups (Heath, 1987). I have attempted to break new ground by developing and constructing a feminist ethnographic analysis of the symbolic nature of young women's drinking practices. In other words, I have developed a research strategy that is unique in the field of young people, drugs and alcohol research. The previous four chapters have endeavoured to construct a series of 'insider accounts' (Conrad, 1990). These insider accounts have

enabled the young women in my group to talk about the reasons why they have developed particular styles of drinking. I will now build upon these accounts, in order to develop a more theoretical and structural analysis of the young women's drinking practices. This analysis should help to disrupt the view that alcohol use, like drug use, is merely a negative activity for young people to become involved in. By adopting this approach, I am not trying to ignore or deny the serious problems which drinking obviously pose. Instead, I am trying to add to our understanding of how drinking problems can arise.

Anthropologists have consistently contended that alcohol use can be a constructive and 'coherent' social act (Douglas, 1987). Despite this, most alcohol researchers who work with young people insist that any 'drug use' must be mis-use (Gullotta et al, 1994). I challenge this assumption by suggesting that, in general, working class young women's drinking should be viewed as a constructive and highly symbolic social act. Symbolism is essentially expressive (Beattie, 1966). Furthermore, symbolism is often used by social groups as a way of saying something important which it may be difficult or impracticable to say directly. It is, therefore, a complex and difficult process to try and identify the symbolic elements of human behaviour. Beattie (1966) suggests that it: "requires the clear formulation of a distinction which sociologists have drawn between what have been called the 'instrumental' and the 'expressive' aspects of human behaviour" (Beattie, 1966, p71).

The young women who took part in my research were developing a range of drinking practices that appeared to be both instrumental and expressive activities. Drinking to become drunk, for example, can be clearly identified as an instrumental activity, because becoming drunk is directed towards bringing about some desired state of affairs; it is oriented towards an end. The instrumental aspect of any activity is generally understood by seeing what is aimed at. Observing and analyzing young women's instrumental drinking activities is, therefore, a relatively straightforward activity.

However, it is far more difficult to observe and analyze expressive drinking practices. Expressive aspects of drinking activities can only be interpreted when it is understood

what is actually being said by the people involved. Expressive drinking activities are a way of saying or expressing something, usually some idea or state of mind, that is difficult to convey by using other means. I contend that it is this aspect of young people's drinking activities that has remained concealed by traditional quantitative research methods. The more holistic qualitative research strategy which I developed during the course of my fieldwork and analysis, has proved to be a much more sensitive and penetrating research tool. It has enabled me to enquire beyond the instrumental drinking acts which I observed taking place in the young women's social worlds. I have been able, then, to locate and analyze some of the more expressive aspects of their drinking activities. My research strategy has also enabled me to understand that the young women's drinking activities exhibits both instrumental and expressive aspects. So, although the young women's drinking activities can, at times, be regarded as two separate analytical categories (instrumental and expressive), these separate analytical categories can also be difficult to separate out, because they are often enmeshed in a single drinking activity.

III(i) First encounters - young girl novice drinkers

When the young girls 'test' the range of alcoholic drinks they steal from their parents' cupboards at home, they are merely experimenting with the various flavours of drinks. Few of them were able to gain access to sufficient quantities of alcohol to become intoxicated. Alcohol researchers have long been acquainted with this particular aspect of teenage drinking. As Maddox stated over thirty years ago, drinking at home is about "playing at" and experimenting with one facet of adult life (Maddox, 1962, p233). The young girls' drinking activities were an infrequent random instrumental drinking activity that was restricted and controlled by their very limited access to alcohol. During the course of my fieldwork, interviews with the middle and older girls reinforced the notion that as young girls they had very few opportunities to gain access to alcohol. The fieldwork indicates that it was not until they began to 'hang about' at the 'rec' that they began to purchase alcohol from off licences and shops. It is likely, then, that the young girl novice drinkers are fairly typical in representing the ways in which most working class young girls have little access to alcohol.

In an earlier chapter, I mentioned that alcohol is not generally drunk at home on any regular basis within the working class households that I visited. The young women's parents and older siblings tended to go to 'pubs' to drink. Alcohol was drunk at home for special 'celebratory' family occasions such as anniversaries, weddings, Christmas and so forth. The young women in my group were, therefore, introduced to a very limited range of drinking patterns in their home settings. Within these, they do not observe general 'social drinking' or drinking integrated with meals. Instead, they observe and learn that drinking alcohol is generally associated with festive occasions. They also learn that it is acceptable to drink to excess and become drunk on these occasions.

The young women also learn that in general, it is working class men who are regular public social drinkers. The young women's mothers only visited 'pubs' for special occasions and appeared to drink in moderation. This notion that women are both private and moderate drinkers is often documented within the literature. Dimitra Gefou-Madianou suggests that

"what characterizes women's drinking then seems to be moderation in the quantities consumed and the domestic context within which it is consumed" (Gefou-Madianou, 1992, p10).

I believe that the findings from my thesis have already begun to disrupt this view. My work is challenging this view because I am suggesting that the older girls' very varied drinking activities (within their homes and within public settings) should be interpreted as social practices which challenge traditional interpretations of their social positions.

III(ii) Developing drinking games and rituals - middle girl active learner drinkers and older girl legal drinkers

Chapter 5, 'Creating free spaces,' examined the unique aspects of the 'rec' as a space in which young people could explore a variety of different behaviours and situations. For the middle girls, in particular, the 'rec' provided a space where they felt free from the general social constraints that dictated how they should behave. At the 'rec' they were free to experiment with many different ways of talking and interacting with other young women and young men. They were able, therefore, to use the 'recs' to begin to

try out a range of adult activities, such as sexual experimentations, drinking a wide range of alcoholic drinks, smoking tobacco, and 'testing' drugs, such as cannabis and LSD.

The 'rec' provided the middle girls with their first indeterminate 'liminal space'. This was because the young people who frequented the 'rec' did not submit them to the general constraints and restrictions they experienced on a daily basis. They were able to 'escape' from the limited feminine scripts to which they were expected to adhere. However it was also pointed out that, despite the overwhelming advantages that 'recs' provided for young women, there was also an element of risk for those who utilized the freedom offered by such a space. The middle girls who 'hung around' recs knew that by taking part in the 'rec activities', they were at risk of being perceived as 'bad' or 'loose' women, both by their peers and by their local community. They had to decide whether the pleasure and power that they enjoyed at the 'rec' would actually outweigh the disadvantages associated with obtaining a 'bad reputation'. The middle girls were aware that the young men whom they joined in with at their 'recs' had to make no such compromise. The 'rec' and other equivalent open public spaces offered the middle girls and some young men their first real opportunities for developing any type of collective drinking habit. I contend that prior to their experience of drinking alcohol at their local 'recs', the young people's knowledge of alcohol and drinking came from their families, relatives, neighbours and from the more general patterns that they had been exposed to from the media. Although most of those who attend 'recs' had already tried alcohol on several occasions, they had done so in the context of adult surveillance. At the 'rec' the middle girls had their first opportunity to determine and develop their own drinking practices in the confines of a peer led environment. The middle girls' 'rec' drinking activities divided into three main categories: single sexed drinking sessions where they enjoyed experimenting with the effects of a variety of drinks; single sex sessions where they became drunk; and mixed sexed sessions where they joined in with a variety of drinking games. I suggested that the mixed sexed drinking games were very different from the single sex drinking sessions. This was because the drinking games encouraged the consumption of large amounts of alcohol, in a fairly short space of time and in a competitive atmosphere.

I contend that the middle girls' activities at their 'recs' play an important part in the development of their drinking careers. This is because the 'recs' provided an opportunity for them to engage in their own ritualistic drinking activities. The drinking games that I observed them develop at their 'recs' were very different from any adult drinking ritual that the young women had observed previously. It has been suggested that rituals provide social groups with a formalized and standardized 'language' for social occasions with which they may otherwise find difficult to cope (Beattie, 1966). In general, therefore, rituals give individuals tools for demonstrating certain important occasions such as celebrations, weddings, births, deaths and so forth. Rituals are also important for marking transitions, the so-called 'rite de passage' (Van Gennep, 1960). My suggestion that the young people's 'rec drinking sessions' are some sort of improvised rite de passage is not a new finding. Maddox (1962, p244) suggested that young people's drinking should be regarded as "an improvised rite de passage, a dissolver of teenage status and an introduction in to the life of an adult". However, prior to this thesis, young people's drinking games within the rite de passage has not been adequately documented or explored. I have also been able to demonstrate that this is the first time that the middle girls have been able to obtain alcohol in their own right, so although they are still not able to gain access to a wide range of licensed premises, they are beginning to develop strategies to obtain alcohol from a range of licensed shops, supermarkets and off licenses. Their strategies for obtaining alcohol should be considered, therefore, as much part of their rite de passage as their involvement with sexual experimentations, drug use and a range of drinking games. They have discovered that they can 'pass' as an over Eighteen. 'Passing' as an over Eighteen enables them to gain access to a wide range of alcohol. Acquisition of alcohol is very much an adult activity. Furthermore, consumption of alcohol empowers them to become involved in a range of activities that are generally associated with adult status. All of these activities enable the middle girls to feel that they are nearing the time when they can leave their young person status behind and become fully recognised as an adult.

I suggest that the combination of their newly found ability to purchase alcohol, and their range of drinking games provided the middle girls with what was often their first

opportunity to interact with mixed sexed groups on a much more equal level than was generally the case. They were also able to try out the tastes and effects of a wide range of alcohol. Moderate intoxication allowed them to feel 'lightened' and 'glowy'; these feelings were interpreted as being very pleasurable. Further intoxication enabled them to reject the traditional 'feminine behavioural codes' that generally restricted and controlled their activities; this made them feel confident and empowered. They were behaving in the same ways as the young men; they were enjoying being rowdy and raucous. Drinking at the 'rec', provided an opportunity to 'escape' from the limited 'feminine social scripts' they were used to acting out on a day to day basis.

The middle girls were also learning that intoxication provides a good 'cover' from exposure to public judgements (Gusfield, 1987, p79). Becoming drunk provided a very useful 'cover' for lapses of responsibility and for any improper or immoral actions in which they might take part. Drunken behaviour is readily excused, because it is not 'normal behaviour'; it is behaviour that has been affected by the use of alcohol.

Whether drinking in mixed or single sex groups the middle girls were also experiencing a sense of 'solidarity' with their peers. This was a new experience for them. Generally, they felt no such feelings with their young male counterparts. They, instead, felt that they were in constant opposition to them. For the first time, therefore, the middle girls were able to make the transformation from being socially bounded and limited players of roles, to people who felt full of confidence and self-expression. The middle girls were beginning to learn that drinking alcohol can be a very liberating and expressive force.

The older girls continued to utilize alcohol as an liberating and expressive force. They developed patterned and ritualistic drinking activities that permitted them to enjoy themselves on their 'nights out on the town'. Drinking at home to 'lighten up' and to get in the mood; followed by further drinking to 'get ready for action' and to 'let rip' were identified as part of a 'processual pattern' of drinking activities that they became involved in on their 'nights on the raz'. On their 'nights on the raz' the older girls rejected any notions of behaving in a feminine way. Instead they were 'escaping' by having fun. They were enjoying themselves by acting in ways that they would never

consider when sober. The middle and older girls' activities are described by Myerhoff (1986, p262) as a 'definitional ceremony'. She suggests that definitional ceremonies deal with the problems of cultural 'invisibility' or 'marginality' imposed on a group.

Definitional ceremonies are:

"strategies - formal or informal... spontaneous or planned... that provide opportunities for being seen and... garnering witnesses to one's own worth, vitality and being" (Myerhoff, 1986, p267).

Myerhoff's (1986) concept of 'definitional ceremonies', when applied to drinking alcohol, is useful in that it draws attention to the performative dimension of seemingly trivial drinking practices. The middle young women at the 'rec' and the older girls on the 'raz' can enact, as opposed to merely assert, not only 'what they think they are' but also 'what they (think they) should have been or may yet be' (Papagaroufali, 1992, p50). In other words the young women have discovered the performative dimension of drinking alcohol. They are able to laugh, to sing, to shout, and to have a good time.

It is clear that the young women's performative drinking at their 'recs' and on the 'raz' contained both instrumental and expressive elements. They were certainly drinking alcohol because they enjoyed the instrumental aspects of drinking. They enjoyed the range of sensations and pleasures that they experienced as a result of their intoxication. But in addition to the instrumental aspects of their drinking, I contend that the middle and older girls' drinking sessions were also highly creative and expressive activities. They were choosing to drink alcohol as part of a more general defiant gesture to the socially constructed conventions that dictated the ways in which they should behave. They were discovering that drinking alcohol permitted escapes into liminality where general social rules and constraints need not apply. They were learning that drinking alcohol is a very effective method of passing from the ordered world, to a place where things are less ordered and much more flexible. Gusfield (1987) suggests that:

"the use of alcohol symbolizes a temporal life style and accentuates the transformation out of the posture of social controls... it also symbolizes and signals a remission of social controls" (Gusfield, 1987, p86).

In other words, the middle girls and older girls were utilizing alcohol to 'lighten' their moods and to enable them to escape into a liminal time and space where social rules

and regulations need not be adhered to.

IV EXTENDING LIMINALITY AND DEVELOPING FANTASIES

All of the young women in my group felt that their lives were predictable, limited and boring. Earlier chapters have revealed the ways in which they spent many hours at home feeling that they were 'doing nothing'. One of the strategies that they developed to cope with such feelings was day-dreaming and fantasizing about alternative worlds very different from their own 'paramount realities'. Fantasies run through all of our lives. The young women appeared to utilize fantasy to help time pass and to provide psychic excitement in situations with little perceptual variety. Cohen and Taylor (1976) suggest that we can all, at any moment, throw a switch inside our heads to effect some bizarre adjustment to the concrete world, thus conjuring up an alternative reality which has little connection with our present situation (Cohen and Taylor, 1976, p72). Fantasies provide, therefore, a continual possibility for the blurring and distortion of the clear predictable lines of paramount reality.

This thesis has demonstrated that, as the young women grow older, they begin to explore a variety of different spaces where they might be able to act out some of their fantasies. Chapter 5 examined the liminal spaces provided by the young women's 'recs', while chapter 6 examined other public 'free areas' that encouraged temporary absences from paramount reality. The areas that were examined were: 'raves'; 'fun pubs', discos and holidays. It is within these areas that individuals are encouraged to relax and 'escape' into liminality. The 'escapes' offered by such liminal spaces invariably promise relaxation of more general social controls, different experiences and a variety of pleasurable physical sensations. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 have also shown, however, that most public 'free areas' are invariably male dominated spaces. It was only 'raves' that offered the young women an escape from conventional notions of femininity and gender relations. 'Raves' appeared to be a leisure space in which young people were contesting hegemonic ideas about gender relations. Consequently, the young women felt as much a part of the 'rave' phenomenon as their male peers. But, at other public 'free areas', they still encountered the oppressive and often offensive hegemonic gender relations that they experienced daily.

In previous chapters I have already suggested that most of the young women had few opportunities to 'escape' from their day to day surroundings. Furthermore, very few of them had the opportunity to go away on holiday. Hence, most of them never had the chance to experience alternative surroundings away from their immediate localities. Going out for 'nights out on the raz' were, therefore, very important to the older girls. Chapter 6 has already commented on the many hours that they spent fantasizing and planning their nights out. These activities were an integral part of the older girls' public activities. Fantasizing and talking about events that had happened previously, and that might happen in the future, actually helped to maintain the young women's interest during the sometimes long periods between their occasional 'escapes' into liminality. Their occasional 'escapes' on Friday or Saturday nights created a liminal time and space in which they felt able to become involved in a range of 'breakdown behaviour'.

IV(i) 'Escapes' and 'breakdown behaviour'

Harrison (1970) argues that:

"breakdown behaviour on Friday and Saturday nights is what is left in our culture of the old orgy, the recurring unrepression... it is a 'small weekly edition of the major Easter, Christmas, New Year and Whitsun orgies' (Harrison, 1970, p122).

When Harrison was making his observations in The Pub and the People a Worktown Study in the 1940's, Friday and Saturday drunkenness was very much a social phenomenon that allowed liberation from "the week routine and the time-clock factory-whistle dimension of living" (Harrison, 1970, p252). Week-end group drinking allowed the breaking down of personal and social inhibitions. Harrison (1970) suggests that such 'breakdown behaviour':

"manifests itself in the form of either the expression or removal of individual 'repressions' - and when this takes place on a large scale, the removal of social repressions - the breakdown of conventions and tabus (sic)" (Harrison, 1970, p251).

However, this 'breakdown behaviour' that Harrison was describing was a male phenomenon. Women were only permitted to indulge in such activities when they were on their annual holiday in Blackpool:

"in the Blackpool pubs peculiar and unusual things happen. The ordinary clothes standards go... and women are commonly seen in the vaults" (Harrison, 1970, p249).

I would like to suggest that contemporary society still provides very few opportunities for the sanctioned breakdown of women's behaviour. Men enjoy a wide range of 'sanctioned breakdown behaviour' at: birthdays; weddings; anniversaries and public holidays. They also enjoy sanctioned breakdowns of social restrictions before and after events such as: football matches; cricket matches; rugby and so forth. These sanctioned 'breakdowns' of restrictions are not generally available to women. The working class young women who took part in my research learnt that their only opportunities for sanctioned breakdown behaviour are when they are away on holiday, or when they are going out on occasional 'nights on the town'.

Holiday 'escapes' and nights on the town are, then, very important activities for older girls who spend most of their time feeling bored and dissatisfied with the limitations of their lives. Making plans, preparing and fantasising about the possibilities offered by such 'escapes' are also very important activities for them. Such 'escapes' provide the opportunity to fantasise about 'alternative worlds', where they can feel, act and behave very differently. As Cohen and Taylor have suggested:

"escapes help to nudge away our sense of reality and its routines for a short time" (Cohen and Taylor, 1976, p154).

