UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF MEDICINE, HEALTH AND LIFE SCIENCES

School of Psychology

Discourses Surrounding the Use of Alcohol in Young People Aged 16 and Under

By

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ABSTRACT

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DISCOURSES SURROUNDING THE USE OF ALCOHOL AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16 AND UNDER

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Recent increases in rates of alcohol consumption amongst young people aged 16 and under have been a cause of concern for researchers and health professionals alike. Much of this concern has focused on the harm such drinking can cause; such as, for example, an increase in accidents, incidences of violent assault and rates of unwanted pregnancy. Alcohol education programmes, based on mainstream psychological research, have been developed in an attempt to reduce the level of harm but have met with limited success. An alternative theoretical and methodological approach to the phenomenon of underage drinking was therefore proposed.

Foucauldian discourse analysis, a qualitative methodology grounded in critical theory, was therefore used to analyse four different sets of data. These datasets were i) young people's talk around drinking (obtained through the use of focus groups), ii) educational leaflets targeted at young people, iii) a selection of educational sessions held in the classroom and iv) young people's own talk around alcohol education (again, obtained through the use of focus groups).

Young people's talk around drinking was found to comprise dominant discourses around pleasure and the enjoyment of risk, all underpinned by a fundamental need to be able to lose control. Both sets of educational data, on the other hand, comprised discourses around the essential "vulnerability" of young people, and the need for young people to maintain control through the adoption of a self-monitoring, self-regulating identity (the Foucauldian self). Young people's talk around education appeared to show they had assimilated and accepted these latter discourses. However, the relative failure of educational programmes, coupled with the strength of the 'pleasure' discourses expressed by many young people in their talk around drinking, suggests this apparent success may be illusory.

Educational programmes, rather than engaging in a covert programme of control, therefore need to acknowledge to a far greater degree the fundamental role alcohol use, particularly 'binge' drinking, plays in young people's lives. They need to find a way to connect with young people's experiences if they are to have any success in preventing some of the genuine harm that may arise as a result of such drinking.

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INTRODUCTION

Why study alcohol use in those aged 16 and under?: Some personal reflections

The purpose of this opening section will be to outline why I, personally, have chosen to study this topic, why I think it is important, and the particular perspectives I will bring to bear upon it. Like many qualitative, and indeed some quantitative, researchers I believe that virtually all research is shaped, to some degree, by the pre-conceptions, interests and opinions of those carrying out the research. This project is no exception. Outlining at the start the stance I initially take regarding this topic will enable the reader to place the research in its wider context, and leave them in a better position to be able to subsequently judge the quality of the analysis and arguments presented. Such openness and "transparency" is, I believe, to be encouraged in research: not only is it arguably a more ethical standpoint, it also facilitates more critical engagement with the research as both the researcher and the reader can evaluate and question the way in which the assumptions underlying the research have impacted on both the research process and its outcomes.

My personal interest in this topic stems largely from my background working as an assistant in a residential centre for drug addicts and alcoholics. In the course of this job I developed a personal rapport with many of the people who lived there and learnt much about how alcohol misuse can impact on people's lives, often with quite devastating, sometimes tragic, results. I also became very interested in the different approaches that existed towards treating alcoholism and the varying ways in which people with alcoholism were viewed; whether this be by society, by health professionals, or by those with alcoholism themselves. As a result of these experiences I became interested in Psychology and thus commenced my academic studies. Whilst simultaneously studying and working in the residential centre I began to reflect on the unusual status alcohol has in society. On the one hand, alcohol is seen as a force for good: it is a means by which people can celebrate events, socialise with friends and is clearly the driving force behind an expanding and profitable night-time economy. Yet, as my experiences appeared to show, alcohol also has a "dark side". Although most people are possibly unaware of the nature of full blown alcohol dependence, its (mis)use has, increasingly, been held responsible for a range of societal ills, most notably disorder on the streets and incidents of violence. More recently, particularly in the media, the focus has been on the problems associated with

so-called "binge" drinking, especially amongst young people and, in particular, those not yet old enough to legally drink in pubs and bars.

Prior to starting this project I had therefore developed a fairly ambivalent view of the nature of alcohol and its effects. Although I knew many people who used alcohol regularly, and enjoyed it immensely, I was also concerned about the possible effects the misuse of alcohol may have on the young, particularly in the long-term. However, I was unsure as to the veracity of the accounts I was reading in the media and wondered whether, as someone in their late thirties, I was simply buying into a moral panic targeted at young people. It is these concerns that prompted me to look further at this topic. I also chose to focus heavily on alcohol education simply because I knew little about how such education was structured, nor what its aims were, but I felt that, if there was indeed a major problem with alcohol use, education would be the most effective route for change.

In terms of my theoretical standpoint I have become increasingly interested in broadening the scope of Psychology and taking on board insights gleaned from sociological, anthropological, philosophical and cultural studies. All, I feel, have something useful to contribute and offer different perspectives that guard against insularity, and encourage a more critical stance towards the topics, subjects and approaches of "mainstream" psychology. I also favour the use of qualitative methodology in my research, particularly discourse analysis, and became attracted to the Foucauldian approach towards analysing discourse (the approach that will be used in this thesis). Further exposition surrounding my choice of method will be given in Chapters Two and Three. As a final word, the reader will note that most of this thesis is written in the third person. This is in accord with most scientific (and indeed academic) convention where the researcher/author is largely absent from the text, often in the assumption that they are neutral and objective in their approach. This, however, sits awkwardly with the approach I am advocating, which argues for greater transparency and openness regarding the researcher's involvement, influence and impact on the research. It is hoped that this opening section will therefore go some way towards addressing this issue and, to that end, there will also be an additional section at the end of the thesis that will reflect on the research as a whole, and will outline how, if at all, my opinions and feelings about the topic have changed. First, however, it will be useful to provide the reader with an outline of the main aims and objectives of this research.

Aims and objectives of the thesis

Throughout this thesis I will be taking an open yet critical approach to the topic of underage drinking. This open approach means that I will attempt to avoid pre-judging whether or not under-age drinking is necessarily a "good" or a "bad" thing. Like so many morally contentious issues, there is unlikely to be any definite black or white answers. Indeed, many different viewpoints will be heard throughout this thesis (including my own, as outlined in the previous section) and it will be left to the reader to make up their own mind once they have reviewed all the evidence presented. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide solutions to any "problems" associated with under-age drinking primarily because, as will be seen, what constitutes a problem is itself a highly contentious issue. One of the aims of this thesis, therefore, is to stimulate further debate on this topic and to demonstrate the complexity of the issues involved. Nevertheless, from the outset it is apparent that there are a number of viewpoints circulating in the research literature (and in the public arena) that take a definitive stance on the issue. This is why this thesis will also be critical in its approach, because these viewpoints have come to dominate education policy and research agendas in a way that has often led to them being seen as the "accepted" view on under-age drinking. This thesis does not necessarily oppose these viewpoints, but it does invite the reader to consider alternative ways of looking at the topic of under-age drinking and how the perceived "problems" associated with under-age drinking have been addressed. A useful starting point for this thesis, therefore, will be to outline what its main aims and objectives are.

As stated in the opening section, there have been concerns voiced recently about the increased prevalence of alcohol misuse amongst those not yet old enough to drink in pubs and bars. The first aim of this thesis was, therefore, to examine the demographics of drinking in this age group in order to ascertain its prevalence and establish how, and in what way, it has come to be seen as a "problem", particularly in terms of the potential harm such drinking is believed to cause.

A second aim of this thesis was to look at the most common way in which this issue has been tackled, namely through education, and to explore reasons as to why such an approach is apparently failing to achieve the goals it sets itself. A key focus here will be on a critical evaluation of the psychological theories underlying the philosophy of these programmes

The third aim of this thesis was then to argue for the adoption of an alternative theoretical approach grounded in social and cultural theory and aligned with an appropriate qualitative methodology, in this case Foucauldian discourse analysis. It will be argued that such an approach, to date unused in this field, has both the theoretical and methodological power to provide alternative and potentially more practically useful insights into the phenomenon of underage drinking.

A fourth aim of the study will be to carry out research that explores more fully the meanings underlying young people's drinking, meanings situated within the context of wider social, economic, historical and cultural practices. It will do so by focusing on three key areas: the meanings young people themselves ascribe to alcohol use, the meanings ascribed to such use by educationalists (both in the classroom and in the form of leaflets) which often incorporate more commonplace public health approaches to the topic, and the responses young people themselves make to the education they receive.

The final aim will be to assimilate and evaluate these findings, draw conclusions from the insights they provide, and provide an argument for the relative utility of Foucauldian discourse analysis as a theoretical and methodological framework through which to carry out relevant and stimulating psychological research.

CHAPTER 1: YOUNG PEOPLE AND DRINKING- A LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Multiple perspectives

In line with the goals outlined earlier the approach adopted in this thesis will be to "give voice" to a number of different perspectives on the topic of alcohol use amongst those aged 16 and under. The review of literature in the early part of this chapter will therefore approach the topic largely from a public health viewpoint. This is because most of the information on drinking amongst young people derives from such sources, sources which are heavily informed by psychological theories and research. The latter part of Chapter One, however, will be given over to the viewpoint of those working within the education field and will review what the educational literature has to say about the topic, most of which is in response to the public health information it receives. What is often missing from the research literature, however, is the perspective of the young people themselves. It was one of the aims of this thesis, therefore, to carry out a study that will provide scope for young people to provide their own voice on both the topic of alcohol use amongst their age group and on the education they receive, and to then sit this alongside the more commonplace public health and educational narratives presented in this chapter.

1.2 A literature review- introduction

Alcohol is one of the most popular and widely used drugs in Britain today and has increasingly become an integral part of British culture, its legal status and social acceptability helping to establish its use as central to the way we spend our leisure time. Though levels of consumption have risen steadily over the last few decades this increase has, in the main, not tended to be seen as problematic as the majority of people appear to use alcohol recreationally without any apparent adverse consequences. Nevertheless, the misuse of alcohol can, for a significant minority of individuals, sometimes lead to adverse physical, social and psychological consequences.

Heavy long-term use, for instance, can result in serious physical damage to almost every organ in the body, the liver and nervous system in particular. The psychological consequences of such use may also be profound and can include incidences of depression, anxiety and/or the development of various psychoses (Eastman, 1984). It is estimated that over one million people in Britain are drinking at

levels that place them at risk of these consequences and who could therefore be classified as alcohol-dependent (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). The majority of people, however, do not drink in this way and yet, nevertheless, their use of alcohol may still be problematic.

Of particular concern in this regard are the short-term effects of alcohol occurring directly as a result of intoxication. Temporary intoxication can lead to poor judgement, exaggerated emotions and uninhibited behaviour. As a result, alcohol use has frequently been linked to accidents, violence, suicide and the practice of unsafe sex (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). Excessive intoxication can even be fatal, with deaths occurring as a result of alcohol poisoning or choking on one's own vomit. Whilst serious, such consequences are by no means inevitable. In fact, many of these short-term consequences, and potentially the longer term ones, have often been attributed to alcohol use amongst just one age group, that of young people aged 18 to 30. This age group has therefore been the focus of attention by both researchers and policy makers alike in the last two decades. More recently, however, greater attention has been paid to drinking among the under 16s, arising as a result of research pinpointing some "worrying" trends in drinking amongst this age group and fuelled by a variety of media panics exploiting these trends.

It is therefore important to establish, initially, the extent to which concerns about drinking in this age group are justified, particularly in light of the fact that young people are one of the healthiest age groups overall in the population (Wright, 1999). An array of research, mostly survey-based, has attempted to do just this by focusing primarily on the drinking *behaviour* of young people.

1.3 Young people's drinking behaviour- patterns and trends

1.3.1 Definitions

Surveys have varied in how they have differentiated, and therefore categorised, young people and young adults. Some categorise young people as being those aged up to 16 from whence on they are considered young adults. Others categorise young people as being those aged up to 18 and consider them to be young adults thereafter. For the purposes of this review the former classification will be adopted and the categories used in other studies adapted accordingly.

More complex, and more controversial, are the different definitions used by researchers with regard to what constitutes "light" or "heavy" drinking. A particular

problem here concerns the cultural variations regarding such differences, such as for example between studies carried out in Europe and in the USA. Often such definitions are based on what are considered to be "safe" drinking limits by the governments of a particular country, but all tend to be related both to the frequency and the level of consumption of alcohol. For instance, studies in the UK carried out prior to 1995 define "safe" drinking as being the consumption of less than 21 units of alcohol for men and 14 units for women a week (one unit being equivalent to half a pint of normal strength beer). From 1995 onwards these guidelines changed to focus on daily drinking levels, taking greater account of both frequency and consumption. These guidelines (Department of Health, 1995) recommend that men drink no more than four units a day and women no more than three, and that they do this infrequently. Such guidelines are intended to apply directly to adults, yet many studies apply such guidelines in a similar fashion to young people.

A consequence of this has often been confusion surrounding what constitutes heavy drinking in young people and, in particular, what constitutes excessive "binge" drinking. This is a salient point as much of the short-term harm linked with alcohol may come from one-off episodes of drunkenness (Wright, 1999). American studies, for instance, often define binge drinking as involving the consumption of five units or more on a single occasion, whereas British studies tend to define it as involving the intake of eight units or more on a single occasion. However, these are general rules; many studies differ from these definitions with some going as high as 11 units or more on a specific occasion (Anderson, Plant and Plant, 1998). Empirical support for any definition is lacking (Murgraff, Parrott and Bennett, 1999) and so caution is therefore needed when interpreting the results of surveys, particularly with regard to the effect such variation has on claims for the prevalence of drinking amongst young people. Furthermore, care needs to be taken regarding the degree to which it is appropriate to apply adult guidelines to the drinking of young people.

1.3.2 Age at which drinking starts

Studies in the 1970s reported that young people most commonly take their first drink around the age of 15 or 16 (Aitken, 1978). Furthermore, such research has also found that the younger the person was at the time of the study, the lower was the age at which they had their first drink, indicating a trend towards younger drinking. Later studies endorse this trend, finding for instance that a majority of young people (79.5

per cent) had had their first proper drink, i.e. a glass rather than just a sip or a taste, by the age of 13 (Marsh, Dobbs and White, 1986). This is a level that has been maintained in the 1990s with 13 per cent of young people having had their first proper drink by the age of 10 (Balding, 2001), 20 per cent by the age of 11 (Goddard and Higgins, 2000) and the majority having done so by the age of 13 (Anderson, Plant and Plant, 1998). In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that the age of first drink may, for some young people, be as low as 7 (Hughes, MacKintosh, Hastings, Wheeler, Watson and Inglis, 1997). Overall, a trend towards younger drinking in the 1970s and 1980s appears to have now bottomed out as the age at which drinking starts appears to have stabilised in the last ten years.