The older girls' occasional Friday or Saturday night 'escapes' gave them their only opportunities to become free from the restrictions of the feminine scripts to which they were expected to adhere. Furthermore, the 'cover' that alcohol provided allowed them to become involved in a range of 'breakdown behaviours'. These were all highly pleasurable activities. They drank large quantities of alcohol. They gained confidence and became very vocal and visible. They ate hearty meals and they sang and shouted both outside and inside the 'free' public areas that they visited. They were no longer adhering to 'feminine scripts' that restricted and controlled their movements and behaviour. Intoxication permitted the young women to behave in ways generally associated with masculine drinking activities. Their dissociation from femininity allowed them to feel powerful. They are used to equating masculinity with power and

authority. By adopting male behaviour patterns, the young women were escaping from their subordinated feminine positions. By becoming involved in breakdown behaviour they were actually taking part in a 'performative strategy'. The young women were communicating a very explicit message to the outside world. They were demanding to be seen and heard. I contend that when the older girls were finally 'letting rip' they were taking part in an undeniably potent symbolic act of protest against hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations. They were tired of being marginalized. They felt able to assert themselves in the public arena. When they became involved in very vocal and highly visible breakdown behaviour, their activities were challenging the traditional 'gender scripts' which they experienced daily.

The older girls who went out to drink in public 'free areas' were attempting to liberate themselves from the more 'traditional' roles that had been generally imposed upon them throughout their lives. By becoming drunk, they had the opportunity to find another 'self' in a very public manner. This 'self' was the 'self' that had often been sought for and dreamed about - attractive, assertive, fearless and interacting with the world in a loud and confident way. Such a 'self' was confidently displayed when intoxicated. This 'self' was indicated by the way in which they walked, talked, sang, and interacted with young men. I contend that an intoxicated young woman indulging in 'breakdown behaviour' is also a young woman actively engaged in her own grass-roots power struggle. However these feelings of pleasure, power, confidence and 'strong identity' were quickly lost, once having left the confines of the 'liminal settings' that they had shared with other intoxicated people.

When the older girls were 'letting rip' they were enjoying the opportunity to make themselves seen and heard by a public that still has not fully accepted their presence within the 'public social world'. When Eleni Papagaroufali (1992) analyzed Greek women's public drinking activities, she attempted to discern these as part of a more general power struggle, identifying them as 'limited victories' against the establishment (Papagaroufali, 1992, p51). While I realize that this is a complex and difficult task, I suggest that my research will alert researchers to the notion that drinking alcohol does allow young women specific kinds of extrinsic pleasures, while also allowing them to

be very expressive and to enact powerfully against established social norms of femininity and gender relations. In other words, the older girls' public drinking activities that lead to breakdown behaviour could be interpreted as a power struggle within the fine meshes of the web of power (Foucault, 1984, p54).

V DEALING WITH REALITY, AND SEEKING OBLIVION AT HOME

Although all the older girls took part in the highly pleasurable 'nights on the raz' at some point, the unemployed could not afford to do so on any regular basis. Working class young women's access to such pleasurable activities are, therefore, directly related to their specific material circumstances. For those with very small incomes, it was difficult to maintain the positive and powerful feelings that they experienced when they went 'out on the raz'. As David Widgery (1991) has pointed out:

'the modern UB40 can afford to watch a video, even order a take away. But they will always lack things that the employed take for granted - a holiday... and the ability and the means to go out in the evening at weekends' (Widgery, 1991, p108).

The older girls, who were unemployed and/or single parents, felt that they were confined to the area in which they lived. They had no or few educational qualifications, they had little experience to offer employers, and none of them had regular boyfriends or partners to help support them. Boyfriends were invariably in the same situation as them; poor, limited horizons, unqualified, unskilled and often unemployed. Many of the young men also had criminal records. The older girls knew, therefore, that they were confined to the type of lives that they were already experiencing. They fantasized about occasional 'escapes' into town, but they were also developing strategies to help them block out the boredom and pain that they frequently experienced. The older girls were beginning to utilize the effects of alcohol and other drugs as a way of relieving the stresses, discomforts and strains of their daily lives. This is not a new finding, Philo et al (1986) suggests that alcohol use in women is related to reasons 'to forget' and Ettore (1992) suggests that this aspect of women's drinking is well supported by the literature. However, Ettore (1992, p44) also suggests that women's alcohol use is linked, implicitly or explicitly to their subordinate role in society (Ettore, 1992, p44).

The older girls in my group were very aware of their subordinate role in society. This was especially so for the unemployed and/or single parents. They could not afford to purchase many of the 'escapes' or pleasures that would help to make their lives more bearable. They felt that they would never really 'escape' from their social circumstances. They had begun to develop a fatalism to living a 'lesser sort of life' (Widgery, 1991, p 122). Within this 'lesser sort of life', the young women were adopting different drinking activities. Their lives were made more bearable by the oblivion that alcohol and the use of other drugs in their homes provided them with. Drinking activities were no longer necessarily associated with the sense of escaping into 'public free spaces'. Instead drinking activities were beginning to be utilized for the changes that merely took place inside their heads. Drinking alcohol and using drugs to dull one's senses, to achieve oblivion, and to block things out is described by Cohen and Taylor as a 'mindscaping activity' (Cohen and Taylor, 1976, p 129). The older girls were utilizing alcohol and other substances, such as cannabis, to provide some sort of solution to their problems; alcohol and cannabis use relaxed them, slowed them down, provided them with brief moments of pleasure. Alcohol and drug use also stopped them from thinking about their current situations and the limitations of their futures. Prior to becoming involved in drinking at home, the older girls had equated drinking alcohol with going out and the notion that 'anything might happen'. But now they had lost this belief. They were feeling that their lives were uninteresting and monotonous. Hence they had begun to develop a new drinking activity.

It was not only the unemployed young women who had begun to adopt this 'mindscaping' drinking activity. Some of the older girls who were in regular employment were also beginning to drink at home to achieve oblivion. They had begun to utilize alcohol and cannabis to mindscape at home, because they were becoming increasingly disillusioned by the limited escapes they were able to obtain by 'going out on the raz'. They were beginning to realize that, despite the number of times that they tried new settings and new experiences, they would still wake up the next day confronted by the same mundane routines and social world. The material that has been presented in the 'Story', together with the young women's responses to it, (See Appendix V) encapsulates the limited trajectories that the older girls felt

themselves to be facing. Most of the Abraxus young girls dreamed of fame, riches and successful careers. They fantasized about being pop stars, fashion models and film stars. The Crofton middle girls were more down to earth. They knew that they needed to pass exams to get jobs. They were aware that competition for jobs was tight, but they hoped that working hard at school would help them to secure a job. Most of them hoped that they would get better jobs than their parents. The Blummerstone middle and older girls however, were well aware of their limited horizons. They were not successful at school, so they were not going to escape. They were unqualified, unskilled, and in poorly paid jobs or unemployed. They realized that their lives were going to be as difficult, or possibly more difficult, than the lives of their parents. They were already experiencing the harsh realities of being poor on a daily basis. They had begun to give up hope of any change in their social circumstances. They were, therefore, developing a new range of drinking and drug taking activities that would help them to cope with the limitations of their day to day lives.

I have suggested that the public drinking that led to 'breakdown behaviour' should be interpreted as pleasurable 'performative strategies' through which the young women were attempting to make themselves seen and heard within the public world. Drinking activities in this context, should, therefore, be interpreted as highly expressive and creative actions. I have further suggested that the young women's public drinking activities could also be interpreted as 'limited victories' against the restrictions of hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations. But can drinking to oblivion at home also be regarded as a creative act that has an expressive or symbolic meaning? Those who stay at home to seek oblivion through drunkenness, are clearly engaged in a very different activity to those who are involved with drinking in a range of public settings. But at the same time, it is clear that the home drinkers were certainly expressing their extreme discontent with their social circumstances, so their drinking is an expressive act, but can it be interpreted as part of their grass roots power struggle? What type of satisfaction, pleasure or power was drinking at home providing them?

Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated the ways in which the young women's homes were the 'private location' in which they were expected to perform traditional

'feminine roles'. By drinking at home the older girls were challenging this notion very explicitly. Drinking alcohol at home to block out anger, anxieties and frustrations is not behaviour that can be equated with traditional feminine scripts. Yet the older girls were not afraid of the ensuing judgements that other family members might make of them. Furthermore, some of them actively encouraged their mothers to join in with their subversive drinking strategy. They encouraged their mothers to join in with them because they wanted them to be part of the strategy that they had developed to subvert notions of traditional gender roles. They were encouraging their mothers to become liberated and to find a voice. The older girls were not afraid of the hang-over that invariably followed their drinking sessions. The ensuing hang-over was in itself as subversive as drinking at home. Older girls and their mothers are not expected to stay in bed nursing their hangovers. This prevents them from performing their domestic roles and duties. Getting drunk at home, then, should be interpreted as an action which portrayed powerfully the way in which the older girls, and some of their mothers, felt about their restricted circumstances. On the surface, it would seem that their home based drinking activities were distinct and very different from those which occurred in public. However, by utilizing Foucault's (1978) theory of 'games of power and pleasure', it is possible to interpret the older girls' home based drinking activities as an additional facet of their grass roots struggle against hegemonic ideas about femininity and gender relations. This, then, is the focus of the last section of this chapter.

VI MAKING CONNECTIONS: ISSUES OF POWER AND PLEASURE

Foucault's contention that it is not fruitful to look at the world through the focus of grand theories and that we should attempt to acquire 'strategic knowledge' (Foucault, 1980) sits comfortably with my feminist intentions concerning the desirability of relating theory and practice. Foucault (1978) also suggests that

"power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault, 1978, p94).

He argues that

"where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault,

1978, p95).

Resistances to power are, therefore, distributed in an irregular fashion.

"There are no great radical ruptures... more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance... the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities" (Foucault, 1978, p96).

The young women's varied drinking practices in both public and private settings can, therefore, be explored within what Foucault describes as 'games' or 'perpetual spirals of power and pleasure' (Foucault, 1978, p45). Foucault suggests that there are four components to be considered within his 'perpetual spiral': pleasure from power; pleasure from evading power; power that lets itself be invaded by the pleasure it is pursuing, and power asserting itself in the pleasure of showing off, scandalizing or resisting (Foucault, 1978, p45).

Using this framework, it is clear that the pleasure and power that the older girls' experience from drinking and becoming involved in 'breakdown behaviour' in the public arena, is a very different form of pleasure and resistance than that experienced by drinking at home. Utilizing Foucault's 'perpetual spirals of power and pleasure' framework, the older girls' 'breakdown behaviour' can be interpreted as 'pleasure that comes from exercising power'. The older girls are feeling empowered, confident and full of self-expression. They feel invincible and capable of anything. They are also experiencing 'pleasure by evading power'. In other words, they are challenging and subverting hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations within the liminal spaces that they are occupying. The older girls are also enjoying the experience of 'power asserting itself in the pleasure of showing off, scandalizing or resisting'.

Intoxicated young women on the dance floors and so forth are revelling in the attention that they are commanding. However, their drinking activities at home, must be interpreted as a very different type of power: a 'power that lets itself be invaded by the pleasure it is pursuing'. In other words, the potential power that might be gained by the young women drinking within their homes is 'invaded' by the drunken state that enables the young women to 'block things out'. Drunkenness followed by a hangover may not be intrinsically pleasurable, but the act provides pleasure and a sense of power for the young women because they are developing a drinking strategy that is exclusive

to them and is very subversive. In Foucault's 'game' of power and pleasure the concept of 'pleasure' has become politicized. Pleasure is not necessarily only to be found in activities that have previously being defined as pleasurable. Drinking at home with the intention of becoming drunk, may not, on the surface, appear to be a pleasurable activity but, because Foucault has politicized pleasure by putting it on a par with 'power' and 'resistance', it can be interpreted, along with the young women's other drinking activities, as an activity that provides them with power and pleasure.

My research has demonstrated, therefore, how important it is for social researchers to explore beyond the instrumental aspects of young women's drinking so that they can examine the highly expressive meanings of both their public and home based drinking activities. I am suggesting that, whether young women are choosing to drink at home or in the public arena, their drinking should be viewed as a highly complex, multi-faceted and sometimes contradictory symbolic activity. Young women's drinking should also be regarded as an assertive personal choice within a 'multiplicity of mobile and transitory points of resistance' (Foucault, 1978, p96). As Eleni Papagaroufali (1992) suggests, women's drinking should:

"be seen as instances of a specific kind of pleasure felt by marginals in the process of their producing and enacting power against the established culture and towards the formation of an alternative counterculture more appropriate to their own experiential reality" (Papagaroufali, 1992, p52).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to draw together themes and dimensions that are significant in the development of the young women's drinking patterns. Firstly, I examined the ways in which they felt constrained and restricted by 'feminine behaviour codes' and hegemonic notions of gender relations. I then traced the development of a range of drinking activities that are highly symbolic of the ways in which they feel about themselves and their general position within society. I then analyzed the meanings of a range of 'performative drinking strategies' with which they became involved, both in the private and the public arena. Finally, I endeavoured to situate the young women's drinking patterns within Foucault's (1978) theory of 'perpetual spirals of power and pleasure'.

This chapter has demonstrated that the young women's consumption of alcohol, at specific places, and at historically specific moments, comprise highly expressive multi-faceted and complex symbolic actions, which are related inextricably to their social and cultural position. Future examinations of young women's drinking activities will have to acknowledge that these need to be considered as possible acts of resistance against the culturally accepted hegemonic ideas of women's roles and behaviour in contemporary society.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this conclusion is both to summarize the main findings of the thesis, and to weave together some of the key issues and themes raised. In the Introduction I stated that my overall intention was to develop a qualitative, locally focused, study that would enable me to develop a rich understanding of the material conditions in which working class young women's drinking activities are played out. Consequently, I have demonstrated that working class young women's alcohol use should be viewed as a complex social issue with specific political implications. My work should be regarded both as an alternative and as a challenge to traditional 'addictions' research. This is because I am demonstrating that women's alcohol use should no longer be regarded as merely as an epidemiological concern or as some type of individual failing. Bearing this in mind, this conclusion is divided into 4 sections: Insider Notes; General Empirical Contributions; Challenges to Addictions Researchers; and Implications for Feminist Researchers.

I INSIDER NOTES

The ethnographic research strategy that I developed during the course of my research has proved to be a sensitive and penetrating research tool. By asking the young women to describe their own experience and to interpret their drinking, past and present, I have been able to provide a solid foundation on which to build my theoretical explanation. My theoretical explanation of the young women's drinking activities challenges the simplistic approach of most addictions research that has been carried out with young people. My research goes beyond the traditional questions of what age do young women drink, how much do they drink and where do they drink? My research strategy has enabled me to develop a rich understanding of why they drink. This is the element that remains hidden in most other addiction research. My interpretations of the young women's accounts should be regarded as a beginning in what needs to be an on-going process of information gathering and analysis within the addictions field. I suggest that the utilization of Foucault's (1978) 'perpetual spirals of power and pleasure' should be regarded as a "clue" to "reading the landscape" (Frye,

1983, pxii). By utilizing Foucault's (1978) 'perpetual spirals of power and pleasure' I have politicized the young women's drinking. I have also demonstrated that the consumption of alcohol is a highly expressive, multi-faceted and complex symbolic action. Further research examining young women's drinking will have to acknowledge this. But, this said, it should not be assumed that the accounts and developing theory in this thesis apply to *all* groups of young women. However, my theorizing of the young women's drinking does rest on the assumption that it is both possible and necessary for feminist researchers to describe and comment upon forces that affect 'women' albeit in highly differentiated ways. As Frye (1983) has suggested:

"although the forces which subordinate women would be modified, deflected and camouflaged in various ways by the other factors at play (*race, social class, sexuality and so forth*)... we still ought to be able to describe these forces in ways which help make sense of the experiences of women who live in all sorts of different situations" (Frye, 1983, xiii).

My research strategy has enabled me to develop a rich and detailed understanding of the ways in which groups of working class young women experience their social worlds. I have documented the harsh realities that the young women encounter daily. I have also been able to develop my research inquiry beyond the observable instrumental drinking acts that are generally commented on within addictions research. I have been able to do this because my research strategy has enabled me to locate and analyse some of the more expressive aspects of drinking activities. Consequently, I have endeavoured to link the young women's developing drinking activities with their more general experience of being a working class young women within contemporary society. By doing this, I have demonstrated that addiction researchers must pay attention to young people's cultural, social and economic lives. Growing up poor has profound effects on the way in which young people view the social world in which they live. This, then, will also effect the ways in which drinking alcohol is utilized. For example, I contend that working class older girls' drinking patterns are very different from middle class older girls who are involved in full-time education. As well as challenging traditional 'addictions' research, the findings from this thesis have a broad application. My thesis makes important contributions towards the continuing debate regarding identifiable feminist research practices. It contributes towards the ever increasing feminist debate on theories of power. It has also attempted to explore the

ways in which young women attempt to experience pleasure.

II GENERAL EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

My thesis has paid great attention to the details and problems that the young women encounter in their daily lives. As well as examining a range of activities with which they become involved in public settings (such as their schools, youth centres and a range of leisure locations), I have also paid great attention to their experience in their homes. I made an effort to examine as full a range of settings as possible, because it is within the practices of everyday life that young men and young women learn what it is like to be male or female. In other words, I have endeavoured to place the young women's voices in context. The result of this approach is that, as well as being able to make contributions to the addictions field, I have also been able to make contributions to the continuing development of British youth research.

I have demonstrated very clearly that the young women in my group, still live in patriarchies, experiencing inequality and powerlessness. I have also commented on the ways in which their behaviour is constantly limited and restricted by hegemonic 'feminine behaviour codes' that are presented to them as 'social norms'. I have demonstrated the many different ways in which these so called 'social norms' work against the young women while actually leaving male misogynistic attitudes and actions firmly in place.