1.3.3 Changing patterns with age

Prevalence of drinkers

Virtually all studies are unanimous in claiming that the number of young people who drink increases rapidly with age. This is a pattern that has changed little over the years. Studies throughout the last three decades have all found that, by the time they have reached 16, about 90 per cent of young people have had some of experience of alcohol (Aitken, 1978; Marsh *et al.*, 1986; Hughes *et al.*, 1997; Goddard and Higgins 2000). However, only a small proportion of these drink regularly, with the proportion of 11-15 year olds who never drink remaining stable over the last thirty years at around 40 per cent (Wright, 1999). The number of young people who drink regularly does itself increase with age, ranging from five per cent at age 11 to between 36 per cent (Sutherland and Shepherd, 2001) and 45 per cent (Goddard and Higgins, 2000) at age 16. In a similar vein, the number of young people who have drunk at least once in the previous week (which will also include occasional drinkers) also increases steeply with age, ranging from 15 per cent of 13 year olds to 44 per cent of 15 year olds (Matheson and Summerfield, 2000).

Frequency of drinking

Overall, the proportion of young people who drink at least once a week has risen in the past few years from 17 per cent of 11-15 year olds in 1994 to 21 per cent in 1999 (Alcohol Concern, 2000). Figures measuring drinking in the previous week (which will also include some occasional drinkers) have also shown an increase from 20 to 27 per cent among 11-15 year olds over the period 1988-1996.

These differences are apparent across all age groups and reflect the increases with age noted in the previous section. For instance, drinking at least once a week has risen from 20 per cent of 13 year olds in 1978 (Aitken, 1978) to 24 per cent of both twelve and thirteen year olds in 2000 (Balding 2001). Similarly, the number of 14 and 15 year olds who drink at least once a week has risen from 36 per cent in 1978 (Aitken, 1978) to 43 per cent in 2000 (Balding 2001). In fact, in this latter study it is noted that 17 per cent of males now drink on three or more occasions. There is therefore some cause for concern regarding this apparent increase in how often young people now drink.

Consumption

Not only do young people now drink more often, they are also drinking increasing amounts of alcohol overall. Surveys have shown there to be an increase in consumption per week from 0.8 units in 1988 to 1.6 units in 1996 and 1.8 units in 1998 (Alcohol Concern, 2000; Wright, 1999) among 11-15 year olds. A focus solely on those who drink regularly reveals an even greater increase. For this group, consumption has risen from 5.3 units a week in 1990 to 9.9 units in 1998 (Alcohol Concern, 2000). The number of those who consume 15 units or more a week has grown from one per cent in 1990 to four per cent in 1996 (Wright, 1999).

This increase in overall consumption is particularly noticeable in 15 year olds. Balding (2001) notes how consumption increases markedly with age with an average of 4.5 units a week consumed by 12 and 13 year olds increasing to an average of 8.5 units amongst 14 and 15 year olds. Twelve years ago, 15 year old drinkers drank an average of 4.35 units a week, this figure rising to 6.28 units when only regular weekly drinkers were included in the data (Bean, Wilkinson, Whynes and Giggs, 1988). In 1994 this average had risen to 8.8 units for males and 6.6 units for females and, by 1996, had increased to 12.9 units for males and eight units for females (Wright, 1999). The size of these numbers, and the scale of the upward trend among young people as they get older, reflects a level of increase in alcohol consumption that gives some cause for concern.

Excessive consumption in the form of "binge" drinking

Although definitions of binge drinking in terms of amount vary, there is a general consensus that such drinking involves the intake of a large amount of alcohol on any one occasion. With regard to young people, this is a particularly worrying form of

drinking as most of the short-term harm linked to alcohol use may occur as a result of such binge drinking (Wright, 1999). Furthermore, much research suggests that this style of drinking is on the increase in young people, with important implications for their health. For instance, 1000 young people under 15 were admitted to hospital in the year 2000 with suspected alcohol poisoning (Valios, 2001).

In 2000, 22 per cent of 12-15 year olds reported having been "very drunk" in the past year (Shiner and Newburn, 2001). In terms of frequency of such instances, 17 per cent of 15-16 year olds reported being drunk at least ten times in the past 12 months (Engels and Knibbe, 2000).

With regard to the actual amount drunk, 64 per cent of males and 58 per cent of females aged between 13 and 16 reported drinking above the government recommended weekly limits on a single occasion at least once in 1994 (Anderson *et al.*, 1998). Furthermore, 40 per cent of males and 32 per cent of females aged 13-16 also reported drinking 11 units or more on their last drinking occasion (Anderson and Plant, 1996) whereas only four per cent of 12 year olds did so (Hughes *et al.*, 1997).

Other studies show how the frequency of such drinking increases with age. Longitudinal research carried out by Measham (1996) showed that, from the ages of 14-16, the number of students drinking between 11 and 40 units on a single occasion rose from 22 to 31 per cent. The frequency of such binge drinking has also increased over time. For instance, in Wales the number of young people aged between 11-16 who got drunk on at least four occasions rose from 20 per cent of males and 13 per cent of females in 1986 to 26 per cent of males and 22 per cent of females in 1996.

Overall, the figures suggest that, though there is no increase in the number of young people who drink, and though the age at which they start drinking is not decreasing, young people are nevertheless drinking more alcohol more often. In particular, the degree of heavy drinking in just one session gives particular cause for concern. It should be stressed, however, that the proportion of heavy drinkers amongst young people is still small, albeit one that appears to be on the increase.

1.3.4 What young people drink

There have been significant changes in the types of drink preferred by young people over the last twenty years but this appears to be more a reflection of diversification in the drinks market rather than a change in young people's preferences. For instance, in the 1990s the drinks industry developed a new range of alcoholic flavoured drinks in

response to a perceived threat from the popularity of drugs (Hughes *et al.*, 1997). This led to a diversification of the drinks market and the introduction of alcopops, strong "designer" ciders and fruit flavoured wines. The result of this, in terms of what young people drink, is that their drinking repertoire has now widened considerably. In the case of alcopops in particular, it was thought that the introduction of these drinks would lead to earlier drinking or increased alcohol consumption. However, there is little evidence that this has happened (MacCall, 1998). Furthermore, beer, lager and cider have consistently remained the *preferred* drinks of young people. Fifty-seven per cent of 11-15 year olds in 1998 stated that they prefer to drink beer, lager and/or cider (Shiner and Newburn, 2001), with spirits the next most popular (14 per cent) followed by wine (12 per cent) and then alcopops (10 per cent). The figures for consumption, however, were a little different. Only 36.8 per cent of 11-16 year olds actually consumed beer or lager whilst as many as 46 per cent consumed alcopops (Sutherland and Willner, 1997). These figures reflect dramatic changes with age. The consumption of beer remains constant with age whereas the consumption of alcopops declines markedly from 62.9 per cent of 11 year olds to 37.7 per cent of 16 year olds. Spirits, conversely, are consumed more widely with age rising from 1.5 per cent of 11 year olds to 24.3 per cent of 16 year olds. These, on the whole, are more popular with women than men, being drunk by 28.4 per cent of 11-16 year old females and 18.5 per cent of males (Sutherland and Willner, 1998).

Generally, research suggests that the popularity of alcopops tends to peak between the ages of 13 and 17 (Wright, 1999; MacCall, 1998) before declining markedly. There is evidence to suggest, however, that the popularity of alcopops *per se* is in decline as the number of people claiming to have drunk alcopops in the past week fell from 14 to 7 per cent in 1997 (Shiner and Newburn, 2001). Instead, there appears to be a shift towards preferring white ciders such as Diamond White and strong bottled lagers (MacCall, 1998; Hughes *et al.*, 1997) the popularity of which peaks at the age of 13-14 years, therefore perhaps replacing alcopops in the drinking repertoire of young people. Such drinks are also strongly related to incidences of drunkenness (Shiner and Newburn, 2001) along with drinking in less controlled environments (Hughes *et al.*, 1997). Beer, lager and cider, however, remain the most popular drinks overall and throughout all age groups (Balding, 2001; MacCall, 1998) with cider popular amongst young women in particular (Wright, 1999).

1.3.5 Who young people drink with

Most young people's experience of drinking begins at home in the company of their parents, a trend that has changed little over the years. The majority of 10-14 year olds in 1978 drank with their parents. However, as they grew older, young people increasingly drank in the absence of their parents so that, by the age of 14, 29 per cent of the sample were drinking in the company of their friends instead (Aitken, 1978). Similar results were found by Goddard and Higgins (2000). Seventy per cent of the younger participants in their sample of 11-15 year olds drank with their parents but, by the age of 15, only 30 per cent did so. By this age, males appeared more likely to drink with other males and females with their partners. However, there was also a trend towards drinking more in mixed sex groups by both sexes.

Such trends may suggest a move by young people from supervised drinking to more unsupervised, independent drinking. In line with this trend is an increase in the amount young people drink (Shiner and Newburn, 2001). For example, Goddard and Higgins (2000) found that frequent drinkers were far more likely than infrequent drinkers to drink with friends. The number of heavy drinkers drinking with friends was also double that of light drinkers who were more likely to be drinking with parents (Anderson *et al.*, 1998).

1.3.6 Where young people drink

Young people usually begin to drink in the home but, as they get older, they also begin to drink in a variety of other locations. Such locations gradually usurp the home as the preferred location for drinking. For instance, Balding (2001) found that a significant proportion of young people increasingly move to drinking in the homes of friends (10 per cent of 12/13 year olds rising to 21 per cent of 14/15 year olds) or to drinking in outdoor locations such as parks or street corners (7 per cent of 12/13 year olds rising to 18 per cent of 14/15 year olds). By the age of 16, friends' houses and/or the open air are the preferred drinking locations for many young people (Pavis, Cunningham-Burley and Amos, 1998). A significant number of young people (as many as 20 per cent of 15 year olds) also appear to have moved to drinking in pubs or bars (Matheson and Summerfield, 1998). Young people's drinking therefore becomes increasingly eclectic with between 40-50 per cent of 16 year olds drinking at home, 20 per cent drinking outdoors, a similar proportion drinking at friend's homes, 10 per

cent drinking at pubs or bars and a similar proportion drinking at clubs (Goddard and Higgins, 2000; Balding, 2001).

Embedded in these statistics are some important differences with regard to the amount young people drink. For instance, in terms of frequency of drinking, only 13 per cent of those aged 11 who drank at home drank more than once a week compared to 24 per cent of unsupervised drinkers (Goddard and Higgins, 2000). These figures suggest that the move to drinking away from the home, where drinking may be supervised by parents, to more unsupervised drinking with friends is linked to a corresponding increase in the amount young people drink overall.

1.3.7 European comparisons

The concern expressed over young peoples' drinking in the UK perhaps needs to be placed in context as it may be that such drinking is a universal phenomenon rather than a problem specific to the UK. However, the research that has been carried out on this to date suggests that young people's drinking in the UK, whilst not unique, is amongst the most extreme in Europe.

For example, in 1999, 91 per cent of 15- 16 year olds reported drinking alcohol in the past twelve months, a figure higher than in any other European country (Valios, 2001). Furthermore, 69 per cent reported being drunk in the past year, well above the European average of 52 per cent. However, overall, young people in the UK actually consume less and drink less often than do young people in Mediterranean countries such as Spain and Italy (Engels and Knibbe, 2000). The problem appears to be that, when they do drink, they drink a lot more on any one single occasion. For example, 25 per cent of those in the 16 year-old age group reported being drunk on ten or more occasions in the past year compared to only four per cent of young Italians. It needs pointing out, though, that this figure is still lower than that of countries such as Denmark and Finland where there are similar levels of concern over the binge drinking habits of young people (Lintonen, Rimpela, Vikat and Rimpela, 2000).

In summary, though they consume less and drink less frequently, more young people in the UK drink, and more get drunk, than elsewhere in Europe. The *frequency* with which young people get drunk is also amongst the highest in Europe. Binge drinking therefore appears to be a problem specific to the UK and a handful of other Northwest European countries.

1.3.8 Regional variations within the UK

It is possible to establish several trends of note within the UK from the surveys studied. Firstly, frequency of drinking appears to be notably higher among young people in England and Wales than in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Seventeen per cent of 15-16 year olds in England and 15 per cent of those in Scotland reported having nine drinking occasions or more in the past thirty days compared to 10.5 per cent of those in Scotland and eight per cent in Northern Ireland (Miller and Plant, 2000). This is also reflected in rates of weekly drinking among 13 year olds which, in 1986, stood at 10 per cent for those in Scotland compared to 29 per cent in England (Marsh *et al.*, 1986). Though young people in Scotland may drink less often, when they do drink they drink more than young people in the rest of the UK.

Patterns within England also show certain trends. In 1989, frequency of drinking was higher in the Southwest, Yorkshire and Humberside (36 per cent of 9-16 year olds drank weekly) than in the West Midlands (28 per cent) and Inner London (27 per cent) (Wright, 1999). In 1991, drinking frequency amongst 14 and 15 year olds in the Northwest was found to be lower than in the rest of the UK (Wright, 1999). In 1999, 19 per cent of 11-15 year olds in the Northeast drank weekly compared to only 11 per cent in London (Goddard and Higgins, 2000). Compared to other regions of the UK, the frequency of drinking in London and perhaps the Northwest therefore appears to be markedly lower. Finally, frequency of drinking in non-metropolitan areas was, at 18 per cent, higher in 11-15 year olds than in metropolitan areas where the figure was 15 per cent (Goddard and Higgins, 2000).

1.3.9 Gender variations

Concern has arisen recently that the gap between the genders is decreasing and young women are now drinking as much as young men. In Aitken's (1978) study there were few significant differences between the sexes in terms of alcohol consumption among 10 to 14 year olds. The only difference of significance was that young males tended to start experimenting at an earlier age than females, a difference that has endured to the present day (Goddard and Higgins, 2000), with 20 per cent of boys trying alcohol by age ten compared to 10 per cent of girls. By the ages of 13 and 14, however, similar numbers of young men and women were consuming alcohol.

Sex differences in average consumption have, however, become apparent in later studies and have remained consistent. For example, in 1996 young men in

England drank, on average, 9.7 units a week compared to seven units for young females (Wright, 1999). The figures were much closer for Scotland where the average for young men was 11.9 units and, for young women, 10 units.

Heavy consumption, however, has continued to be the preserve of young men (Measham, 1996). For example, in 1996, twice as many young men as women among 11-15 year olds were reported to have drunk 15 units or more in the past week (Shiner and Newburn, 2001) in England. This difference was, however, not evident in Scotland and the overall numbers of young people drinking this amount remained very small. Such gender differences appear to remain into adulthood, with 12 per cent of young men and six per cent of young females aged 18 – 25 classified as heavy drinkers in 1996 (O.N.S., 1996).

Data on gender differences in the frequency of drinking are, by contrast, confusing and often inconsistent. On the one hand, big differences between young men and women were found by Marsh *et al.* (1986) with 52 per cent of 15 year old males and 37 per cent of females reporting drinking once a week, although this gap had closed considerably by the age of 17, with 61 per cent of males and 54 per cent of females respectively drinking once a week. Other studies around this time reported little difference in drinking frequency between the sexes (B.M.A., 1986) leading to a conclusion that young women's drinking habits were becoming increasingly similar to men's.