I have examined the ways in which the young women find it very difficult to find 'spaces' for themselves. They learn from a very early age that most 'spaces' (private and public) are dominated and often controlled by the presence and activities of men. As Enders-Dragaesser (1988) says,

"women are forced to contend with a clash of worlds, the alienation of their own social reality and the paradoxical experience of interacting with the other sex. This makes their lives confusing and tiring" (Enders-Dragaesser, 1988, p585).

This thesis has documented the many ways in which the young women feel undermined and undervalued in general. Although all of those who took part in my research were

under 22 years of age, they all, in varying ways, had very clear notions of how women, their ideas, their activities, and their experiences, are perceived as less interesting, less relevant and less valid than those of men. The young women were aware, therefore, that they were living their daily lives in a deeply misogynistic society.

This thesis has demonstrated the way in which all the young women had experienced a wealth of put-downs, humiliations, disadvantages, discriminations, threats, mistreatment, harassment and, in some cases, abuse. They had learned to treat these experiences as 'harmless', 'trivial' or 'just a bit of fun', because they are merely part of 'normal life'. Cowan (1990) has suggested that:

"the fact of being male or female is perhaps the most fundamental truth a child takes into its body, where it becomes a virtually incontestable core of being, but it is never merely this brute, biological fact that is thus embodied. What are being embodied are the socially encrusted ways of being male or female in the world... in the quotidian social activities within a particular society" (Cowan, 1990, p130).

These 'quotidian social activities' restrict and control young women to behave in particular ways. They are not encouraged to take pleasure from the social world that they inhabit. Jackson (1984) suggests that, given both the social and individual constraints placed upon women, their sexuality and their bodies within a patriarchal society, real pleasure for women is impossible to attain. Ettore (1992) indicates that

"all women need pleasure in their lives... women need to take delight, as men do, in investigating what pleases them and to act in a self-directed and self-centred way" (1992, p147).

But in the patriarchal society in which women live, as Webster has argued,

"the pursuit of pleasure for women makes them feel selfish, unfeminine, not nice" (Webster, 1984, p393).

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the young women invariably need to become intoxicated, prior to allowing themselves to experience a range of pleasurable sensations and experiences.

III CHALLENGES TO ADDICTIONS RESEARCHERS

Addiction researchers must move beyond putting young people of both sexes into age groups and producing statistical generalizations that quantify their drug and alcohol

use. This approach only tells us what different age groups of young people drink, where they drink, and how much they drink. My work has demonstrated that although age is an important variable, cultural, social and economic circumstances have far more influence on the development of young people's drinking patterns. Age is not, therefore, a particularly useful explanatory variable. This is because it deflects attention away from reasons as to why young people drink. I have demonstrated that working class young women's developing drinking patterns need to be understood in terms of being inextricably related to both their daily lives, and their more general social position within society. I have suggested that drinking alcohol provided the young women in my group, with what is often their only opportunity to try a range of new and different experiences. Drinking alcoholic drinks for, example, provided immediate 'sensations' which the young women interpreted as pleasurable. Drinking also enabled young women to alter their moods. Drinking alcohol, whether to 'lighten up', 'to get ready for action', to 'let rip' or to 'block things out' is a pleasurable experience because it enables them to feel powerful and full of self-expression.

All these experiences are new and exciting for the young women in my group, who have little control over their lives and who experience very little pleasure. Ettore (1992) has suggested that women's use of substances can be viewed as an assertive choice and as a move towards pleasure, because active consumption of substances challenges social stereotypes of women as the controlled and men as the controller (Ettore, 1992, 147). The in-depth analysis that I have presented in this thesis further suggests that the working class young women's developing drinking patterns should also be interpreted as reflecting and symbolizing the ways in which they feel about themselves and the social world in which they live.

This thesis has documented the range of activities in which the young women become involved when they are intoxicated. When intoxicated at the 'rec' the middle girls take a lead role in drinking games. They are very vocal and they challenge the young men's assertions, skills and abilities. They also become involved in a range of sexual experimentations. All these activities challenge hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations. When the older girls are 'out on the raz', they eat, drink, smoke, sing

and dance. Most of these activities are oral pleasures that have traditionally been denied to women. As Coward (1984) has suggested, there are complicated taboos and prohibitions that surround the sensual pleasures of women's mouths;

"the mouth appears to be the organ where the tightest controls are placed on women's behaviour, where women's sensual life is most closely policed" (Coward, 1984, p118).

Throughout, I have documented the ways in which the young women's drinking activities provide them with opportunities to 'escape' from the confines of having to behave in a 'feminine way'. I have also documented the ways in which drinking provides the older girls with brief 'escapes' from the harsh reality of the poverty that they face daily. Alcohol is utilized by the young women as an 'escape' mechanism because they learn from an early age that drinking alcohol makes them feel and behave very differently. They also learn that, generally, intoxication provides a good 'cover' for behaving inappropriately. Despite this, however, they often find themselves running up against a range of prohibitions and controls in their pursuit of power and pleasure when they become intoxicated. This is because drinking (and especially getting drunk) whether it is in pubs, clubs, or at home, it is still generally considered to be an 'unfeminine behaviour'. It is also perceived as a possible threat to the 'natural order of society'. Intoxicated young women who are feeling powerful, confident and who are in a range of public leisure settings are threatening. They are loud, highly visible and they are powerfully challenging hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations.

Despite the existence of highly visible public activities, young women are not expected to become involved in the range of 'breakdown behaviour' that takes place in the 1990s. 'Breakdown behaviour' as a result of intoxication is invariably perceived as a male domain within contemporary society. It is expected that women should be: 'in control of themselves'; 'responsible for themselves and others'; and to behave in a 'feminine way' - preferably away from public settings and in the private domain of their homes. Harrison suggests that:

"human societies have only been maintained by limitations of their members' freedom, by restrictions, tabus (sic), laws, barriers between man and man" (Harrison, 1970, p337).

I suggest that the stability of society has also been dependent on women not questioning their 'natural' and 'expected' feminine roles. Hegemonic ideas about gender roles appear 'natural', so that individuals consider any possible alternative ideas as 'crazy', 'unnatural' or 'stupid'. Hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations, continue, therefore, to repress, constrain and modify women's behaviour within society. These hegemonic notions of femininity and gender relations have never included any type of 'safety valve' for women to release any possible tensions that they may have in regard to their complex and contradictory positions within society. Addictions researchers must acknowledge, therefore, that although most societies have definite and often ritualistic breakdowns of tabu (sic), unrepression and 'intoxications' (Harrison, 1970, p337), women still do not have the same access as men to these 'sanctioned breakdowns'. Yet women's need for such 'breakdowns' is very clear. This thesis has indicated the often bewildering situations and pressures that working class young women encounter in their everyday lives. As Harrison suggested in the 1940s:

"as contemporary industrial society becomes more and more unstable, manifesting this in fears of wars, unemployment, revolutions, lack of confidence in the future and of certainty that we live in the best possible worlds, the need for breakdowns becomes greater amongst those who have no adequate set of values to deal with the situation" (Harrison, 1970, p338).

Working class young women in the 1990s often find their lives to be complex, confusing and contradictory. They are encouraged to believe that they live in an 'equal opportunity' society where there is no discrimination between male and females. Yet they often find themselves dealing with forms of sexual discrimination on a daily basis. Furthermore, many of the young women have limited skills and abilities to deal with the situations in which they often find themselves. This is especially so for those young women who find themselves as a single parent or unemployed. It is not surprising, therefore, that they are beginning to drink more alcohol than they have in the past.

By drinking, the young women are exploring and experiencing a wide range of new and different activities, feelings and pleasures. For example, drinking to 'lighten up' or 'to get ready for action' are perceived as pleasurable and empowering activities. When the young women are 'letting rip' and indulging in a range of 'breakdown behaviours'

or drinking in their homes 'to block things out', they are also undeniably taking part in a potent and powerful symbolic act of protest against hegemonic femininity and gender relations. They are publicly proclaiming their active involvement in a range of pleasurable drinking activities that enable them to 'escape' from the confines of hegemonic gender relations that dictate that they should behave in a 'feminine way'.

Addiction researchers must acknowledge that young women's drinking is a highly creative and symbolic act. It provides the young women with an immediate sense of well being. Drinking alcohol also creates a 'space' which separates individuals from their everyday social worlds and experiences. My work has demonstrated that drinking alcohol is a pleasurable and powerful activity that provides an expectation that 'anything might happen'. Whether drinking at home or in a range of liminal settings, the young women are exerting their power to develop a range of drinking activities which provide them with very brief pleasurable 'escapes' from the 'paramount reality' of their lives.

However, this thesis has demonstrated that as the young women grow older and more disillusioned with their lives, they are increasingly turning to drinking alcohol to achieve oblivion. The older girls who do not foresee any changes in their social and economic circumstances, are drinking alcohol to numb their fear, frustration and pain. If working class young women continue to feel that the only way that they can cope with the broader structural conditions in which they live, is to use alcohol (and other drugs) to achieve oblivion, then some of the young women who took part in my research will inevitably be putting themselves at risk of developing drink (or drug related) problems. The drinking strategies that start off as both pleasurable, and powerful statements, may well become unmanageable, resulting in the development of a range of drink and health related problems in the future.

IV IMPLICATIONS FOR FEMINIST RESEARCHERS

The findings of this thesis offer a challenge to a wide range of feminist researchers who are interested in women's drink and drug taking activities. This is because it may not just be working class young women who feel that they have little power and are unable

to make their voices heard. Furthermore, many women in contemporary society may also feel that they do not experience much pleasure in their lives. Researchers need, therefore, to begin to explore how women might develop ways to exert their power in order to challenge hegemonic ideas of femininity and gender relations. To facilitate this process, I suggest that it is the responsibility of feminist researchers to make accessible to women, especially women drinkers, the thinking and theorizing on women and alcohol. My theoretical explanation of working class young women's multi-faceted drinking activities utilizing Foucault's theory of 'perpetual spirals of power and pleasure' (1978) is a good starting point, because it has politicized young women's drinking. However, it is important that my explanation is further tested and refined. One way of doing this would be to test it among women of different ages, races, social classes and sexual orientation.

If my theory is able to stand up to such scrutiny, then I suggest that it could be used among a wide range of women to help them become better informed, educated and empowered. But in doing this, we need to consider the ways in which we communicate outside the academy because, as bell hooks (1994) points out:

"any theory that cannot be shared in everyday conversation cannot be used to educate" (1994, p64).

Feminist researchers need to begin the process by, first, communicating with each other, and then by communicating with other women about the ways in which they might experience power and pleasure. As a result of developing and extending communication networks among feminist researchers, we can then begin to explore how it might be possible for working class young women to experience both power and pleasure in ways that are not necessarily dependent on them becoming intoxicated or disinhibited.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

A brief review of schools, youth service, mass media and community based alcohol and drug initiatives

I Schools

It is generally assumed that alcohol and drug education should be an integral part of a school health education programme. Margaret Whitehead in her document Swimming Upstream: Trends and Prospects in Education for Health, (Whitehead, 1989), identifies six positive trends associated with getting health education on the agenda within schools. These are identified as:

1. A general broadening of the concept of health in schools,
2. An increase in the number of schools in which health education appears in the formal curriculum,
3. A trend towards a more systematic co-ordination of health education programmes,
4. A shift in teaching methods to involve more active learning,
5. An upsurge in curriculum development projects within health education, and
6. An increased emphasis on the importance of health education in the Department of Education and Science and Her Majesty's Inspectorate Reports (Whitehead, 1989, p11).

Other documents, for example, Curriculum Guidance 5 - Health Education, (National Curriculum Council, 1990), also stress the importance of health education as one of the cross curricular themes in education, and 'substance use and misuse' is identified as a key component. Curriculum Guidance 5 - Health Education, states that the aims of substance use sessions should be:

"the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills which enable pupils to consider the effects of substances such as tobacco, alcohol and other drugs on themselves and others and to make informed and healthy decisions about the use of such substances" (National Curriculum Council, 1990, p4).

Despite much documentation outlining the content of health education sessions in schools, I suggest that the reality of schools' health education, and especially so in the context of drugs and alcohol education, is that teachers are invariably subject to the confines of the institutions in which they work. Because of this, schools throughout the country utilize an assortment of alcohol and drug health education training packages. This was especially so in the county where my research took place. (I was

able to visit most secondary schools in the county during the period 1990-1994. This was as a result of my professional duties as a Drugs and Alcohol Officer). On my visits I discovered that some schools were still relying on the 1960s "Shock Horror" approaches, apparently unaware of De Haes and Shuurman's (1975) findings that:

"Substance orientated drug education programmes, either purely factual or using scare tactics, had a stimulating effect on drug experimentation".

Other schools had shifted their emphasis away from shock horror approaches, but had not got beyond merely providing 'objective factual information', others had moved on to the 1980s/1990s person-focused 'affective' education¹, that encourages an exploration of attitudes, enhances decision-making skills, and increases social skills to resist 'peer group pressure'. Some schools included drugs and alcohol education within a more general programme of substance education, while others treated the use of alcohol and the use of illegal drugs very differently. This diversity of approaches was still very much in evidence in October 1996 (Thomas, 1996).

Most British drug and alcohol education programmes seem to be based primarily on North American ones; this means they share the same strategies and objectives (Swadi and Zeitlin 1987). Consistency of approaches and messages are hard to find, although Swadi and Zeitlin (1987) suggest that most programmes tend to assume that:

- "1. Because of their lack of information on drugs, young people do not know how dangerous drugs are, and therefore, engage in their use;
2. Young people are more likely to start experimenting under the influence of personal factors, for example, the lack of certain skills, and those related to family and peer group;

¹ Nick Dorn (1981) suggests that most didactic approaches in health education, postulate that knowledge results in attitudinal change which in turn results in behavioural change. This approach has been called KAB (from Knowledge, through Attitudes, to Behaviour) approach. The last two decades has seen this approach joined by 'affective approaches': affect means emotion and feeling, and affective education is supposed to deal with the 'emotional', as opposed to the strictly 'rational', basis of behaviour. In affective health education, the teacher tries to provide the classroom conditions in which the child develops an understanding of her/his individuality, or sense of self, and this is supposed to result in 'sensible' decisions and behaviour that contributes to health. This approach has been called the KISS (Knowledge of Individual Self leads to Sensible decisions) approach. The main difference between the KAB and KISS is that whilst KAB assumes that the type of knowledge about the world that the Health Educator considers important will 'naturally' motivate all individuals to behave themselves, the KISS approach assumes that true knowledge of self will 'naturally' motivate all individuals to behave themselves (Dorn, 1981, p63).

3. Young people can safely avoid substance abuse if they are provided with alternative sources for obtaining the desirable effects they would get from drugs" (Swadi and Zeitlin, 1987, p742).

It is then assumed that addressing these issues will lead to a measurable - and desirable - shift in the prevalence and pattern of substance abuse (Swadi and Zeitlin, 1987). I contend that most British drugs and alcohol health education approaches can be divided into three main types: information sessions, affective approaches and peer-led programmes.

I (a) Information sessions

Targeting 'drugs information' at young people is based on the assumption that they need to be told about drugs and alcohol. Yet there is no empirical evidence to support such a supposition (May, 1991). Indeed Hansen (1988), has pointed out that the existing evidence suggest the reverse is true, especially in relation to alcohol. Several reviews of alcohol use among young people in Britain, has shown that a large proportion of even very young children have consumed alcohol and have some knowledge of its effects and undesirable consequences (Bagnall, 1991; Jahoda and Cramond, 1972; May, 1991). The evidence on the whole suggests, therefore, that alcohol and drug education programmes in the form of factual knowledge has yielded, at best, negligible, and sometimes counterproductive results (Swadi and Zeitlin, 1987). As far back as the 1970s researchers such as Berberian, Gross, Lovejoy and Parapella (1976) were demonstrating that although 'Prevention Packages' may be able to increase knowledge relating to the negative consequences of substance use, and occasionally even have an impact on attitudes they saw no evidence to suggest any impact on actual substance behaviour. Dorn and Murji (1992) also cite studies from Berberian et al (1976); Kinder et al (1980); Randal and Wong (1976); and Stuart (1974), as all having demonstrated that drug information education has been ineffective in preventing use. Similarly, Polich, Ellickson, Reuter and Kahan (1984) say that information programmes do increase knowledge, but less often affect behaviour, and can have a counter productive effect. Smart and Feijer (1974) suggest that drug education programmes might lead to greater drug experimentation because they have actually allayed young people's anxieties about different types of substances. Davies

and Stacey's conclusions also suggested that the reiteration of well-worn health messages may be positively harmful by further alienating and boring young people (Davies and Stacey, 1972).

I (b) Affective approaches

Drug education 'affective programmes' aim to develop young people's values, to stimulate their thoughts, opinion making, and decision making. Role playing, or 'acting out' situations which may lead to alcohol or other substance use, is an important component of most affective drug and alcohol initiatives. Social Assertiveness Training, reported by Pentz (1985), Life Skills Training, reported by Botvin (1985), and Cognitive Behavioural Skills Training, reported by Schinke and Gilchrist (1984), are examples of such approaches. These are intended to promote healthy behaviours by enhancing self-esteem, self-control and a sense of individual self-worth. However, an evaluation of an intervention by Mauss and colleagues (Mauss, Hopkins and Weisheit 1988) produced disappointing results. The programme was intended to enhance students' knowledge of alcohol and its effects, to improve self-esteem and decision-making skills and to impart appropriate attitudes regarding the responsible use of alcohol. The evaluation was unable to demonstrate any 'appreciable impact'. Schaps and colleagues (1981), when reviewing 127 alcohol and drug education programmes, made serious criticisms of the affective programmes they appraised. They noted that fewer than 10% of the programmes had been comprehensively evaluated; only two had any demonstrable effect on substance use, and these were related to tobacco. Supporting Schaps and colleagues' claims Moskowitz (1989) argues that poor project design, confused objectives and the failure to carry out evaluations means that the benefits of such programmes remain unproven. May (1991) further argues that the assumptions which underpin skills-based approaches need to be thoroughly questioned. Like Moskowitz (1989) and Schaps (1981), he states that the suppositions that young people use or misuse alcohol because of their lack of social competence or poor decision-making skills, or because of an inability to resist peer-group pressure, has little foundation in empirical research. A further review by Kinder and colleagues (1980), also concluded that evaluations of attempts to influence subjects' attitudes to alcohol failed to demonstrate changes in

attitudes or behaviour. However, Bagnall (1991) has demonstrated 'modest positive effects' when the subjects' *baseline* knowledge of alcohol has been taken into account. In Bagnall's study, student participation was an important feature of the education intervention deployed in schools. Participation by subjects, rather than their passive reception of an intervention, is, therefore, an important component of success in achieving these, albeit limited, effects (May 1991).