This proposed closure of the gender gap may, however, have been overstated as the gaps between the genders not only are, but perhaps always have been, a lot smaller than that claimed by Marsh *et al.* (1986). For instance, in 1996, 27 per cent of 11- 15 year old men in England reported drinking in the previous week compared to 26 per cent of females (O.N.S. 1996). Over the years, this represents an increase of three per cent among males since 1988 and nine per cent among females. Similar figures were found for Scottish teenagers, where weekly drinking among males aged 12-15 rose from 16 per cent to 24 per cent in the period 1988-1996 and females 12 per cent to 21 per cent in the same period. Only in Northern Ireland did large gender differences remain, with 33 per cent of young males drinking weekly in 1992 compared to 18 per cent of females (Wright, 1999). For England and Scotland at least, these figures have often been presented as evidence for a decreasing gender gap (Wright, 1999). Shiner and Newburn (2001), however, cast doubt on this interpretation. They argue that gender differences, albeit small in nature, tend to

fluctuate with the gap decreasing and increasing over the years. Data from Goddard and Higgins (2000) support this interpretation. They found that the gap between young men and women aged 11-15 who drank weekly decreased from four per cent in 1994 to just one per cent by 1996. However, by 1998, with the overall frequency of drinking falling, the gap increased to five per cent, higher than four years previously. Young females' drinking, for example, had fallen at a greater rate than males, falling from 26 per cent to 18 per cent, whereas for males it had fallen from 27 per cent to 23 per cent. By 1999, however, the rates for females had risen again to 20 per cent, whereas for males the rate had dropped further to 22 per cent. As a result the gap had once again decreased. Gender differences in drinking frequency are therefore apparent but fluctuating and small, with evidence for a shrinking gender gap remaining unclear.

1.4 Young people's knowledge about alcohol

Research on what young people know about alcohol has been surprisingly scant. It has received far less attention than has young people's drinking behaviour (Wright, 1999). However, from the little research that has been done, some interesting points arise. For example, it is apparent that young people know a fair bit about alcohol from quite an early age. Ten year olds, can, for example, identify alcohol by smell or from a photo and are able to recognise drunkenness in adults (Aitken, 1978). Later studies elaborate on these findings. For example Bagnall (1991, cited in Wright, 1999) found that, not only can young people identify alcohol, they are also clear about its legality and show high awareness of the harm it can cause. However, there is considerable confusion amongst young people over the strength of alcohol, particularly when it comes to the relative strength of different drinks. Sixty per cent of 12-13 year olds, for example, thought that a single whisky was stronger than a pint of beer (Bagnall, 1991, cited in Wright, 1999). A similar result (54 per cent) was found by Plant, Bagnall and Foster (1990) in their study of 14-15 year olds. Furthermore, over 23 per cent of the young people in Plant *et al.*'s study also thought that a glass of wine was stronger than a pint of cider. Of particular interest in this study was that the most inaccurate answers were given by heavy male drinkers and the most accurate by heavy female drinkers.

Levels of knowledge also appear to change little as young people get older (Black and Weare, 1989). Amongst 17-18 year olds, knowledge of the harm alcohol can do was very good although there were gaps in other areas of knowledge, such as the change in price over the years and relative mortality compared to other drugs

(consistently underestimated in the case of alcohol). However, as with younger people, there was considerable confusion over the relative strength of different drinks, particularly that of beer. This meant that young people underestimated the amount they could drink safely, especially in relation to drink-driving. Heavier drinkers were also more likely to feel their knowledge was adequate whereas it was actually no better or worse than that of other young people. More attention perhaps needs to be paid to young people's knowledge of alcohol strength, particularly in relation to their level of personal consumption.

1.5 Perceptions of, and attitudes towards, alcohol

Young people's attitudes towards, and perceptions of, alcohol appear to have changed little over the years. Up to the age of about ten, young people develop increasingly negative attitudes to alcohol and to drunkenness (Wright, 1999). From this age onwards, a more ambivalent set of attitudes emerges, in line with young people's burgeoning experimentation. Although drunkenness, and the imbibing of spirits, is strongly disapproved of up to the age of 14, a more favourable attitude towards the drinking of beer, lager and cider has developed. For instance, whereas 50 per cent of ten year olds believe drinking beer and cider is wrong, only 30 per cent of 14 year olds do so (Aitken, 1978). There is also an increasing development of positive attitudes towards the effects of alcohol (Hammer-Lloyd, 1989). As young people begin to experiment with alcohol they therefore hold conflicting views, believing it to be both wrong yet also a good thing to do, enjoyable and fun. The transition of such attitudes, however, appears to have been poorly researched and little is known about whether such attitudes are held today.

Attitudes towards gender differences also emerge from previous research, with 10 to 14 year olds of both sexes appearing to disapprove more of girls' drinking than of boys' (Aitken, 1978). Whether such differences are apparent now remains unclear, although there may be a shift towards less severe judgements regarding girls' drinking (Wright, 1999).

Young people's perceptions of those who drink, in line with the change in attitudes, also alters with age. Young people around the age of 10 or 11 tend to perceive themselves as relatively introverted (Aitken, 1978), similar to, but not as introverted as, non-drinkers (who were disapproved of as too introverted). They perceive people who are liked as "sociable" extroverts. Drinkers, however, are seen as

"rowdy" extroverts, rather than sociable, and therefore not liked. However, as young people get older, they perceive themselves as more extroverted and therefore less similar to the image of the non-drinker. The "Ideal Self" is therefore seen as increasingly extroverted and occasional drinkers, if not heavy drinkers, are now seen as desirable role models.

This ties in with young people's occasional experimentation with alcohol at this age and illustrates the change in attitudes toward alcohol, whereby it is seen as having specific social benefits. For example, Plant, Bagnall and Foster (1990) found that boys in their mid-teens in particular give their primary reason for drinking as one of gaining social confidence. In line with this, 11-15 year old drinkers sometimes develop more negative attitudes toward school and teachers than do non-drinkers and state that they drink as a way of escaping pressure and adult expectations (Turtle, Jones and Hickman 1997, cited in Wright 1999). Such young people generally had low expectations of themselves, at least in academic terms.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the more young people drank the more favourable their attitudes toward alcohol and drinkers became. As young people get older, the incidences of binge drinking increased. A greater tolerance of drunkenness therefore emerges from about the age of fourteen onwards with drunkenness perceived as being life enhancing and engaged in for reasons of sociability, relaxation, romance and as a way of escaping boredom (Pavis, Cunningham-Burley and Amos, 1997). Given such positive attitudes it is not surprising that young people sometimes deliberately plan to get drunk and get a "buzz". Binge drinking is therefore not perceived as being particularly risky with health consequences not seen as relevant. Young people tend to worry more about the adverse social and legal consequences that may ensue and deem the adverse short-term health consequences such as hangovers acceptable (Murgraff *et al.*, 1999). Many young people who engage in such drinking therefore do not consider themselves to be heavy drinkers. For instance, 91 per cent of females and 78 per cent of males class themselves as moderate or light drinkers despite drinking well above the recommended weekly limits in just one sitting (Murgraff *et al.*, 1999). In fact, young people perceive risky drinking as consisting of daily drinking, drinking alone or drinking when at home. They therefore perceive most adults as drinking at risky levels and themselves as not doing so.

1.6 Harm and risk

Having reviewed research on young people's drinking behaviour, and the limited data on what young people know and think about alcohol, attention now needs to turn to *why* alcohol use by young people is therefore a cause for concern; in particular, why this should be so in relation to the particular patterns of consumption evident in young people's drinking, "binge" drinking especially.