Dorn and Murji (1992, p13) refer to affective health education initiatives as 'deficits programmes' "as they assume a fundamental lack in the individual, an incompleteness, of a rather general kind". Dorn also points out how assumptions that deviant behaviour results from personal inadequacies sits uncomfortably with harm minimization approaches² and the proposition that people can choose to adopt safer forms of deviancy (Dorn and Murji, 1992, p18). I suggest that the emphasis on psychological models of behaviour and action within schools based alcohol and drug education has tended to over-determine the individual as the source of behavioural change. This neglects, therefore, the social contexts in which alcohol and drug use comes to be understood and experienced. Affective approaches do not allow space, therefore, for the possibility that young people's drinking-and-drug-taking activities could be interpreted as valid coping responses to the circumstances of their daily lives.

I (c) Peer-led programmes

Peer led education seems to have developed as a result of the disappointing reports on the efficacy of other types of alcohol and drug education programmes (Dorn and

² Many individuals and agencies recognise the universality of drug use in societies, and acknowledge the benefits that can accrue from individual drug use. They believe that the usual prevention goal of abstinence from drug use for young people is unthinking, unobtainable and unacceptable (Moore and Saunders, 1991). They embrace, therefore, a low-risk use or harm-reduction approach. (The concept of harm reduction became common currency in the late 1980s in response to two particular pressures. The first was the problem of HIV infection among drug injecting users. The second was a growing suspicion that the strategies that had been adopted to deal with drug use exacerbated the problem, rather than ameliorating it [O'Hare, et al, 1992]). In essence harm reduction approaches accepts that drug use is here to stay and that we must learn to live with it as best as we can. Within the paradigm of risk-reduction, drug experimentation by young people is viewed as a normal, healthy facet of growing up and exploring one's world.

Murji, 1992). It is assumed that if peer influence can work in a direction that encourages experimentation with various substances, then at least in theory, it could also act in a discouraging way. Swadi and Zeitlin (1988), suggest that young people could become involved in peer influence programmes, peer participation programmes, peer counselling and peer teaching programmes (Swadi and Zeitlin, 1988). They say that the most optimistic use of 'peer influence' methods would be to help non-takers resist adverse 'drug taking' influence. They also suggest that it may be possible to use peer influence from 'non-takers' to persuade 'takers' to abstain or modify their patterns of use into less harmful ones.

Looking at peer-delivered programmes, Moskowitz et al (1985) found that Jigsaw - a cooperative learning strategy - did not produce significant differences in outcome on alcohol and drug variables between experimental and control groups. Yet Tobler (1986) found that peer programmes showed a distinct superiority on all outcome measures in the context of skills-based programmes. Dorn and Murji (1992) suggest that such differences may be partly due to the *degree of participation* required of peers in such programmes. While Resnik and Gibbs (1988, p 82-83) make the interesting suggestion that those who benefit may be those who are most active in the delivery of the programme, whilst those who are merely its recipients get little benefit (Resnik and Gibbs, 1988). There is less evidence for gains among the tutored. Similarly, peer counselling programmes seem to benefit the helpers more than the helped. This fits in with Coggans (1991) finding that Scottish teachers delivering a values/skills programme of education themselves achieved positive learning and became convinced that it was positively influencing young people, when this was in fact not the case.

Within peer-led programmes there appears to be no acknowledgement that peer groups tend to form around substance use, and that users of a particular drug are far more likely than non-users, to have close friends who also use (Cohen, 1989). I suggest, therefore, that before non-users can persuade users to abstain, it would be more appropriate to focus on peer groups in positive ways by emphasising the attitudes and skills needed to help and respect others. This would necessitate an avoidance of stereotyping drug or alcohol users, so they do not feel rejected or isolated. It would

also mean developing respect among users for those who do not use. This way there could be an effective dialogue between adults, and different groups of young people, using drugs or alcohol. This approach may prevent adults undervaluing young people's cultures, and intervening in young people's beliefs in inappropriate ways. The result of inappropriate adult intervention as Cripps has already argued, is that young people's ideas, emotions and values are rendered invisible (Cripps et al, 1991, p37).

In conclusion, when Health Education programmes are not trying to 'change adolescents' thinking' about drugs and alcohol, the emphasis appears to be on 'improving decision-making skills', or 'improving personal responsibility'. I suggest that this emphasis deflects the debate away from any concern that the structural constraints in young people's lives may affect their decisions to use or mis-use alcohol. Alcohol and drug education in the 1990s is presented as an initiative to encourage young people to make 'free choices', but I suggest this is not really the case. Instead of offering free choices, health educators really want young people to choose a 'healthy choice of action', but are not owning up to this.

This is a very general summary of 'Alcohol and Drugs Education' within schools, but what about the Youth Service? Within the Youth Service throughout the United Kingdom there are various examples of good practice regarding working with young people in informal settings (Wilson, 1991). Many youth workers, especially detached youth workers, have managed to negotiate special sorts of relationships with young people, in which the traditional notions of adult power and authority play no part. Youth workers endeavour to accept young people as they are. The National Youth Bureau (1990) suggest that it is in this non-threatening environment that young people can often be encouraged to develop their own ideas on issues and situations which affect them.

II Youth centres and the youth service

Youth work appears, therefore, to offer a stark contrast to the work that goes on in schools. Rosseter (1987) suggests that the emphasis of youth work is placed upon discovering and learning things by experiencing them, while school work is dominated by a curriculum that has its emphasis on analytical, intellectual, and linear thinking with a reliance on theoretical and abstract knowledge. This suggests that youth service alcohol and drug initiatives may have two major advantages over those 'taught' in schools. Unlike teachers, youth workers may be able to gain an understanding of the localised nature of young people's alcohol and drug use. They may also be able to treat young people's alcohol and drug use as merely one emergent 'coping behaviour' that needs to be *understood* and *explained*, rather than assumed as a starting point of behaviour problems.

McDermott (1986) suggests that the informality of many youth work settings - offering relatively open, unstructured relationships with the minimum of role differentiation - also permits greater possibilities of youth workers engaging young people in activities that try to create effective and imaginative ways of finding out what young people's needs really are. While Burgess (1989) argues that most youth workers are well aware that alcohol and drug use is part of the wider 'normal' culture of adolescence. However, Burgess also notes that "youth workers have not formulated a coherent response to the challenges that the widespread use of substances have created" (Burgess, 1989, p20). Adams (1988), and Davies (1986), suggest that youth workers have been unable to formulate a consistent approach to young people's drug and alcohol use because of the confused societal perceptions of where alcohol and drugs fit into the sphere of public reaction. Youth workers traditionally have seen themselves as having to cope with young people's alcohol and drug use only in the capacity of 'having to control them' when they become intoxicated on youth service premises.

In December 1989 the Alcohol and Education Research Council (AERC) commissioned The Teachers Advisory Council on Alcohol and Drugs Education (TACADE) to conduct a nine month research project on alcohol and youth workers

(Wright, 1991). The aim of the initiative was to gauge:

- a) Youth workers' concerns regarding young people and alcohol,
- b) Youth workers' responses to alcohol issues,
- c) Youth workers' training needs regarding alcohol, and
- d) Youth workers' needs for appropriate resources, methods and materials to work with young people and alcohol.

Unfortunately, at no point during this project were young people themselves consulted. Fortunately though, the first four recommendations from this research state clearly that alcohol work with young people needs to be:

- a) Based on participation and empowerment of young people,
- b) Driven by young people's needs and concerns,
- c) Managed and controlled by young people, and
- d) Be fun and participatory. (Wright, 1991, p5).

Unfortunately, it appears that this initiative has since been abandoned (Thomas, 1996). So although there are some youth workers who are involved in participatory activities with young people, these type of activities are not widespread. In most youth centres drug and alcohol initiatives are very similar to those in schools (Thomas, 1996). In other words if youth workers are considering any sort of 'alcohol activities' with young people they are still very likely to use health education teaching packs very similar to Health in Clubs - Health that Works, (Piper, 1990), which is a health education model that perceives the individual as being in need of behavioural change (Thomas, 1996).

In general young people have not been consulted in the design and development of drug and alcohol health education packages and programmes. Adults assume that young people's drug and alcohol use can and should be 'controlled', see for example, (Bagnall, 1990; 1991; Evans 1989; Schools Council Health Education Projects, 1977; 1977a; 1977b). Manipulation of young people's peer groups is often a chosen approach to 'educate' them about drugs and alcohol, see for example, (Evans, 1989; Fergusson et al, 1994; Swadi and Zeitlin, 1988). Yet few researchers have acknowledged that young people's peer groups are a complex and on-going series of interactions between individuals and dynamic situations. Furthermore, no-one has suggested that young people's peer groups are constantly infringed upon by factors outside them, such as the family, social norms, and adult expectations. Alcohol

teaching interventions appear to have been designed, developed and implemented by adults who have assumed that young people who drink or use drugs are deficient in values or skills, hence their 'problem' behaviours. May (1991) argues that educational initiatives in schools and youth centres will continue to remain popular because they are politically attractive; they place the onus for being responsible with alcohol onto the individual consumer, thus not interfering with the operation of the market place; in effect they address problematic *consumers* rather than products (May, 1991). The emphasis on the individual consumer as opposed to any other consideration appears, therefore, to dominate drug and alcohol prevention strategies. The final section in this Appendix will demonstrate that this is even the case in so called 'mass media' and 'community based initiatives'.

III Mass media and community based alcohol health education initiatives

The most popular way of conveying drug and alcohol messages to the broader community is through mass media public education campaigns. Public education campaigns are politically very attractive because of their immediacy and visibility, (Plant, 1987). Furthermore, it has been relatively well established that media information campaigns can change people's knowledge (Dorn and Murji, 1992). High profile educational campaigns have, therefore, been an immediate and highly visible response to AIDS, drugs, smoking and alcohol over the last two decades. Furthermore, where there has been some kind of acknowledgement that schools may not be the most appropriate venues for alcohol education because "young people are difficult to make contact with and are resistant to a number of health messages, particularly in relation to alcohol" (Bennett et al, 1990, p80). Public education, through mass media and economic measures, are invariably the suggested solutions.

Cohen (1980) suggests that the media is very good at marking out the boundaries between 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' behaviour. He also suggests that it can 'set the agenda', defining what the public issues are, and what choices are open to a reasonable public (Cohen, 1980). It is not the purpose of this section to critically appraise the role of the media in 'drugs' education, this has been done elsewhere; (Dorn, 1981; Dorn and Murji, 1992; Dorn and South, 1982; 1983). But it is necessary

to look briefly at both the aims of media intervention, and the messages and images that are conveyed to young people regarding alcohol.

Margaret Whitehead states:

"The use of the media in alcohol and drug prevention in the UK includes increased editorial coverage of such issues in the press and documentaries, specific drug and alcohol advertising campaigns for example, 'Drink Driving', and 'Heroin Screws You Up', and the insertion of 'health' and 'substances' issues into children's programmes and soap operas". (Whitehead, 1989, p23).

The only television programme that has recently been devoted to substance issues is the BBC, six week series, 'Pssst.... The really useful guide to Alcohol'. This series was shown on BBC 1 in 1989/90 on Tuesday evenings at 10.35pm, and again in 1992, on Monday evenings at 11.35pm. The aim of the series were to 'stimulate debate and activities which will raise young people's awareness of the issues surrounding alcohol use and mis-use, and to encourage them in developing a positive attitude towards sensible drinking' (Health Education Authority, 1992). No evaluation of the series has been made, so unlike other users of the medium, for example, advertisers, the makers of the series, (The Health Education Authority), have no way of assessing whether young people received their intended messages or not. This lack of evaluation also applies to the numerous substance use commercials the Department of Health has made throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Over the last decade certain useful lessons have been learnt from research and direct experience about using mass media for education concerning health (Pasick and Wallack, 1989). In summary, raising awareness and transferring simple information is relatively easy to achieve (given adequate resources), conveying complex ideas and changing attitudes is extremely difficult, and changing anything other than simple one-off behaviour is exceptional (Whitehead, 1989). Indeed a number of reviews have pointed to the accumulating body of evidence which suggest that claims about mass media campaigns being able to achieve attitudinal or behavioural change are exaggerated or inaccurate (Moskowitz, 1989; Wallack and Corbett, 1990).

Retention of knowledge has been found to be better under (i) low rather than higher

fear appeal, and (ii) with a credible commentator (Williams et al, 1985). Thus, credible messages focusing on short-term consequences and risks have been suggested. Tones (1981), has argued that 'properly' designed health education mass media programmes may successfully perform several important functions. They may promote awareness of important issues. They may also provide information and, in doing so may produce new understandings and beliefs (Tones, 1981). But he also adds:

"where information requires complex processing or where it threatens existing motivational and belief structures, it is unlikely that mass media will have any significant effect. On the other hand where information is congruent with existing beliefs, and where existing motivation may be canalised, mass media may produce quite dramatic behavioural effects". (Tones, 1981, p106).

British media drug prevention and HIV campaigns have been reviewed by Power (1989) and Dorn and Murji (1992), the latter concluded that:

- 1) Some specific population groups (of which the clearest example is the gay community) were ahead of the campaigns; indeed, were influences on the campaigns (rather than vice versa). In these cases the campaigns may have reinforced changes that were already occurring.
- 2) Other population groups - in particular, drug injectors not in touch with treatment agencies or other drug agencies - have a relatively low awareness of anti-injection campaigns and the majority seem to be continuing to share injection equipment and engaging in unsafe sex.
- 3) General population groups (eg, parents and most young people) fall between concerned gays and promiscuous syringe sharers in their responses. There is a tendency for these groups to call for more 'realism' (for which read 'stronger' messages) in relations to drugs, and to display an ambiguous attitude to the issue of safer sex ('important, but not for me')", (Dorn and Murji, 1992, p11-12).

It is, therefore, too simplistic an appraisal to say that media campaigns do not work. They can work, given certain circumstances and depending upon the criteria of success. It would also seem that media campaigns may have considerable potential in relation to behaviour change in the direction of safer practices and reduction of harm, but only if the campaigns can latch onto, and reinforce existing tendencies, commitment and mobilisation in specific social groups. Regarding the more traditional preventive goal of reduction in consumption of drugs or alcohol, the general conclusion seems to be that the consumption of drugs or alcohol per se has not been, and probably cannot be, achieved by information-style mass media campaigns (Dorn and South, 1982/3; Dorn and South, 1983; Power, 1989). Mass media campaigns may

also have a potential for increasing harm. Whitehead (1989) points out that the transmission of relatively simple messages through advertising and sensationalist media stories can also have the effect of reinforcing, on the one hand, negative portrayals of and prejudice against high-risk groups and, on the other hand, of promoting myths about drugs and drug users (Whitehead, 1989). Dorn and Murji (1992) suggest that mass media information-based drug and alcohol initiatives have failed to make any impact on consumption patterns. They further suggest that many other aspects of health promotion, or 'lifestyle education', for example reduced consumption of sugars and fat information campaigns have also failed to make any impact.

So what about community based initiatives other than the mass media? I suggest that it is very difficult to find good examples of community based participation initiatives in the British literature. Furthermore it is even more difficult to find examples in the field of young people and alcohol. 'Community' and 'participation' are both terms that are widely used in the drugs and alcohol educational literature, but few authors make any effort to define their specific usage of the terms they have utilized. Instead a common level of understanding of the terms is generally assumed. Consequently, there is much scope for misunderstanding and confusion regarding the emphasis of specific 'community' initiatives and programmes.

It seems that when community initiatives are suggested as a way of directly involving the local community and its resources, the emphasis on 'community involvement' is lost in an alternative definition that could readily include any initiative that is based 'in the community'. There certainly does not seem to be any acknowledgement that establishing contact with people in the community and building up trust with them is a slow and sensitive process. For instance, in the 'Drinkwise Wales' strategy, 'community projects' seemed to centre entirely on publicans and other 'opinion leaders' in the planning of Drinkwise events. (Bennett and Powell, 1989). The only community based initiative that was suggested for young people in the Drinkwise Wales project was the provision of alternative facilities, which it was suggested could be successfully run as good commercial ventures (Bennett et al, 1990). The organizers have not considered that such an initiative would not be appropriate for young people with very

few financial resources and who may feel powerless and distanced from the environment in which they live.

There are more extensive examples of 'broader community based initiatives' within the North American literature (The National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 1976; NIDA, 1983). NIDA, has tried to target four areas - the community, parents and families, schools and workplaces - as the areas for prevention. Community strategies usually entail a community task force composed of civic, youth and voluntary organizations. Ideas for action have included:

- a) establishing youth programmes which emphasise that drug-free behaviour is increasing and provide positive peer influence;
- b) developing community norms and policies with consistent messages about drugs;
- c) early intervention, counselling and treatment by community-based agencies;
- d) involving young people in constructive community-based projects, involving private sector leadership. Projects are both drug specific (videotapes, drug information services) and non-drug specific (community restoration and service);
- e) health promoting through healthy lifestyle programmes,
- f) use of local media to de-glamourise drug use; establishing good working relationships with local media and so forth to influence their editorial policy and coverage;
- g) networking and working in concert with other organisations to develop consistent and comprehensive programmes (NIDA, 1983, p3-4).

The potential scope for these type of 'community based projects' is very wide, ranging from the participation of presumed 'at risk' individuals in leisure activities, to the transformation of social networks and city infrastructure.