However, before doing this, it needs to be reiterated that most young people do drink in moderation and that the number who experience problems is small, albeit significant. Furthermore, the relationships between alcohol misuse and most of the harms discussed in the following section are complex. Although the effects of alcohol are sometimes direct, often they are not. The exact nature of the links between alcohol intake and, say, criminal activity or use of drugs, is unclear. It is therefore more appropriate to consider these as reflecting patterns of co-morbidity rather than any straightforward causal links (Shiner and Newburn, 2001). Nevertheless, there are associations, and so this section will now examine in more detail the harms associated with alcohol misuse in young people.

1.6.1 Physical effects

Most of the short-term physical harm young people suffer as a result of alcohol use arises as a result of their lack of physical maturity and inexperience with alcohol. The recommended government limits with regard to daily intake are frequently surpassed by a significant number of young people, amounts that would place a fully grown adult at risk (Miller and Plant, 2000). These limits, however, lack relevance to young people who, because of their developmental stage, may be even more at risk. Young people's smaller weight and build means their blood alcohol levels are higher per intake of alcohol than they would be for adults (Alcohol Concern, 2001a; Shiner and Newburn, 2001). Different metabolic rates to those of adults mean that large amounts of alcohol are not broken down as efficiently or as quickly as they are in adults (Shiner and Newburn, 2001). As a result young people become intoxicated far more quickly than adults; i.e., their tolerance is far lower. The amount needed for overdose is therefore far less than for adults and so young people may have fits or slip into alcohol induced coma at far lower blood alcohol levels than do adults (Alcohol Concern, 2001a; Wright, 1999). In addition, young people are also at increased risk of hypoglycaemia, hypothermia and respiratory problems (Alcohol Concern, 2001a).

Wedded to these physiological differences is the fact that young people are relatively inexperienced with alcohol and may lack the skills needed to monitor their drinking. Furthermore, the contexts in which young people drink, most commonly outdoors, means there is little supervision over the amount they drink and, furthermore, the haphazard nature of such drinking means they have no real way of knowing, or keeping track of, the amount they drink (Alcohol Concern, 2001; Shiner and Newburn, 2001).

Records of hospital admissions arising as a result of alcohol misuse by young people are, unfortunately, rare. Nevertheless, the Royal Liverpool Hospital released figures in 1996 suggesting that 200 young people aged between 9 and 16 were admitted in that year for suspected alcohol poisoning (Robson, 1998; Alcohol Concern, 2001a). Alcohol related hospital admissions for young people more generally were estimated to be about 1000 per year amongst the under 15s in the 1980s (Alcohol Concern, 2001a; Valios, 2001). Thankfully, deaths arising as a direct result of alcohol misuse are rare amongst young people. The most recent figures suggested there were eleven such deaths in 1995, down on previous years (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). Overall, it appears that most young people avoid excessive alcohol related harm though clearly it is a problem for a significant minority.

More commonly, young people are afflicted with minor physical discomforts such as a hangover. The instances of these increase significantly with age, for example, 50 per cent of 15 year olds reported falling over at least once as a result of being drunk in the previous year, compared to 33 per cent of 14 year olds (Marsh *et al.*, 1986). Other effects of alcohol that were reported in this study include amnesia (50 per cent of 14-15 year olds reported experiencing this in the previous year) or just simply being too ill to go out the next day (which 9-17 per cent of all 13-14 year olds reported as experiencing in the previous year). Although less severe, these effects still give cause for concern as they may affect school performance, relationships and, if persistent, such drinking can cause more serious long-term physical problems later on in life.

The long-term effects of the way young people drink are, however, a source of much debate. Approximately 40000 people die each year as a direct or indirect result of alcohol misuse (Murgraff *et al.*, 1997). Those dying directly as a result of alcohol misuse are found to be suffering from a range of diseases of which liver cirrhosis is perhaps the most well known. In addition to this, however, are deaths from heart

disease, pancreatitis, gastritis and also cancer where three per cent of all deaths are directly attributable to alcohol misuse (Mugraff *et al.*, 1997; Shiner and Newburn, 2001). Such diseases are often a result of prolonged and excessive alcohol intake. Worryingly, however, the death rates amongst younger people aged 25-44 have doubled in the period 1984-1994 and this tends to correspond with an increase in binge drinking amongst young people during this period (Shiner and Newburn, 2001).

Such drinking may be a particular problem for women in the long-term (Wright, 1999) as their lower body weight means they are less able to metabolise large amounts of alcohol and, indeed, rates of liver cirrhosis amongst young women appear to have increased rapidly in recent years. Generally, however, rates of binge drinking amongst young people are poor predictors of later heavy drinking and mortality amongst young adults. Nevertheless, there is some evidence to suggest that a significant number of young people do continue to drink heavily into adulthood. For example, Ghodsian and Power (1987) found that 50 per cent of those who drank heavily at age 18 still did so at age 32. Overall, then, most young people experience a range of mild discomforts to do with alcohol excess. A significant minority, however, experience more serious short- term problems and, for all drinkers, there is a risk of adverse long-term damage if patterns of binge drinking persist into adulthood.

1.6.2 Accidents and injury

Often of more concern when it comes to the drinking behaviour of young people are the indirect harms that arise as a result of excessive alcohol intake. Intoxication impairs physical and motor coordination and affects both judgement and decision-making skills deleteriously. As a result, young people who are intoxicated are at greater risk of accidents and subsequent injury, both to themselves and others. The increased risk of accidents as a result of intoxication is therefore of great concern, particularly in the case of young people who drive, where the risk of having an accident is increased five-fold at the legal limit of 80mg/100ml of blood (Murgraff *et al.*, 1997). In fact, drinking and driving is the leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds (Snow and Cunningham, 1985, cited in Shiner and Newburn, 2001) either as drivers, passengers or pedestrians. For example, 20 per cent of car driver fatalities in 1993 who were over the legal limit were aged 16-19 (Wright, 1999).

Alcohol is also thought to be linked to falls, drownings, deaths from burns and head injuries (Wright, 1999; Shiner and Newburn, 2001) although no exact figures

exist for young people. Overall, however, alcohol is believed to be a factor in 20-30 per cent of all accidents that occur nationally (Wright 1999).

1.6.3 Violence and crime

The relationship between alcohol use and criminal activity is a complex one. For some offences alcohol is obviously a direct causal factor; e.g., drink-driving or being drunk and disorderly. Arrests for drunkenness peaked in 1989 at 93000 and have been in decline ever since, mainly as a result of changes in policing rather than a decline in drunkenness *per se* (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). Convictions for drunkenness peak at 18 so young people are heavily represented in this particular group of offenders.

The relationship between alcohol and other forms of criminal activity are, however, less obvious. Alcohol is certainly associated with many crimes but whether or not it has a causal role remains a matter for debate. In terms of overall offending, alcohol consumption is strongly linked to crime rates. For instance, one study of young offenders found that, on average, these offenders drank 58 units of alcohol a week, well above the average rates of consumption for young people generally (McMurran and Hollin, 1989). Alcohol use has also been similarly linked to persistent offending. Newcombe, Measham and Parker (1995), for example, found there to be a significant correlation between the number of deviant acts committed in the previous year and the frequency and amount of alcohol consumed. Twenty-five per cent of their sample of 14-15 year old offenders were classed as frequent drinkers compared to seven per cent of non-offenders.