Dorn and Murji (1992, p24) report that there is a broad tradition in drug prevention - as in social welfare interventions generally - which emphasises participation as an antidote to social malaise. The participation may be:

- relatively casual (for example young people having access to leisure activities which may act as alternatives to drug use or to destructive patterns of use);
- or it may be more central to the lives of people (where work experience schemes or improvements to the built environment might reduce incentives to drug use or drug dealing);
- or it may be specifically tailored to fit the concerns of specific population groups, (for example, young people living in particular areas, or those 'at risk',

or those from specific groups).

The above approaches may, therefore, be seen as further types of 'deficit' approaches - but ones in which the deficits lie in the environment rather than in the individual, the remedy being to re-organise the environment through the actions of individuals and groups. There is no presumption of the problem(s) residing 'inside' individuals or in peer pressure; rather, individuals and groups are presumed to have positive potential which needs encouragement.

In some of these programmes 'participation' means roughly the same as 'taking part'. This is very different from truly participatory drug and alcohol prevention programmes developed with young people. Initiatives such as Youthlink Wales, for example, do not start with given messages, but instead begin with a concern to identify the felt needs of young people in a broader social and community context (Youthlink Wales, 1993). This emphasis of participation is also used within the Leicestershire drugs and alcohol prevention projects (Barnes, 1993). This means that the projects may not focus directly on drugs and alcohol. Often, they will concern other aspects of life which young people have identified as being important. In other words, participation is more than young people merely taking part, the young people must also have power to determine how their groups should develop and function. Unfortunately, evaluations of these types of approaches are generally carried out 'in-house' and are very difficult to obtain.

In conclusion, it appears that adults perceptions of young people's needs and concerns regarding drug and alcohol education are sadly deficient, and often result in targeting resources inappropriately in an attempt to curtail perceived drug and alcohol 'problems'. I suggest that for this situation to improve, educationalists, youth workers and so forth need to develop innovative ways of encouraging young people to participate in dialogues and initiatives that enable them to identify and articulate any queries or concerns that they may have.

APPENDIX II

Gaining access to the Youth Centres

To gain access to the county council youth centres I first had to have permission from the Area Youth Officer. The Area Youth Officer cancelled his meetings with me on three occasions. On the first occasion he forgot our meeting. On the second occasion he was off sick, and on the third occasion he postponed the meeting because 'something important had come up'. By the time I eventually had my meeting with the officer, I had been waiting for 8 weeks.

Prior to seeking a meeting with the Area Youth Officer I had sent him documentation regarding my intended research project. At my meeting he told me that he had not received the information. However, he did tell me that I had his approval in principle, and if I sent him further documentation, and sought the permission of the youth workers in the centres that I was considering, he would send me a letter saying that I had his approval. I never received this. When I suggested to him that I had chosen one inner city youth centre and one community college youth centre, he told me that I needed to get the permission of the Headmaster of the community college, because he had 'no real jurisdiction' over visitors at youth centres based in community colleges.

A week after my meeting I contacted the inner city youth centre (Abraxus) and received a quite a hostile response from the senior male youth worker who was in charge. He told me that he was against 'girls' work' "in any shape or form". He also told me that he hated feminists and hoped that I wasn't going "to stir up the girls with half baked airy fairy stuff" because it was "wrong to concentrate on girls because then the boys would loose out". He justified this by explaining that boys were "easy to please and would always make use of what was provided". When I suggested that perhaps girls needs had not been addressed adequately by traditional youth centre provision, he told me that the girls were "too fussy, fickle and flighty to be interested in anything for long". He also told me that I was wasting my time doing research at the Abraxus because "neither the women workers or the girls will give a toss". Despite this warning, I continued to pursue my enquiries.

After five weeks of trying to contact the female worker who ran the girls' group, I eventually met with her and obtained her permission to attend the girls' group sessions. My attempts to meet with the Area Youth Officer began in December 1990, I met the Abraxus male youth worker in February, the female workers in March, but was not able to begin my fieldwork until April 1991!

The time scale for the community college youth centre (Crofton) took even longer. Soon after I had met with the Area Youth Worker I sent a letter to the Headmaster of the school with accompanying documentation about my intended research. He telephoned me to say that he was leaving his job in March, so he had given my documentation to the Youth Worker in charge of the Crofton Youth Centre. He also suggested that a youth worker would contact me in the next few weeks. I tried to follow this up several times. Eventually in April I telephoned the new headmaster and explained the situation to him. He was very interested in my research and organized a meeting in May with me and the youth worker in charge of the Youth Centre. At the meeting, I met two female youth workers. One was the current worker who was leaving in July, the other was a new worker who was going to start work in August. It was agreed that I should begin my fieldwork at the Centre in August. The youth worker went off sick and away on holiday in August, so I began my fieldwork in September 1991.

To gain access to the city council youth centre (Blummerstone) I had to get permission from the City Council Youth Development Officer. Unfortunately, the City Council Youth Development Officer never replied to any of my letters or phone calls. (I wrote 2 letters and left 8 telephone messages). After several months of following the 'official channels' (during which time I was becoming increasingly disillusioned by the county council bureaucratic procedures) I decided to adopt my own 'unofficial method' of making contact with the Blummerstone youth workers.

I approached the youth workers at the Blummerstone Youth Centre on an evening in June when I knew they would be running the girls' group. I told them about the purposes of my research. I also told them of the silence I had received from their Area

Youth Development Officer. Both the youth workers thought that my research would be 'interesting' and it would be a 'useful' experience for the young women to take part in. They also said that I did not need the Area Youth Development Officer's permission to work in their youth centre. Instead they said that they would put my name forward to the city council to be 'vetted', and then they would enlist me as an unpaid youth work volunteer.

After my meeting with the youth workers, I wrote another letter to the Area Youth Development Officer outlining the discussions that had taken place expressing my hope that our plan was acceptable to him. I still received no reply. I assumed, therefore, that my proposals were acceptable and eventually began my fieldwork at Blummerstone Youth Centre in August 1991.

All the negotiations that I had to carry out with the various 'gate keepers' within the Youth Service were frustrating, demoralizing and exhausting. Furthermore, I felt that they were a very inauspicious beginning to my ethnographic fieldwork!

APPENDIX III

Young women who attended the Abraxus, Blummerstone and Crofton Youth Centres

I Young women who attended the Abraxus Youth Centre April 1991 - February 1992

The sixteen regular attenders of the Abraxus Girls' Group

Aged 12	(Ages in September 1991)
Tammy	(Sister of Donna)
Aged 13	
Angela	(Cousin of Sara)
Louise	
Kelly	
Cathy	
Teresa	(Cousin of Donna, Tammy and Melanie)
Aged 14	
Laura	
Sara	(Cousin of Angela)
Susie	
Tara	(Sister of Trisha)
Melanie	(Cousin of Donna, Tammy and Teresa)
Rachel	
Kerry	
Aged 15	
Donna	(Sister of Tammy)
Tirina	
Aged 16	
Trisha	(Sister of Tara)

Occasional attenders

In addition to the regular attenders, Zoe and Clare (both aged 14) joined the group on two occasions for outside excursions. They did not appear to be friends of any of the regular attenders. Emma (aged 14) also joined the group for outside excursions. She joined us ice-skating, visiting a restaurant and attending a party at the Youth Centre. She was a close friend to Laura. Debs (aged 16) joined us ice-skating. She was a cousin of Donna, Tammy, Melanie and Teresa. She was also a friend to Trisha.

Friendship groups

Teresa (cousin to Donna, Tammy and Melanie) lived next door to Donna and Tammy. Rachel lived in the next street. They were all very good friends and spent a lot of time together at each others houses, despite the difference in their ages.

Sara and Cathy were best friends and lived in the next street from Rachel.

Tirina and Donna were in the same class at school. On occasions, therefore, they would met up without the younger women. This did not happen very often because Donna was generally left 'in charge' of her younger sister Tammy.

Tara and Kerry were close friends. Kerry often spent time at Tara's house because she said it was better than where she lived.

Laura did not spend much time with any of the young women outside the girls' group. However, she did attend the activities I arranged for the group during the summer holidays of 1991.

Rachel became pregnant in 1991. Trisha became pregnant in 1992. When I met with Rachel in the autumn of 1992 she introduced me to her son. She also told me that Trisha was expecting her baby very soon.

ii Young women who attended the Blummerstone Youth Centre August 1991 - August 1992

The maximum number of young women that attended a 'girls' group session' was nineteen. Although none of the young women attended each session, I would describe all the young women as regular attenders. The composition of the girls' group depended on the activity that had been planned. 'Outside activities' invariably attracted more young women than ordinary 'girls' group sessions'. This was also the case at the Abraxus and Crofton Youth Centres.

Aged 16 **(Ages in January 1992)**
Julia (Cousin of Gerry and Carla)
Liz (Sister of Carole)
Lisa (Pregnant in July 1992)

Aged 17
Catherine
Nicky

Aged 18
Clare
Jo
Lizzy (Cousin of Anna)
Jane
Kelly (One child 4 years old)

Aged 19
Kath
Steph
Karen
Jen
Hayley
Andrea
Carla (Cousin of Julia and Gerry)
Karen

Aged 20
Nita
Carole (Sister of Liz)
Paula
Kerry
Kerry-Ann
Marie (Two children age 4 and 2 years old, her third child was born in
October 1992)

Aged 21
Natasha
Anna (Cousin of Lizzy)
Patty
Gerry (Cousin of Julia and Carla)

Friendship groups

Patty was Clare's cousin. Clare's best friend was Hayley. Patty, Clare and Hayley often, therefore, spent time in each others houses despite the difference in their ages.

Jen lived two houses away from Clare and was very good friends with Catherine. Patty, Clare, Catherine, Jen and Hayley always knew what each other were doing and were often in each others homes.

Marie and Kelly were good friends. They often supported each other regarding child-care arrangements. When they wanted to go out for the evening, they left their children with Marie's mother.

Kelly's house was a place that Clare, Natasha, Marie, Kerry-Ann and Jo often visited. The young women felt comfortable 'hanging around' at Kelly's.

Gerry, Julia and Carla were cousins although they were not particularly close friends. Lizzy and Anna were also cousins (their mothers were identical twins, so they were used to becoming involved in 'family occasions'. The two families spent their holidays together).

Kelly, Clare, Kerry-Ann, Natasha, Carla and Jo became very good friends as a result of planning a holiday together in June 1992. A few weeks after the holiday Clare left her parents and moved into Kelly's.

III Young women who attended the Crofton Youth Centre September 1991 - July 1992

On my first visit to the Crofton Youth Centre I met sixteen young women. Over the next few weeks the numbers declined. By the sixth week of fieldwork only ten young women were regular attenders of the Youth Centre (Becky, Kelly, Charlotte, Vicki, Rebecca, Roisin, Jo, Natasha, Deborah and Christine).

The other young women did attend irregularly until late February/early March 1992. However, by April 1992 only Becky, Kelly, Charlotte, Natasha and Jo regularly attended the Youth Centre. By the end of June it was only Becky, Kelly and Jo who were regularly attending the girls' group.

Aged 15 (Ages in January 1992)

Sara
Jo
Vicki

Aged 16

Tania
Rebecca
Roisin
Hayley
Natasha
Kelly
Deborah
Kirsten
Jenny
Sandra (Pregnant in September 1991).
Anita
Keeley

Aged 17

Sarah
Christine
Charlotte
Becky
Carly (A single parent. She only attended the first two sessions, as did Sandra).

Friendship groups

Becky and Kelly were very good friends with Tania, Vicki and Sarah, so I kept in contact with them when I visited Kelly and Becky at Kelly's home.

Becky, Vicki, Sara, Keeley and Christine spent quite a lot of time at the 'rec' during late March early April in 1992. Sara rarely attended the Youth Centre based girls' group sessions, although she attended Crofton School and she always attended the 'girls' group excursions'. I also met Sara on many occasions when I was socialising in Crofton by 'hanging around' at the 'rec' and while visiting the chip shop, video shop and so forth.

The young women that appeared to belong to the closest friendship group were Deborah, Keeley and Christine. In all of these accounts it is clear that the young women's friendship groups are not necessarily structured around age. Other factors

such as growing up together, living near to each other and being related appeared to be far more important influences.

APPENDIX IV

Fieldnotes

I Recording girls' group activities at the Youth Centres

Generally most of my fieldnotes were written up after I left the girls' groups or other locations that I visited. However, my research was not solely dependent on this method of note-taking. This was because the structured fieldwork situations that I created such as: video sessions; role plays; discussion groups; and quizzes gave me plenty of opportunities to use a tape recorder. I also used a tape recorder on some nights out and on all scheduled one to one, and small group discussions. However, all unscheduled one to one conversations and events that took place on a more general basis were recorded mainly from memory.

Because I did not want to be perceived as someone who was always 'writing things down'. I tried not to take many overt notes in general youth centre girls' group sessions. Consequently, I would make several visits per evening to the toilet where I would record: names of those attending, events that were taking place, what was being discussed, key quotes (if I couldn't remember these verbatim I would try to record the nearest approximation to what I could remember) and so forth. By choosing not to be overt in my note-taking outside of the more 'structured' girls' group sessions that I organized, there was always a tension between my feminist principles of being explicit to the young women regarding the different stages of the research process, and how I actually felt when they saw me taking down notes. I never resolved this particular dilemma during the course of my fieldwork. I continued, therefore, to make most of my fieldnotes in clandestine circumstances.

As soon as the evening sessions finished I would continue my note taking in the confines of my car. I would try to recount the evenings events and use key words to remind myself of particular areas of interest. During the course of my journey home, I would think about, and re-live the events of the evening. Once I arrived home I would quickly write more brief notes. (The notes were brief because I invariably arrived home late - always after 10.30pm, so I was tired and often very hungry, hence I had to

leave the more rigorous note recording until the next day). On the mornings that followed my fieldwork, I would set my alarm clock an hour earlier than usual so that I could record my field notes onto a Dictaphone, prior to going to work. The notes I had written the night before acted as my prompt for creating detailed accounts of the activities and events I had observed and experienced. I conducted my fieldwork regularly on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Hence I would be getting up at 5.30am, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings to record my fieldnotes before doing a full days work. My weekends were then filled by transcribing the notes I had made on the Dictaphone earlier on in the week. In other words, my note-taking was a very laborious and time consuming task¹. I often took my fieldnotes into the girls' groups to share with the young women. Sharing my fieldnotes with the research participants proved to be a very useful fieldwork strategy. It allowed them an opportunity to see what I was recording, and it enabled me to have further discussions that I could record by tape.

In the early stages of my fieldwork I was very concerned about the quality and accuracy of my fieldnotes. This was especially so at the Abraxus Youth Centre. This was because, once the young women accepted me as an acceptable person to have around, they would often be competing with each other for my attention. I found it impossible to get away and spend even a few minutes on my own. Often, therefore, I was unable to make any field notes until the end of the sessions. In these circumstances I very quickly learned that during the course of conducting ethnographic fieldwork, most ethnographers invariably have to rely on their memories as their principle 'recording tool'.

¹ As I became more immersed in my fieldwork, the task of transcribing my fieldnotes grew in magnitude. At the beginning of my research, I was recording impressions, making notes of the young women's names, ages, appearances, describing the events of the evening, and so forth. But once I began to develop a more active role within the youth centres the amount of notes I made increased. I felt, therefore, that I needed help in transcribing my fieldnotes. At one point, it was taking me nearly two days merely to transcribe my weeks fieldnotes. Fortunately, I was able to enlist the support of a secretary at my place of work. I explained to the secretary that the information that I gave her should be treated confidentially, and for a brief time the burden of endlessly transcribing fieldnotes dramatically decreased. Unfortunately, this system only continued for 10 weeks. Transcribing fieldnotes continued, therefore, to demand a lot of my time throughout the period which I conducted my fieldwork.

During the early stages of my fieldwork, I felt that I was being 'flooded' by data, and that I was not keeping up with it. I also felt that my notes were not doing justice to the diversity of the data I was being exposed to. Consequently, I spent many hours recording absolutely everything I could possibly remember in great detail. Gradually though, as I began to feel more comfortable and confident within the different youth centres, I began developing the different research strategies that I have described in chapter 2: video sessions, role plays, discussion groups, quizzes and these allowed me to be overt in my note-taking. These sessions also allowed me to exert some control over the data that I was recording. By utilizing a variety of different approaches, I was able to introduce specific topics to the young women and make decisions as to the relevancy of data that I was being exposed to. This was especially so regarding the tape-recorded in-depth interviews that I carried out with the Crofton and Blummerstone young women.

II Fieldnotes outside the confines of the Youth Centres

It was very difficult making notes in night clubs and 'raves', it was virtually impossible making notes when I was hanging about at the 'rec'. It was fortunate, therefore, that the young women did not mind me using my tape-recorder on some of these occasions. In the public settings that we visited I found myself yet again, forced into the toilets, making brief and hurried notes into my tiny notebook. Because I was aware that my fieldnotes in these circumstances were dependent largely on memory, I generally tried to share my fieldnotes of the 'nights out' with the young women the next time that I met them at their girls' group. These sessions were very enjoyable because they allowed them to 're-live' the good times that they had enjoyed. The sessions also enabled other young women to make contributions and comparisons regarding their 'nights out on the raz', and they allowed me to make corrections and additional notes.

The inherent tension that I felt about taking notes when I was observing and participating with the young women's more general activities was most apparent when I was on holiday with them. It felt very wrong to be pouring over my note book while we were away on holiday - even though I had asked their permission to do so before

the holiday. For the first two days of the holiday, I slipped away to a cafe to write my notes while the young women were still in their beds. I felt dreadful doing this. I decided, therefore, to create a 'holiday diary' that I could share with them. I then felt much more comfortable about writing while I was sitting with them, and they felt they could check my accounts and amend them when they thought that I had missed things out. Feeling uncomfortable becomes quite a familiar feeling for an ethnographic researcher. Negotiating relationships in the field; writing up extensive fieldnotes; and sharing written observations with the research participants, are not tasks that can be entered into lightly. Ethnographic fieldwork is, therefore, very demanding and requires a great deal of energy, enthusiasm, tact and a high level of inter-personal skills.