Of most concern, however, appears to be the link between alcohol and violent crime. The 1996 British Crime Survey concluded that 40 per cent of violent crimes involve alcohol, including 45 per cent of violence by acquaintances and 32 per cent of domestic violence. There are also 125000 facial injuries sustained each year as a result of violent assault (Alcohol Concern, 2001a) and alcohol is thought to be a factor in 22 per cent of these and in 43 per cent of the more serious facial injuries (Shiner and Newburn, 2001). Overall, 13000 such violent incidents take place a week in, or near, licensed premises (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). Young people aged 15-25 are the group who suffer more assaults than any other age group and the highest number of alcohol related assaults. They are also more likely to be both the perpetrators and the victims of such assaults.

Questions have been raised, however, with regard to whether alcohol intake causes violent crime and, if it does, whether such a relationship with alcohol holds for other forms of offending. Ferguson, Lynskey and Horwood (1996), for instance, found that 15-16 year olds who were heavy or frequent drinkers were more likely to commit both violent and property crimes. Further analysis of their data revealed that alcohol intake was, however, not causally related to property crimes. Instead, both alcohol consumption and property crime could both be attributed to a variety of underlying "risk" factors. These include family substance use, social disadvantage, individual factors (such as IQ or childhood conduct problems) and an affiliation with delinquent peers. This complex set of associations has led Farrington (1996) to conclude that alcohol use may be both an antecedent to offending and a consequence of it.

With regard to violent crime, Ferguson *et al.* (1995) found that such underlying factors exist but, when these are controlled for, a small but significant causal relationship between alcohol consumption and violent crime is found. The direction of this causal relationship is not totally clear but evidence supports the notion that pre-existing aggressive behaviour may lead to heavy drinking, thus exacerbating the aggression (Wright, 1999). Endorsing such a claim, Rossow, Pape and Wichstrom (1999) suggest that the social environment in which drinking takes place is therefore of great importance. The risk of pre-existing aggression being expressed is increased in response to situations of frustration or those involving provocation. The frustration and provocation are themselves felt more keenly as a result of the cognitive and emotional effects of alcohol. Having a "wet" social environment may therefore be a strong mediator of the relationship between drinking and violence. Another strong mediator may also be the tendency to partake in problem behaviours *per se*, that is to say, to live a "deviant" lifestyle and mix with "delinquent" peers. However, more research is clearly needed to clarify the nature of these links as these may help to explain, at least in part, why those involved in violent offending are predominantly male (over 80 per cent of young offenders).

Generally, then, alcohol has a direct causal role in some offences but a far less direct role in others though there may be such a role with regard to violent crimes. It is perhaps more useful to think of the relationship between alcohol intake and crime as therefore complex and involving a series of underlying "risk" factors which combine in many different ways depending on individual circumstances.

1.6.4 Sex

As with crime, the links between alcohol and sex (risky sex in particular) are complex. Risky sex amongst young people can be defined in many different ways, such as having sex under 16 or with multiple partners, but is most commonly defined as sex without the use of contraception. The consequences of risky sex can include the contraction of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhoea. Also of concern, particularly for young women, is the risk of teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy rates have been particularly high in the UK in recent years, with 7400 births to girls under 16 occurring in 1999, though these rates are now falling (Alcohol Concern, 2000). The median age of first sex is now 16 with 26 per cent of females and 30 per cent of males aged 16-19 reporting that they had sex under this age (Alcohol Concern, 2000).

The role alcohol plays in having risky sex, however, remains a little ambiguous. It is certainly clear that both drinking and having sex are common activities amongst young people and that the two are often combined, notably when having sex for the first time. For instance, 40 per cent of 13-14 year olds report being drunk when first having sex (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). Such sex is often risky, with 22 per cent of females and 18 per cent of males reporting using no contraception when they first had sex. The use of alcohol prior to sex appears to continue into adulthood with 82 per cent of 16-30 year olds reporting having had a drink prior to sex (Bagnall, 1991). Such sex continues to be risky as only 13 per cent of 16-20 year olds who have been drinking used contraception compared to 75 per cent of those who have not been drinking (Traeen and Kvalem, 1996). Heavier drinkers in particular were found to be even more likely to have unsafe sex than those who were light or moderate drinkers (Murgraff *et al.*, 1997). Those who misused alcohol were, depending on how much they drank, 6 - 23 times more likely to have multiple partners, unprotected sex and have sex at an early age than those who drank little or nothing at all (Shiner and Newburn, 2001).

Reasons for this may be that alcohol affects judgements of risk and perhaps also provides an excuse for behaviour that might not otherwise be acceptable. The association therefore appears to be clear although not all research has found such unequivocal results. For example, Plant, Plant and Morgan-Thomas (1990) found no association between levels of alcohol and condom use. Nevertheless, the evidence in favour of an association is strong but cannot be assumed to be simply a causal one; it

may be far more complex than that. For instance, Hirst (1994) found that, among 15-16 year olds, alcohol use and sex were both seen as important aspects of socialising. However, the use of alcohol was only one factor that influenced the decision whether or not to have sex. Also important were such factors as available time, attractiveness of partner and degree of privacy. For many young people, alcohol may be important in functional terms in that it acts as a social disinhibitor. Consequently, it is often used by young people in the context of casual sex encounters (Scott, 1992, cited in Donovan and McEwan, 1995) and less by those already in relationships. Such findings are endorsed by experimental studies where young adults with a high expectancy of sexual pleasure drank more in personal-intimate contexts than did those who had no such expectations (O'Hare, 1998). This may explain why some studies found no association between alcohol and risky sex, as the participants involved may have been in more monogamous relationships and thus drank little prior to sex. Furthermore, they may perceive the sex they have as low-risk, irrespective of whether or not contraception is used, on the basis that they know their partner is "safe".

The use of alcohol does not therefore cause risky sex but is instead bound up in the expectancies and meanings placed on drinking by young people and the contexts in which these are situated. Donovan and McEwan (1995) point out that much of the ambiguity in research findings stems from the fact that the contexts and meanings of sex are ignored. Young people combine alcohol and sex in a variety of ways and the meanings surrounding their use may vary according to, for instance, their sexuality. The complexity of the links between alcohol use and risky sex are therefore such that no causal links can be established. The next section will look at how education has been used as a means of attempting to ameliorate the harms associated with drinking in the 11-16 age group.

1.7 Responses to the harms associated with drinking- educational interventions

1.7.1 Aims and philosophy

Schools are a popular arena for intervention as they provide easy access to large numbers of young people in one go, and a useful curriculum framework within which alcohol education can be delivered. Since the Second World War there has been a shift in attitude towards health education in schools from a philosophy of disease prevention to one of health maintenance (Lewis, 1993). This has been accompanied

by a governmental approach that, it could be argued, has become increasingly interventionist, with the government viewing the health of young people as crucial to the state of the country and important in fulfilling society's needs economically, socially and morally (Lewis, 1993). This is especially true for alcohol, where the publication of the government document The Health of the Nation in 1992 (and reflected again more recently in the Government's National Alcohol Strategy, 2004) pinpointed the health of young people, and the reduction of alcohol-related harm, as important areas to target in future years. Important pieces of legislation such as the Grant for Education Support and Training for Preventive Health Education Scheme (Lewis, 1993) have all helped stimulate health education and training and have aimed to establish a sense of purpose in health education through its establishment in the curriculum. These changes in legislation, and the earlier implementation of the National Curriculum in schools in 1988, have resulted in major changes occurring in the status, philosophy and aims of health education in the last decade or so.