APPENDIX V

Julie's story

Julie is 12

She lives at home with mum, step-dad, her two half sisters and her brother. Her half sisters, Carrie and Emma, are 8 and 6. Her brother Carl is 11.

Julie doesn't mind school at the moment. She has quite a few friends at school - Julia, Rachel and Sonia in particular. They like some games, they enjoy art and science.

Julie would like to be an actress or a model when she's older. Her friends also share these ambitions. Some weekends they stay around at each other's houses and spend all afternoon getting dressed up and experimenting with all different sorts of make-up. She doesn't often have her friends at her house because there isn't really enough room for them to stay. Julie doesn't mind because usually her brother is horrible to her and her friends, and he never gets told off. It's always her that gets told off because she's "older, and a girl, and ought to know better". Julie doesn't like boys and can't understand why her friend Sonia is so obsessed with her boyfriend, Wayne.

Julie's mum smokes, her step-dad does too. They don't go out much, but sometimes they go to the Club. None of the children like it when their parents come back smelling of drink and cigarettes. All of them think that smoking and drinking is stupid. They are all against drinking and smoking. Julie won't even sit by her mum on the bus if she's smoking, she makes a point of moving somewhere else away from the smoke.

Julie shares a room with her sisters. Carl has a room of his own. Julie gets really fed up about this because she can never get away on her own. There's nowhere for her to go and her mum is always telling her off for leaving 'her stuff' about the house. 'Her stuff' gets messed with wherever she leaves it in the house. Nowhere is private, someone is always poking around.

When Julie is old enough she's going to move away, get a place of her own. She's not

going to get married, she's fed up with men, her mum waits on her dad and her brother all day long, she's not going to be like that. Things are going to be different for Julie.

Julie is now 13

Carl is now 12, Carrie 9 and Emma 7. Her best friends are still Rachel and Julia, although she sees less and less of Sonia these days. Sonia seems to spend a lot of her time with a group of older girls and she spends a lot of time going out with different boys. Girls and boys in the school talk about Sonia behind her back, Julia thinks this is Sonia's own fault. Rachel thinks it unfair, because loads of the lads go out with lots of different girls and they're not talked about like poor Sonia is.

Julie's step-dad is out of work at the moment. This hasn't helped the atmosphere at home. He's really short-tempered and argues with her mum. Her mum then gets tetchy with her for not pulling her weight and doing enough housework. Julie still goes to stay with Julia and Rachel at weekends, but she's aware she needs to earn some money if she wants to continue doing this because they like to go shopping on Saturdays.

She finds a paper round. Only £3.50 a week but it will be better than nothing. She's got a bicycle so she can easily do the delivery. It is an evening paper round so she can do it when she gets home from school. Julie's parents are not pleased or proud of Julie finding herself a job. They say it's not safe for a girl to do a paper round in the evening, especially in the winter. Julie says other girls do it. Her mum and dad say she isn't other girls. They then let Carl do it instead. Julie is furious and hates her mum, dad and sisters. But most of all she hates Carl.

Julie's periods begin. She's totally fed up about this. What a pain! Everyone will notice, they're bound to see something different about her. Maybe they will see the outline of the towel through her school uniform. What happens if she leaks in the middle of a lesson? Will it go all over the chair? Anyway no-one is allowed in the toilets during lesson time - you have to go to the secretary and ask for the key. She then often goes with you to make sure you're not bunking lessons or having a fag.

Anyway, what will happen on Wednesday when her class has to go swimming? - it will be awful. It's awful enough the boys keeping on at the girls asking where their water wings are, and calling them names, but if she just sits there everyone will know, she'll have to pretend that she's getting flu, or maybe she could just skive games instead...

Julie talks to Julia and Rachel about periods. Julia hasn't begun hers yet and feels left out because Rachel and Julie insist on talking about it all at great length. Rachel uses tampons, her elder sister showed her how. Julia doesn't even know what a tampon looks like, but it all sounds awful and she's sure it will be really painful. Julie wished she had an elder sister like Rachel has. Julie doesn't like being the eldest in her family. She's always the one who has to look out for all the other kids, and she's always told that she's lazy and messy and doesn't tidy up around the house. Carl is never told off, Yet he really is lazy and untidy. Julie isn't most of the time. Julie hates the school holidays, they are so boring.

Julie is now 14

Rachel, Julia and a new girl from the other side of town - Hayley, are all good friends. Mostly they are in the same classes at school, but they know they will be separated next term, after the summer holidays because they have to choose their exam subjects.

Julie still likes the same subjects - games, art and science, but it's now called biology and chemistry. The others think she's mad. They don't mind biology but hate chemistry, and just use the lessons to have a good laugh.

Julie, Rachel and Hayley all have Saturday jobs. Julie sweeps up hair and washes towels at the local hairdressers. Her aunt got her the job, she works there as a stylist. It's quite hard work and pretty boring, 8.30 - 5.30, but she gets paid £7.50 so it's worth it. Rachel and Hayley help Hayley's dad on his market stall, they don't get paid so much, £5 each for 9 - 4, but they do get to be in town all day eyeing up the talent. This is much better than Julie's job which kept her on the estate with women all day. Now that Julia hasn't got a Saturday job she usually spends the day really really bored. Her mum is always keeping on for her to get up and do something, and get out of the

house for some fresh air, but she's not interested, and she hasn't got the energy. Sometimes she goes into the town to spy on Rachel and Hayley on the market stall weighing up fruit and veg and arguing with the OAPs who think they're being ripped off!

Julia wishes she was someone else really. Everyone else seems to have a much better life than hers. Hers is so dull. School is boring, home is boring, her brother and sister are boring, her mum and dad boring. Even Julie, Rachel and Hayley seem to have a more interesting life than her.

Rachel, Julie and Hayley all use their money to buy clothes and make up. They share this with Julia, but Julia isn't really as interested in her friends as she used to be. They never do anything. They only ever sit around talking about doing something, yet nothing ever happens. Julia isn't going to carry on waiting all her life for things to happen. Her brother Roger is always out and about - he's nearly 16, so Julia begins coaxing him and his friends to let her hang around with them. Julia is changing from the girl she used to be. She tries to act 'harder', she now smokes, although she used to hate smoking, like the others still do.

Now on Saturday nights, instead of talking and messing about with clothes and make up with Julie, Hayley and Rachel, Julia hangs around the rec with older boys and girls. They drink cans of lager, beer and bottles of cider. Hayley, Julie and Rachel think she is becoming really stupid, but Julia is actually happier than she's been for a long time.

She feels that she 'belongs' to a group of people who are creating their own excitement and entertainment. She really looks forward to Friday and Saturday nights at the rec because you never quite know what might happen. Sometimes nothing much really does happen, but if it's going to, you know you're in the right place.

Sometimes at the rec they get completely pissed out of their brains, other times they don't, just a few swigs of a bottle of cider, but it's still good because you can re-live all the other times when it was really good and remember what really amazing things

different people did.

It's good to feel part of something and it's good to be seen as someone. The boys in the crowd think she's OK. They call the other girls really stupid names, so does she, but that's OK because she's different to the rest of the girls, she's accepted by the boys as being 'sound', as being OK. She's not afraid of getting pissed and she's not afraid of breaking her nails, or messing up her make up, and she doesn't try wearing stilettos and stupid things like that.

Julie is now 15

She's still friends with Rachel and Hayley, but has lost touch with Julia. She's changed and isn't like them any more. Julie has two other friends, Emma and Sophie. They are in the same classes as her at school. They have now all chosen their GCSEs. Julie, Emma and Sophie all want to pass their exams and go on to do something different. They want to be able to buy a car and some money to buy a house. Hayley and Rachel are fed up with school and aren't taking their exams all that seriously. Hayley knows she could work with her father if the worst came to the worst, while Rachel wouldn't mind going to the factory where her next door neighbour is. The money doesn't seem too bad, and you get Friday afternoons off each week. 7.30 seems a bit early to start though, but if you're bringing home £90 a week it might be worth it.

Hayley goes out with Mark most nights. Rachel gets really fed up with this because she always goes on and on about him. Rachel prefers it when her and Hayley go out together eyeing up the talent. When they go out with Mark, Hayley behaves really differently, she's all fluffy and stupid. She's all eyes and touchy touchy with Mark, everyone else thinks they're far too lovey-dovey.

Rachel and Julie can't understand what Hayley sees in Mark. He's alright looking but he's not the brightest person on earth and he's only just 16. Rachel thinks older boys are better, more mature. She thinks lads her own age are pretty pathetic. She wonders why any of the girls bother going out with them. Emma says that older boys are better in bed. Julie, Rachel, Emma and Hayley have all slept with their boyfriends at some

point.

Julie, Emma and Sophie talk about how they have changed. They laugh at how they once wanted to be pop stars, models or actresses. Now they realise they must have been really dumb. They want sensible jobs, jobs that will always be there, but will be quite interesting, perhaps involving travelling and meeting people. Emma would like to be a travel agent or a rep somewhere exotic, so she's concentrating on her French. Sophie and Julie don't really know what they want to do but neither of them want to stay around the local area. They want to get out and see different places. Julie knows she won't be stuck at home all her life, she will get out. She doesn't want a life like her mother's.

Julie still shares a bedroom with one of her sisters - she's now 11 and a right pain in the arse. Carl is now 14 and really awful. He smokes - often in the house, and stays out really late especially at weekends. He's always hanging around with big gangs of young people and often he's one of the younger ones. Julie thinks he's old enough to look after himself, so she lets him get on with it.

Sophie, Emma and Julie try to do homework together at each other's houses, but often they end up looking through Emma's mum's mail order catalogue ordering clothes, playing tapes, looking at magazines and talking about everything except their homework. They also do this in PSE classes, free periods and in the library. What they look like is very important to all the young women, and they are all very aware of their shortcomings. Julie is tall, flat-chested and skinny. Sophie thinks she's gross - she's 5'4" and a standard size 14. Emma hates her brown wavy hair and blue eyes. She wants to have straight blonde hair and big brown eyes. They all spend hours making themselves look the best they can. They share each other's make up and clothes. Often without Emma's mum knowing, they wear the clothes they've ordered from the catalogue, wash it, iron it and give it back to Emma's mum saying, "Thanks, but it's no good, send it back please".

By the end of the year at school, all of the girls, Julie, Emma, Sophie, Rachel and

Hayley are really bored with school life. They are also very fed up with the stupid boys they meet at their schools and youth centres. All the boys think that they are so big and smart, yet most of them are really dumb and stupid. They are always rude and insulting to the girls. Always referring to their tits, their bums or making snide comments. None of the young women are looking forward to the long summer holiday with nothing to do.

Julie is 16

In September she goes back to school for her final year. Life goes on much the same really. Home is still pretty awful. Julie is a regular smoker these days. All of her friends smoke as well, except Emma. None of them really know why they started. They don't even remember when they started. But they know they probably will never give up. Sophie remembers beginning because her mum and everyone always kept on about not smoking or drinking. So she had made an effort to do both because she knew it was wrong. It was a point she was making. She wanted to prove that she was a human being and could make her own decisions. The others started off sharing a cigarette here and there, mostly on the way back from school, none of them liked it at first, then suddenly, there you are buying fags like you've always done it. Emma is definitely in the minority, as nearly everyone they know smokes.

All of them agree that they spend most of their daily lives wishing time away because it's so boring. They seem to do the same things day in and day out. Nothing really happens, but they continue to do the same things and go to the same places just in case something exciting or interesting does happen.

Julie explains this as being very much like going out at the weekends. If you go out locally you know what it's going to be like. You know all the people you're going to meet - more or less - yet you still go, hoping against hope that it won't be the same. Tonight could be the night that you meet Mr Right and wow! things would be brilliant at last.

Julie, Emma and Sophie now probably drink as much as Julia does. Julia has quietened

down now and is back in the group. They also see Sonia a bit more these days. It's as though they're going back to when it was just 'The Girls', before they started going with lads and growing up. Most of them have difficulty getting served in pubs. Landlords and bar staff don't like young women in the pubs. They think they disturb the lads; put the men off their drink; don't spend enough; and get too noisy. None of the girls use the local pub because they know they're not welcome there.

Instead they go into town and go from pub to pub looking for 'action' and 'talent' - often not finding either. Sophie and Rachel always get served in pubs and get let into clubs, so they do the buying for everyone else. The girls drink rounds quickly and a night out - several pubs and a club, can be very expensive. On nights out they don't really stick to any drinks in particular. Instead they often try something different on each round.

Sometimes when they haven't got enough money to go buying rounds in town they will go around to each other's houses - especially if parents are out. This way they can have a good evening at home sharing a bottle of wine or several cans of lager for a fraction of the cost of going out and getting into buying rounds for everyone. Cider is an even cheaper buy, but considered a bit naff really - only the younger girls bother with buying cider. Drinking at each other's houses isn't the same as going out and seeing who is about, but at least it's hassle-free. No bar staff looking down their noses at you, no drunken men leering at you and groping out at you, but no possibility of spotting any good lads either.

Soon it will be the end of school. Julie is sitting 5 GCSEs. She's then going to try for a YT place in Hotel and Catering. She thinks she'll be able to get a job quite easily, but it will definitely mean moving away from the area, which is definitely what she'd like to do. Emma, Sophie and Rachel are staying on an extra year to do the CPVE. They don't really know what they'll do afterwards, but at least they haven't got to think about it for the time being. Sonia is going to work in the same factory as her aunt. At first she will be taken on as a YT, then she'll go full time there. Julia doesn't know what she'll be doing because she's 4 months pregnant. She thinks that it is not worth

planning ahead, until after the baby is born. Hayley is going to work for her dad on the market stall. They all still meet up and are planning a huge binge on the last day of exams.

They all got completely pissed. It was a brilliant night out. They spent ages getting ready in the afternoon - just like the old days. They met up at the Black Dog and got a bus into town. They must have gone into every pub in town, then ended up at the Whistlers Night Club. Girls get in free on Thursday nights before 11.00pm. Drinks were expensive though - good job they took in half a bottle of vodka to add to their cokes. By the time they got to the Club they were so pissed they didn't care what they did or what people thought. It was brilliant. They were picking up the lads and not waiting to be picked up, they all just went for it. It was one of the best nights ever. Sonia and Julie were really sick at the end of the evening - the rest of them had thumping heads and bad stomachs for the next day but it was worth it. A night to remember.

Now Julie is 17

She still hasn't managed to find a YT Hotel & Catering placement. She's been offered a hairdressing scheme and refused, but she's worried because if you keep refusing schemes you don't get any allowance. The others are still at school doing their CPVE, they're not getting much out of it, and are really fed up with being treated like kids at school. Sonia hates the factory, although she does have a few laughs with the girls she works with. Working from 7.30 am to 6.00 Monday - Thursday is exhausting and often she's too knackered to do anything with her Friday afternoons off. Hayley doesn't mind the fruit and veg stall, she knows everyone at the market, always has, so she feels part of something. She also has a steady boyfriend, Keith. Keith and his dad also work on a market stall. The others don't see a lot of her now. Keith and Hayley seem to go out with his mates or stay in at each other's houses, watching videos or the TV.

The others think this is dead boring and can't understand why she won't go out with them. Sonia goes out with her work mates, but not very often. They tend to go out

once in a while in a huge group, out for a real binge. In between times they mostly stay at home.

Emma, Sophie and Rachel went away for a weekend to Brighton. They had an amazing time, but got chunked out of their guest house for making too much noise. Julie didn't go with them because she didn't want to miss a big rave that weekend. At the moment Julie is more into E's and Whizz at raves than going out with the rest of them drinking. She reckons she can have a better time with E's than drinking, and it doesn't make her feel so bad the next day. Julia goes with her occasionally when her mum offers to look after her daughter Sarah. Julia never really sees Sarah's father - only out and about. She doesn't want anything to do with him, although she adores baby Sarah and wouldn't be without her now. Julia still lives at home at the moment, but is hoping for a house in the next 6 months. She can't wait to be on her own, although she'll miss her mum's support and probably won't be able to get baby sitters very easily. She wants a house on the same estate as her family, but this might not be possible.

Most of the young women have had on/off relationships with boyfriends, but none of them want to settle down. Most of them still think boys their own age are immature. Julie was seeing a 22 year old, but that is all over now. They think about HIV & AIDS, but don't really think it will happen to them because they are choosy who they go with.

Julie is 18

She didn't do much to celebrate her 18th. Most of her friends except Emma were already 18 and they were all getting a bit tired of doing the same old thing. They did go out to the local pub on the night, and the others ordered her a stripper. Good job she was drunk, because she would have died if she'd been sober! Drinking doesn't have the same appeal as it used to have now it's all legal. Julia still has difficulty getting served in pubs, she's always telling them that she's a mother yet she still has to carry her ID card with her.

None of the young women really feel any different to how they did at 14/15. They still don't like the way they look. They are either too fat, too thin, or have the wrong colour hair or eyes. Several of them would like to be someone else, to be completely different. Although in a group the young women come across as really confident, none of them really feel like that. They hate going into places on their own, none of them would ever go into a pub on their own. In fact there don't seem to be many places that young women can go into on their own. Occasionally they make an effort to do some sort of activity, but there's nothing available locally and buses into town are a real pain. Sophie and Emma go swimming occasionally, and Julie and Hayley have been to aerobics once or twice, other than that they don't do all that much.

Julie, Sonia and Rachel are going on holiday. Julie never did get on to her Hotel & Catering YT scheme. She did the hairdressing and is now a junior stylist. The money is lousy, but sometimes the tips are OK and she makes extra money by cutting hair for friends and family. Sonia is still in the factory - she earns more than all the others. Rachel is doing book-keeping for a small knitwear company, it's really dull and it's a YT scheme. Sophie and Emma are unemployed at the moment, although they've applied to work in a holiday camp in Bournemouth.

Because Julie, Sonia and Rachel are earning money, they tend to spend time with each other. They like shopping, going out to pubs, clubs, and the occasional rave. Sophie, Emma and Julia join in, but can't afford to do the same things as the others. They don't see much of Hayley now - she's engaged. Sophie, Emma and Julia also get a bit tired of hearing the others go on and on about the holiday they're going to have. They are going to Corfu for a fortnight with another woman - someone who works at the factory with Sonia.

Julie, Sonia and Rachel spend hours planning and talking about their holiday. They are busy buying clothes, swapping clothes and preparing themselves for the best event in their lives so far. They're going to sunbathe all day, eye up the talent, and drink and dance all night - the clubs don't close till 4 in the morning. They don't think they will find 'Mr Right' but it will be fun looking. The lads are bound to be better and more

interesting than around where they live. Ideally they should also be older, more mature and have some spare cash to spend on them.

Sophie, Emma and Julia might try and go away for a weekend in a local seaside resort. It won't be as exciting, but it will be different. More to do and more to see, and there should be plenty of lads around. They probably won't have good weather, so they'll go out in the evening to the pubs and clubs and have a really good laugh. It's easier to have a good time away from where you live, because no-one knows you, and you can be someone completely different. You don't have to behave all 'girlie', you can just concentrate on having a really good time. That's why they like raves. They are different to pubs and clubs. You can 'get into' raves not caring what anyone thinks, especially if you've had some E or Whizz. Going to raves is so different from everything else.

Julie is now 19

She's still a hairdresser. At a different salon though. She fell out with her boss. He was a right smarmy git who kept treating her like an imbecile. She now works for a woman and it's much better, although it's two bus rides away from where she lives. She's made a new friend, Katie who is 22. Sonia is still at the factory, she tends to go out more with the women she works with these days, so the others don't see much of her. Sophie and Emma are going back to the holiday camp they worked at last summer. They've been unemployed most of the winter, so has Rachel. She hated book-keeping and hasn't really worked since she packed it in. She started doing car-boot sales with her brother, but it didn't really take off, and it was long hours with not much return. They all still live at home - except Hayley, she now lives with her boyfriend's family, and they are trying to save for a house of their own. All of them would love to move out of home and have a place of their own, but none of them can afford it. Sophie and Emma got away last summer when they were in Bournemouth - it was quite nice being on their own, but their chalets were pretty grim and they did miss their home comforts and their mums doing stuff for them. Julie's mum doesn't do anything for her, she virtually runs the house these days and looks after her younger brother and sisters. Carl has moved out now, so at least she gets a bedroom to herself

now.

They don't really think much about the future. It's just something that they will have to face eventually. Julie still clings to the vague hope that one day something might happen that will change her life, she doesn't quite know what, but she still likes to think that she'll get out one day. The others are happy enough really, although they would all like more money. They realise the sort of images all around - on the television, magazines, at the cinema etc, don't really exist - it's just escapism really, but at the same time they would still like to try a more glamorous life. They would like to be richer, not famous or anything, just to have enough money to do what they liked, and not to have to worry about things.

Julie is 20

Work is pretty grim at the moment. A new boss and she's got it in for Julie. Katie and Julie don't take their hairdressing work seriously any more. They always used to, but now they sometimes spend their lunch hours drinking in the pub. They go back to work not caring if they go back giggling and not able to cut hair straight - especially if they've got customers that they don't really like anyway. They tend to drink when they're miserable and fed up these days. When they were younger, they would go and drink to have a good time, now it's different, they tend to drink more as a way of coping with things.

The others are still doing much the same things. Hayley is getting married in a few months' time. Emma now works with Sonia at the factory. Sophie didn't come back from Bournemouth, she stayed down there with Derek. Emma came back after a few months because once Sophie got hooked into Derek it just wasn't the same, and she missed all her mates this time. She's thinking of doing some nursery nursing, because she's always looked after kids, and she might go on to do some sort of qualification. Rachel does some bar work now and works in the restaurant of one of the hotels in town. They don't see a lot of her, because she works really odd shifts. She seems to enjoy it and looks dead posh and business-like. This is a big change from last year when she was jobless and well into E's and Whizz. No-one expected her to get it

together at all. They think she's seeing a bloke, he's a chef or something.

Julie is now 21

Officially, she's unemployed at the moment. Unofficially she 'does hair' in people's houses. Her and Katie use Katie's boyfriend's car and go around doing all their old customers' hair at much less than the salon charges. When they meet a woman who still works at the salon, she tells them that it is empty most days. Julie and Katie say if the Salon closes, she can come and work with them.

Julie still sees Emma, Julia, and occasionally Rachel. She doesn't see anything of Hayley - now that she is married. Hayley and Keith bought a flat in town and they never seem to go out these days. Sophie and Derek came to Hayley's wedding but no-one has heard anything from them since. Sophie didn't even acknowledge her invitation to Emma's 21st party.

Everyone seems to be having 21st parties at the moment. Julie isn't going to bother. It's just like any other birthday really, no big deal. Anyway, she hasn't got all that much cash at the moment and can think of better ways of spending it. She's saving for a car, she passed her test a year ago. With a car she could expand her mobile hairdressing and be legit. She's a bit worried that her old salon boss may shop her to the 'social'. If she can keep building up the customers, maybe one day she could buy her own salon. It could be more than just a hairdressers, she could do manicures, make ups, sell cosmetics, do leg waxing, ear piercing etc. No-one would then be telling her what to do. Who knows what she might do...

I SOME CONFIRMATIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO 'JULIE'S STORY'

Julie is 12

Julie would like to be an actress or a model when she's older. Her friends also share these ambitions. Some weekends they stay around at each other's houses and spend all afternoon getting dressed up and experimenting with all different sorts of make-up. She doesn't often have her friends at her house because there isn't really enough room for them to stay.

Kelly:
(Crof) "This is dead right... you start off dead optimistic like, I were gonna be real famous like when I was 12... Becky and me were going to be backing singers in a band when we were 12, then gradually you realize what real life really is... so then you think of things more real to what you can really do".

Natasha:
(Blumm) "Everyone has their dreams don't they, but gradually they're all knocked out of you, you just get more real I suppose".

Kelly:
(Blumm) "When you're 12 you're still such a kid, life hasn't really hit you".

Sara:
(Abrax) "Twelve years old seems a lifetime ago now".

Julie's mum smokes, her step-dad does too. They don't go out much, but sometimes they go to the Club. None of the children like it when their parents come back smelling of drink and cigarettes. All of them think that smoking and drinking is stupid. They are all against drinking and smoking. Julie won't even sit by her mum on the bus if she's smoking, she makes a point of moving somewhere else away from the smoke.

Sara:
(Abrax) "I never thought that I would smoke when I were that age, I hated it, I thought it were awful... I used to get right mad with mam for smoking".

Charlotte:
(Crof) "Everyone starts off like this. Adults forget the different reasons they start smoking. It is the same for kids, there are lots of reasons. I've started now, I don't know why. I probably won't stop now that I have started, but that is my choice because it is my life".

When Julie is old enough she's going to move away, get a place of her own. She's not going to get married, she's fed up with men, her mum waits on her dad and her brother all day long, she's not going to be like that. Things are going to be different for Julie.

Kelly:
(Blumm) "When you're younger you don't really think about real life... like there's no limits to what you think you can do... as you get older you wise up, everything tells you what you can and can't do... yea, like teachers and careers officers... YT place for you girl... that's life I 'spose... well our lives anyway, folk round here I mean".

Julie is now 13

Her best friends are still Rachel and Julia, although she sees less and less of Sonia these days. Sonia seems to spend a lot of her time with a group of older girls and she

spends a lot of time going out with different boys. Girls and boys in the school talk about Sonia behind her back, Julia thinks this is Sonia's own fault. Rachel thinks it unfair, because loads of the lads go out with lots of different girls and they're not talked about like poor Sonia is.

Gerry:

(Blumm) "That's fairly typical, girls are always bitched about, boys ain't... it's different for boys... starts off like that when they're babies... me mam bloody spoils our Martin, he can do owt, it don't matter, stay out, get pissed, pees in his bed, it don't matter, me I can't do a thing... he's a bloody hero to his mates, the one who'll do owt, me if I did owt like that I'd be a bloody dog... I'd be called all names, it's different for girls... it does yer head in, it does, if you really thought about it, it do yer head in, boys get away with owt all the bloody time".

Kerry-Ann:

(Blumm) "You have to tell 'em that, 'cos it's not fair, and it'll go on an on if we don't say enough is enough... girls are just as good as boys... yet it's a bloody man's world, women don't get a look in... we didn't ought to just take it, but we do".

Julie's periods begin. She's totally fed up about this. What a pain! Everyone will notice, they're bound to see something different about her. Maybe they will see the outline of the towel through her school uniform. What happens if she leaks in the middle of a lesson? Will it go all over the chair? Anyway no-one is allowed in the toilets during lesson time - you have to go to the secretary and ask for the key and she often goes with you to make sure you're not bunking lessons or having a fag. Anyway, what will happen on Wednesday when her class has to go swimming? - it will be awful. It's awful enough the boys keeping on at the girls asking where their water wings are, and calling them names, but if she just sits there everyone will know, she'll have to pretend that she's getting flu, or maybe she could just skive games instead.

Rachel:

(Abrax) "You're not going to talk about periods are you? You can't! People don't want to read about periods".

Gerry:

(Blumm) "Isn't it a bit tacky talking about periods...".

Sara:

(Abrax) "No-one wants to read about it, it's something that goes on, no-one talks about it, it's private like".

Julie hates school holidays. They are always so boring.

Natasha:

(Blumm) "Bored, I spend me life being bored... I do, I do, bloody boring that's my life, day in and day out, you've got to say this because this is real life - fucking boring".

Clare:

(Blumm) "It didn't used to be as bad, like when I were a kid, but I think I were bored when I was this age, I used to just watch tele".

Kelly:

(Crof) "I used to get bored during the holidays, still do, but I spose at that age, I'd hang around with Mark (her brother), and his mates and play football and stuff... you don't keep playing football with lads when you're 15 or 16 do yer?... I suppose then we started going down the rec and drinking...".

Julie is now 14

Rachel, Julia and a new girl from the other side of town - Hayley, are all good friends. Mostly they are in the same classes at school but they know they will be separated next term, after the summer holidays because they have to choose their exam subjects.

Natasha:

(Blumm) "You're bound to have different friends when you start taking exams, 'cos you go to different lessons... you still speak to your old mates though".

Kerry-Ann:

(Blumm) "I lost one of my best mates really, she was a bit of a egg-head, I went with the dunces... ain't got nowt in common now".

Julie still likes the same subjects - games, art and science, but it's now called biology and chemistry. The others think she's mad. They don't mind biology but hate chemistry, and just use the lessons to have a good laugh.

Gerry:

(Blumm) "I hated bloody sports, most girls do, they do...".

Natasha:

(Blumm) "It were the boys as much as it were the sports".

Becky:

(Crof) "Sports are dead embarrassing, and the boys are really awful to you".

Kerry-Ann:

(Blumm) "You know damn well we hate bloody science and all that crap... we're girls aren't we, thick and that, too stupid to do science see... you just done this to see if we'd read it properly didn't you?".

Julie, Rachel and Hayley all have Saturday jobs. Julie sweeps up hair and washes towels at the local hairdressers. Her aunt got her the job, she works there as a stylist. It's quite hard work and pretty boring, 8.30 - 5.30, but she gets paid £7.50 so it's worth it. Rachel and Hayley help Hayley's dad on his market stall, they don't get paid so much, £5 each for 9 - 4, but they do get to be in town all day eyeing up the talent, which is better than Julie's job which keeps her on the estate with women all day. Julia hasn't got a Saturday job and usually spends the day really really bored. Her

mum is always keeping on for her to get up and do something and get out of the house for some fresh air, but she's not interested, and hasn't got the energy, although sometimes she does go into town and spies on Rachel and Hayley on the market stall weighing up fruit and veg and arguing with the OAPs who think they're being ripped off!

Kelly:

(Blumm) "You don't get jobs now... when I were that age I could, but not now".

Clare:

(Blumm) "You can't get jobs that easy now... even if you do the money is crap... people use unemployment to pay slave wages... they do it's criminal".

Now on Saturday nights, instead of talking and messing about with clothes and make up with Julie, Hayley and Rachel, Julia hangs around the rec with older boys and girls, drinking cans of lager, beer and bottles of cider. Hayley, Julie and Rachel think she is becoming really stupid, but Julia is actually happier now than she's been for a long time.

She feels that she 'belongs' to a group of people who are creating their own excitement and entertainment. She really looks forward to Friday and Saturday nights at the rec because you never quite know what might happen. Sometimes nothing much really does happen, but if it's going to, you know you're in the right place.

Sometimes they get completely pissed out of their brains, other times they don't, just a few swigs of a bottle of cider, but it's still good because you can re-live all the other times when it was really good and remember what really amazing things different people did.

It's good to feel part of something and it's good to be seen as someone. The boys in the crowd think she's OK. They call the other girls really stupid names, so does she, but that's OK because she's different to the rest of the girls, she's accepted by the boys as being 'sound', as being OK. She's not afraid of getting pissed and she's not afraid of breaking her nails, or messing up her make up, or getting her stilettos stuck in the mud.

Becky:

(Crof) "We knew you'd write about the rec... what are you gonna say about it... like what's here is right, going down the rec were brilliant, some of our best times out... you just go through it for a while...that's what people don't understand, they just say don't do it, they don't see that it's totally excellent".

Kelly:

(Crof) "Rec nights were brilliant, we sometimes still talk about them now, specially if you haven't seen someone for ages, then you bump into them and say do you remember such and such a thing, and then it starts you off talking about it again".

Jo:

(Blumm) "When you start out at the rec, you're not being namby pamby... I `spose you want to be one of the boys accepted like... it's like you want to be different to how boys think that all girls are... we all used to keep up with them with the ale, we bloody well did, Clare could drink any of them under the table".

Clare:

(Blumm) "There's no special reasons for drinking, it's just like owt else, different reasons for different times... and the rec was just bloody good fun".

Julie is now 15

They have now all chosen their GCSEs. Julie, Emma and Sophie all want to pass their exams and go on to do something different that will let them have a car, some money and be able to buy a house. Hayley and Rachel are fed up with school and aren't taking their exams all that seriously. Hayley knows she could work with her father if the worst came to the worst, while Rachel wouldn't mind going to the factory where her next door neighbour is. The money doesn't seem too bad, and you get Friday afternoons off each week. 7.30 seems a bit early to start though, but if you're bringing home £90 a week it seems worth it.

Clare:

(Blumm) "Not many round here our age bring home £90 a week, no jobs now, cept at the knicker, and even they are YT now...".

Kelly:

(Crof) "There ain't any jobs are there, not for our age, that's why we're staying on doing the CPVE, we might as well mightn't we?

Clare:

(Blumm) "I'm going to get me a rich man... thas the only way I'll get out of here... I'm serious, I am".

Kerry-Ann:

(Blumm) "There ain't any other way we'll get rich and have a nice house and stuff... yea, I'll stay at home and do the cleaning, cooking and stuff, and he can bring the wage home...".

Becky:

(Crof) "I'd like to work in a travel agency, but I probably won't, I'm no good at exams see...".

Kelly:

(Crof) "I want to work in advertising... Mam has an interesting job, and she loves it, she's much happier than she used to be, I have seen her change... I want to be like her, travelling around meeting people and stuff, I don't want to stay round here, I'll move to Dunstan (a small town 6 miles away), and get a flat or something".

Rachel can't understand what she sees in Mark. He's alright looking but he's not the brightest person on earth and he's only just 16. Rachel thinks older boys are better, more mature. She thinks lads her own age are pretty pathetic. She wonders why any

of the girls bother going out with them. Emma says that older boys are better in bed. Julie, Rachel, Emma and Hayley have all slept with their boyfriends at some point.

Gerry:

(Blumm) "All boys are like that... so why do we still go out with them? Sleep wi' em that's a joke ain't it... at that age it's a couple of gropes and a poke and it's all over".

Kelly:

(Blumm) "Boys your own age are **bloody awful**... I think they get a bit better as they get older, well some do anyway".

Natasha:

(Blumm) "Golden rule don't start playing round with lads till they're at least 17... but you don't find that out till your older and wiser... younger boys are pathetic, I hate them... wi' their stupid little cocks it's awful... you forget how awful the first few times are... mind you not much has improved now... being on the ale helps, loosens you up like, helps you relax... can you imagine doing it dead sober like, argh it's too awful to think about".

Kelly:

(Crof) "The first time is awful for everyone ain't it... don't know what you're doing... suddenly it's all over and you think what was all the fuss about... it's dead awful, embarrassing like ain't it, makes you wonder why we bother to do it again... but we do don't we... everyone does...".

Becky:

(Crof) "I hadn't been drinking like the first time, but that was so bad I drank before I tried again... for confidence like... it was too awful being stone cold sober like... I couldn't face that again, drinking makes you more relaxed like...".

Gerry:

(Blumm) "**You have to say how pathetic they are, (boys) `cos they are, girls are so much more mature and clever, but like we're not meant to be are we... got to play the little wife and all that fucking crap, you got to tell `em we ain't like that... if we had a chance we'd be dead good at anything... but because we're girls they don't want to know**".

Julie is 16

Life goes on much the same really. Home is still pretty awful.

Jo:

(Blumm) "Home is better now than it used to be, when I were 15, 16 I **hated** being there... hell it was, nothing I ever did was right... battles all the bloody time, now though it's a bit better... I get on we' Mam better, Dad an I still have a go though... and Marcus is still a bloody pain".

Clare:

(Blumm) "I've always been alright we' Mam, it's the boys and Dad who get on my nerves... they never let up...".

Kelly:

(Crof) "It's not been too bad at our house, 'sept the divorce, before dad moved out then it were **really bad**... you just accept the cleaning and stuff, you just give in, its easier than not doing it in the end".

Becky:

(Crof) "I ain't giving in, I still don't see why girls always get the cleaning and stuff and boys get off scot free... I still have screaming matches with me mam because she says I ought to know better... it ain't fair".

All of them agree that they spend most of their daily lives wishing time away because it's so boring. They seem to do the same things day in and day out and nothing really happens, but they still do the same things and go to the same places just in case something exciting or interesting does happen.

If you go out locally you know what it's going to be like. You know all the people you're going to meet - more or less - yet you still go, hoping against hope that it won't be the same. Tonight could be the night that you meet Mr Right and wow! things would be brilliant at last.

Rachel:

(Abrax) "I'm 16 now and I still hope and pray that something exciting might happen... you just do... it keeps you going... 'cos it might happen one day...".

Jo:

(Blumm) "Going away from here... 'cos you stand more chance of something different happening, meeting other type of folk, when you go over to town or something".

Sometimes when they haven't got enough money to go buying rounds in town they will go around to each other's houses - especially if parents are out. This way they can easily have a good evening sharing a bottle of wine or several cans of lager for a fraction of the cost of going out and getting into buying rounds for everyone.

Gerry:

(Blumm) "You go round to yer mates houses before you can get into the clubs... once you can get into the clubs that's what you do... sometimes you get loaded before going into town or owt, if there's a gang of you, but otherwise you only tend to drink at home to drown your sorrows... like when we thought we were going to lose our jobs...".

Julie is now 17

Emma, Sophie and Rachel went away for a weekend to Brighton. They had an amazing time, but got chucked out of their guest house for making too much noise. Julie didn't go with them because she didn't want to miss a big rave that weekend. At the moment Julie is more into E's and Whizz at raves than going out with the rest of them drinking. She reckons she can have a better time with E's than drinking, and it

doesn't make her feel so bad the next day.

Kelly:

(Blumm) "We knew you'd write about the raves... raves are good for a few times, then they get a bit boring... the first few times you don't know what to expect, and you can get hold of all this gear... think you're going to go berserk to start off with... you think they're totally excellent, but they're dead expensive... the smaller ones aren't... and you don't get any decent gear at those..."

Rachel:

(Abrax) "The raves are brilliant to begin with... get like everything else after a bit, like you can really get into the gear, but you see too many folk really wasted on crap, so it's not really worth it... it's something you do for a while..."

Kelly:

(Crof) "Some raves are alright, but like Stuart he queues for 6 hours to get into the 'Rain Dance'... it's no wonder he needs the whizz... I think that's plain boring... I like the smaller ones okay though... there's not much gear but at least you know where it's coming from..."

Most of the young women have had on/off relationships with boyfriends, but none of them want to settle down and most of them still think boys their own age are immature. Julie was seeing a 22 year old, but that is all over now. They think about HIV & AIDS, but don't really think it will happen to them because they are choosy who they go with.

Clare:

(Blumm) "You don't really expect us to talk about boring HIV stuff do you Tina? Well, we ain't gonna, so move on, cos' this is getting boring".

Natasha:

(Blumm) "Fuck that crap, it's everywhere, you ain't going to write about that are you... it's so bloody boring, no-one wants to know".

Becky:

(Crof) "I know it's important and that but you don't really think about it".

Kelly:

(Crof) "It's like you know all the stuff about it... from school, the tele and that, but you don't really think it's anything to do with you like".

Julie is now 18

Julie, Sonia and Rachel spend hours planning and talking about their holiday. They are busy buying clothes, swapping clothes and preparing themselves for the best event so far in their lives. They're going to sunbathe all day, eye up the talent, and drink and dance all night - the clubs don't close till 4 in the morning. They don't think they will find 'Mr Right' but it will be fun looking, and the lads are bound to be better and more interesting than around where they live. Ideally they should also be older, more mature and have some spare cash to spend on them.

Clare:

(Blumm) "That's our holiday to Butlins ain't it? It were dead good weren't it, you got to write about that..."

Jo:

(Blumm) "Yea, that were one of the best weekends of my life..."

Clare:

(Blumm) "You're different on holiday aren't you... more confident like... it's like an escape, you can do things you like normally don't dream of".

Becky:

(Crof) "That's about the sum of my idea of a holiday... I've never been on one like that though... still one day..."

Kelly:

(Crof) "I don't worry about the lads though, I'd take enough cash we me... Becks and I went to Skeggy with her auntie and her mate, they're twenty something, and we had brilliant fun, in a caravan..."

Kelly:

(Blumm) "Holidays are like how you'd like your life to be... like the life you think other people have.. like exciting, glamorous and that... the things real life ain't".

Julie is now 19

They don't really think much about the future. It's just something that they will have to face eventually. Julie still clings to the vague hope that one day something might happen that will change her life, she doesn't quite know what, but would like to think that she'll get out one day. The others are happy enough really, although they would all like more money. They realise the sort of images all around - on the television, magazines, at the cinema etc, don't really exist - it's just escapism really, but at the same time they would still like to try a more glamorous life - be rich, not famous or anything, just have enough money to do what you like, and not to have to worry.

Clare:

(Blumm) "Like this is the first page I read, because I'm 19, and I still hope something, one day might happen... deep down I know it won't but I still hope..."

Jo:

(Blumm) "Getting away to Butlins, that was all like a bit of an escape, loads of different things happened... makes you feel different... but then you come back... the memories keep you going for a bit... you keep on talking about it all, but it don't really last for long... then you get more depressed cos it ain't going to happen again for ages, but you'd like it to, you want to do it again quickly..."

Gerry:

(Blumm) "I hate it here on this estate sometimes, I really do, but I'm stuck here, save for a fucking miracle... it's enough to make anyone miserable..."

Julie is now 20

Katie and Julie don't take their hairdressing work seriously any more. They always used to, but now they sometimes spend their lunch hours drinking in the pub. They go back to work not caring if they go back giggling and not able to cut hair straight - especially if they've got customers that they don't really like anyway. They tend to drink when they're miserable and fed up these days. When they were younger, they would go and drink to have a good time, now it's different, they tend to drink more as a way of coping with things.

Natasha:

(Blumm) "Too bloody right we drink to drown our sorrows, so would you if you were round here all the bloody time... it does yer head in sometimes, it really does... does my head in anyway... me Mam is the same..."

Gerry:

(Blumm) "This story fits lots in don't it, things are happening, life isn't like that round here, nowt happens, our lives are much more boring than this Julie... we know what's going to happen stuck out here, so sometimes you need to drink just to block things out".

The others are still doing much the same. Hayley is getting married in a few months' time. Emma now works with Sonia at the factory. Sophie didn't come back from Bournemouth, she stayed down there with Derek. Emma came back after a few months because once Sophie got hooked into Derek it just wasn't the same, and she missed all her mates this time. She's thinking of doing some nursery nursing, because she's always looked after kids, and she might go on to do some sort of qualification. Rachel does some bar work now and works in the restaurant of one of the hotels in town. They don't see a lot of her, because she works really odd shifts. She seems to enjoy it and looks dead posh and business-like, which is a big change from last year when she was jobless and well into E's and Whizz. No-one expected her to get it together at all. They think she's seeing a bloke, he's a chef or something.

Clare:

(Blumm) "Things might be different outside of here, but round here they're ain't suddenly going to be any jobs... folk don't go away either, Jo's aunt did, but she's older, it don't happen now, unemployment is worse... like it or not, we're here for good...".

Natasha:

(Blumm) "I don't think there's much point in moving out, cos' nowhere's any better now is it?"

Julie is now 21

Everyone seems to be having 21st parties at the moment. Julie isn't going to bother. It's just like any other birthday really, no big deal. Anyway, she hasn't got all that much cash at the moment and can think of better ways of spending it. She's saving for a car, she passed her test a year ago. Then she could expand her mobile hairdressing

and be legit. She's a bit worried that her old salon boss may shop her to the Social. If she can keep building up the customers, maybe one day she could buy her own salon. It could be more than just a hairdressers, she could do manicures, make ups, sell cosmetics, do leg waxing, ear piercing and stuff and no-one would be telling her what to do. Who knows what she could do....

Natasha:

(Blumm) "I feel flatter now than I did when I were 18".

Gerry:

(Blumm) "At 18 you think Wow... at 21 you know the score more...".

Kelly:

(Blumm) "At 18 I wouldn't have believed that I would be like I am now at 21... I get depressed a lot these days...".

Kelly:

(Crof) "I hope I don't feel like this when I'm 21, I have to be 18 first... that's going to be a night to remember, or not to remember...".

Becky:

(Crof) "I think I'll probably feel like this at 21... Kelly is more cheerful than me... I get depressed easy even now...".

Clare:

(Blumm) "Julie might go on and do something, but if she's like us, she probably won't, she'll just make the best of things...".

Gerry:

(Blumm) "If she were from a different class like, she'd do everything she wanted to, but she wouldn't be as happy... ordinary folk like us are more down to earth, we stick together and have a better laugh than they do".

Natasha:

(Blumm) "Ordinary folk have just got to cope with life haven't they... make the most of things, people like us don't get as much luck as some do, so you just make do and live for as long as you've got".

Kelly:

(Crof) "You don't really stop and think about why you are who you are and why you aren't someone else... when you're a kid you start off with dreams, then you get older and you realize that living from day to day is your life and that's it so you cope. That's what it's about, you just think other people are different.. but even the rich and famous people, they still have to cope from day to day don't they?".

Kelly:

(Blumm) "The girls in this have more chances than I do now... once I was going to be a policewoman, fat chance now hey? Never was really, I suppose. But it were nice dreaming. I'm more realistic now, I have to be. My life is like me Mam's is... I ain't gonna leave this estate, 'cos I'm like them, always was, and always will, be... given up trying to be owt else, cos I am what I am and I know me place I suppose".

Clare:

(Blumm) "What you've said here is pretty much what goes on in folks lives round here... it's no fucking wonder we hit the gear and ale is it?"

Natasha:

(Blumm) "I'm glad you didn't make it all high-falutin'... just tell it the way it is, no complicated long words and stuff... just we are what we are because this is how we live... we are what we are and we do what we do".

Gerry:

(Blumm) "It was good to see what you are doing... like I thought it might be dead boring when I saw how long it were, but it were alright to read like, cos' you wanted to know what happened to Julie and how she made out".

Jo:

(Blumm) "Like once we got this we could see what you were doing, like normally you don't read stuff about ordinary people like us... I suppose no-one's interested".

Charlotte:

(Crof) "I thought that this was good. I liked reading about it. You're right this could be some of us. I'm not really like Julie, but she could be one of my friends. Her life seems ordinary to me, like most teenager's lives today. I think Julie would be okay, but she would never really be very rich or anything. She would probably get married and have two children before to (sic) long. I liked reading the story" (Charlotte's written comments).

APPENDIX VI

Views from behind the bar

On the evenings that I visited the local 'pubs' with the young women I was very aware of the time that we were kept waiting at the bar. I decided, therefore, to return to all of the local 'pubs' we had visited so that I could interview the bar staff regarding their thoughts on young women drinking in 'pubs'. I made my visits in my professional capacity as a Community Drugs and Alcohol Problem Prevention Officer. I asked the bar staff if I could talk with them regarding young women in 'pubs'. (I explained that I was conducting a research project regarding young women drinking alcohol). All the bar staff I met agreed to talk to me. I tape-recorded my brief interviews with them.

Below are some of the responses that I received:

- "When you see a group of young women come into the 'pub' what are your initial reactions?"*
- Female staff: "They're nowt but trouble".
- Male staff: "They stir up the lads, they don't come in to drink like the lads, they want the lads attention... they unsettle things".
- Female Staff: "It depends whether they come in in ones and twos or whether there's a whole gang of them... if they are out for the night then they can become very noisy... it's to be avoided really..."
- Male manager: "They don't spend enough for my liking... and that's how it should be, I'm still not used to it, slips of lasses coming in and downing all sorts... I don't like to see women of any age drunk, it's not right, it's the same as women smoking in the street... I can't stand it meself, and I won't be far wrong when I say I speak for most men - oldens and the youngens".
- "Do you think you treat groups of young women differently from groups of young men?"*
- Male Staff: "Well, yes and no, they don't know what they want half of the time, it's often more work serving girls than lads, they tend to stick to their drinks....girls swop and choose more like..."
- Female staff: "They're too noisy they're worse than the boys ever know how to be, it seems worse somehow you know... when the girls start drinking and being loud and that... it's not ladylike is it...? Well, it never used to be anyway, and I don't think most think it is now".
- Male Manager: "I treat all my paying customers the same... everyone is entitled to the same respect... youngens sometimes need a talking to, but by and large you treat everyone the same".
- "What do you think of young women going to 'pubs' in*

- general?"*
- Male manager: "They're alright if they're out steady wi' a lad, or even just a group of lads and lassies, but not the girls on their own, cos' then you get a group of lads coming in and all hell let's loose"
- Female staff: "I prefer men's company anytime, that's why I'm here and not down knicker lacing see. I like to be with the men, not so bitchy as a bunch of girls... you know more where you are with them... but now women use pubs more don't they, they never used to like, it were men only like... the men prefer it that way... older women aren't so bad like, they know to sit down and behave and that, but younger girls they can be as common as 'owt, they don't care see... they think anything goes like".
- Male Manager: "Well it's always nice to see a pretty face isn't it, but women shouldn't interfere with tradition should they, pubs are for men really like aren't they, they have to take it or leave it..."
"So you think 'pubs' should be for men only, then?"
- Female staff: "Well, no, but you see it's different coping with the lads, they're noisy, but that's just lads, you expect them to be loud on a Saturday night and that, but it's the state the girls get into... the ladies on Friday Saturday nights, well there ain't any ladies been in there, sick and toilet paper everywhere..."
"The boys don't get sick?"
- Female staff: "Well sometimes, of course the lads get sick, but you expect that time to time don't you... but the girls you expect different from don't you... I have two girls at home, and I don't expect them to behave to the likes of what I see... it's not on is it?"
- Male staff "The lads come in for a beer or two most nights, the girls, they come in for a real fling, a night out of the tiles so to speak, always in groups, not often just one or two for a few drinks... it's so different now... but you'll never get the day when it's right for women to be hanging around on their own in pubs... the men just don't want it... you see no disrespect missy, but that's what they come here for, to get away from the women folk".

The brief responses that I have selected for inclusion in this appendix suggest that bar staff hold a range of inconsistent and contradictory views regarding young people drinking alcohol. In summary I suggest that these statements, reinforce the young women's assessments that they are often not welcome in local 'pubs'. I further suggest that most adults think that it is 'normal' and 'natural' for young men to want to drink to become drunk. However, adults do not think that it is 'normal' or 'natural' for young women to want to drink to become drunk.

APPENDIX VII

Alcopops

During the time that I was conducting my fieldwork it was apparent that a range of 'cocktail mixes' was becoming available on the market. Most of the new mixes available in off-licences did not appear to be marketed at any particular group. Furthermore, the mixes only appeared to be found in off-licences. These mixes were available in lurid colours, for example, greens, blues, oranges and yellows, or in a form which appeared to be very similar to a soft drink such as lemon and lime. The middle and older girls were very keen to try out these new drinks, but the young men thought that they were "namby pamby girls drinks".

Most of these new drinks are now known as alcopops. I contend that alcopops are drinks that the drinks industry have developed and marketed at young people. (The drinks industry represented by the Portman Group have denied that alcopops are aimed at young people). Originally the new alcopops were called names such as 'Hooper's Hooch (Alcoholic Lemon)', 'Alcola (Alcoholic Cola)' and 'MD 20/20' which was available in a variety of flavours: lemon and lime, kiwi and lemon and so forth. But over the last two years the names and marketing strategies of alcopops has changed dramatically.

In late 1995 the drinks industry agreed (under mounting pressure from health workers, campaigners and the anti-drinks lobby) to tighten up its rules on the marketing of so-called alcopops. This was because it was felt that names such as 'Mrs Puckers', 'Alcola', 'Hooch' and 'Two Dogs' actually helped to conceal the alcoholic strength of the drinks. On the 17th April 1996 an announcement was made by the Portman Group stating that the drinks industry had decided against banning terms such as lemonade and cola from alcoholic soft drinks. Instead, a voluntary code of practice was published by the drinks industry the day before which stated that 'such names should be used with utmost care'.

Since then alcopops with names like 'Snake Bite', 'Love Byte', 'Barker's Liquid Gold',

'Ravers', 'Shock', 'Piranha', 'Jammin' and 'Shark Bite' have all appeared on the market. I contend, therefore, that in place of the breweries original attempts to conceal the strength of their products, they now appear to be naming and advertising their products so that targeted audiences are fully aware that their products are strong, exciting, risky drinks that provide alternatives to traditional beers, ciders and spirits. Alcopops can no longer be accused of being 'namby pamby girls drinks'; they are often stronger than beer, lager and cider.

Pressure Groups such as Alcohol Concern have complained to the Portman Group that the above drinks have been marketed to appear to an under-18s culture. In 1996 Alcohol Concern submitted nineteen complaints about alcopops to the Portman Group. Only three of these complaints were upheld. The first was a complaint about 'Shott's Lemon Jag'. Alcohol Concern felt that the name of this drink suggested an association with violent, aggressive, dangerous and anti-social behaviour. The company (Whitbread) has since agreed to replace the name. The second was about 'Shott's Vanilla Heist'. It was felt that the name 'Heist' was unacceptable on the grounds that a heist is a violent, anti-social and illegal activity. Again Whitbread has agreed to replace the name. The third was that the cartoon characters should be removed from 'Hooch' because the characters appeal to the under-18s. Bass Brewers have since removed the cartoon character. However the complaint that 'Hooch' was not an appropriate name for a lemonade targeted at young people because it has a traditional meaning of an illicit strong drink was not upheld. For details of the full nineteen complaints see 'The Code Report' (Portman Group, 1996a). The recent HEA drinking trends survey (The Guardian, 17th January, 1997) questioned 1,543 people aged 11-18, and 840 aged 20-25. Sixty-three percent of the 15-16 year olds wrongly thought that alcopops were weaker than beer and lager. More than a third felt that they were the drink of choice for people their age.

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