Today, young people have a great deal of experience of alcohol education, with approximately 90 per cent of young people reporting having had lessons on alcohol although these were often part of a wider drugs based programme (Orme and Starkey, 1999). However, in 1998, only 66 per cent of young people actually remember having had these lessons and this figure drops to 56 per cent in 1999 (Goddard and Higgins, 2000). This seems unlikely to reflect a drop in the number of lessons but instead may indicate a decline in the impact of, or interest in, such education. The way alcohol education is therefore taught has recently come under the microscope, particularly as questions have been raised regarding its effectiveness (though it is believed to have some effect on knowledge and behaviour as will be seen later). In part, this may be due to a lack of consensus surrounding the aims of alcohol education, a lack of properly evaluated interventions (particularly longitudinal ones) and perhaps also a lack of resources for both teaching and evaluation.

Approaches based on an abstinence message, for instance, have largely been ineffective in reducing alcohol, in part because such a message is at odds with the culture in which young people live (B.M.A., 1986). Instead, a philosophy of harm reduction or minimisation has increased in popularity and is now considered the most appropriate way of delivering alcohol education to young people (Anderson *et al.*, 1998; Haydock, 1998). Such an approach views drinking as a "normal" pastime for young people and one that they will almost inevitably engage in. The emphasis

therefore is on dealing not so much with the use of alcohol per se but its misuse. The difficulty for those designing such education has therefore been one of how to define what constitutes "safe" and "responsible" drinking (B.M.A., 1986). Frequently, the health and safety risks of misuse are focused upon (Haydock, 1998) and so one aim of alcohol education is to reduce this risk; e.g., by delaying the onset of unsupervised drinking. The outcomes of alcohol education, thought to predict the degree to which harm will be minimised, are often taken to be an increase in knowledge and attitudes, an improvement in personal qualities such as assertiveness and self-esteem and, ideally, a decrease in actual alcohol consumption.

It has also been recommended that the difference between alcohol and illicit drugs be flagged up in classroom education (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). Confused messages are often given to young people when alcohol is subsumed in a more general drugs education. Alcohol's legality, social acceptability and differing role in our culture may mean that anti-drug messages are not relevant or appropriate to alcohol, nor are the problems of alcohol use taken so seriously when they disappear in a morass of drug education. Therefore, there needs to be a greater focus on alcohol as a drug in its own right making it far more visible, along with innovative approaches to teaching (Orme and Starkey, 1999). Furthermore, the strong link with unsafe sex (discussed earlier) suggests that alcohol and sex education can be usefully combined together where appropriate.

Those who develop alcohol programmes are therefore required to take into account several factors. These include external factors mentioned previously such as the demographic make-up of the community; e.g., young people's socio-economic background. Perhaps of equal importance, however, is the need to take young people's own views into account, views acquired in a world where alcohol is available and its use both widespread and normal. Too often, it is claimed, alcohol education has been based on the assumption that adults are teaching young people what they think young people *ought* or need to know, not what they *want* to know or indeed already do know (Wright, 1999). It is therefore important to respond to the "felt need" of young people rather than the normatively defined need constructed by adults (Orme and Starkey, 1999). The emphasis should therefore be on designing alcohol education on the basis of where young people themselves are. In other words, this means finding out what young people already know, believe, think and have already experienced, using this as the baseline and then proceeding from there. An example of how to do

this is to use a "draw-and-write" technique to elicit young people's perceptions of risk (Weare, 2000). Such an approach incorporates young people's real-life experiences into alcohol education, making it more appropriate and relevant to their needs.

1.7.2 Content: Information based approaches

Alcohol education has, traditionally, consisted of a largely informational approach and to a degree this is still true today. For example, 50 per cent of the content of drug programmes in America focuses on factual information about drugs such as prevalence of use, consequences of overdosing, etc, (Hansen and McNeal, 1999). Whilst the same can not necessarily be said of Britain, it does seem likely that there would be a similar amount of information based content here. Furthermore, 80 per cent of British children, apart from those who drink heavily (and whose reasons for drinking may be different from the norm), say they actually want more information, particularly more *detail* and clear facts (Orme and Starkey, 1999). However, such approaches on their own have largely been ineffective in reducing alcohol related harm (O' Hare, 1998) and there is a move now towards developing young people's social and cognitive skills (as will be seen in following sections). This, however, does not mean there is no role for imparting information and in fact information is essential if young people are to be encouraged to make independent and healthy choices regarding how they use alcohol (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). In other words, there is little point in learning skills if young people have no information on which to base those skills. Information is therefore seen as an essential component of alcohol education, one that backs up other skills young people are taught. School would also appear to be an effective arena in which to impart such information, as 97 per cent of young people say they obtained information about alcohol and drugs from school as opposed to 78 per cent from the television, 62 per cent from magazines and 54 per cent from parents and from friends (Hansen and McNeal, 1999). If the information is accurate then the dangers of receiving misinformation from other sources are cancelled out reducing the risk of ignorance causing harm.

So what information should young people therefore be given? Eighty-seven per cent of young people in Britain report being given information on the effects, risk and consequences of drinking and these three aspects of drinking are felt by many to be the most important ones to concentrate on. For instance, it is suggested that young

people should be told about the effects of drinking in a way that avoids undue negativity (Aitken, 1978). That is to say, rather than just state that drinking "gives you a hangover and makes you sick", it should also be pointed out that drinking "can make you feel good and help you interact with people". To avoid some of the negative effects of drinking arising from inexperience young people should also be given more information on the potency of drinks, particularly when these drinks are mixed with each other (Black and Weare, 1989). Young people should also be informed of the consequences of drinking, particularly of drinking too much. These consequences can be physical, mental, can be anti-social (such as becoming violent) and may involve the law (Aitken, 1978). The risks involved with drinking, arising from a combination of physical immaturity, inexperience, and drinking in unsupervised venues should therefore form a central part of the information young people receive. In particular, young people's behaviour needs to be situated in context. The contexts young people often drink in need to be seen as risks in their own right, rather than stressing drinking itself as risky *per se* (Pavis and Cunningham-Burley, 1999). For instance, the dangers of drunkenness on or near places such as railway lines, potential exploitation and abuse by strangers, the potential for unsafe sex and the imbibing of mixed drinks whose combined strength is unknown, may all be consequences of drinking in outdoor unsupervised environments. Stressing such risks may help to keep young people safe without "blaming" alcohol or the young people themselves. Preaching moderation is also unlikely to work successfully as young people may have different understandings of what "moderation" means and, even if they did not, would have difficulty drinking this way in a context where drinking to excess is the goal. Further, monitoring of intake is practically impossible due to the mixing of drinks and consumption of non-standard measures. Accepting that young people drink this way and working to keep them safe within such a context would seem therefore to be the best approach. In addition, it has been suggested that some discussion of the effects of advertising would be useful. This would raise young people's awareness of how such external pressures operate, including how these both reflect, and are part of, the wider culture within which young people live (Black and Weare, 1989).

1.7.3 Content: Targeting attitudes and beliefs

Exploration of young people's beliefs about alcohol use, and their attitudes towards it, is considered desirable if young people are to make independent, healthy choices

regarding their subsequent use of alcohol (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). Central to this is often a concern with how young people perceive and define "risk" in relation to alcohol use (Wright, 1999). For example, McWhirter and Weston (1994) found young people's general perceptions of risk to be very complex and that, at the age of 11, notions of health were rarely referred to. Instead, risk was seen as short-term and often incorporated an element of excitement. Such perceptions can be seen as examples of the different "rationality" young people construct in relation to alcohol use. Perceptions of risky unhealthy behaviours are likely to be affected by the social and situational contexts in which people live and this includes their position in the life-course; i.e., their particular age group. For young people, this rationality constructs alcohol use as life-enhancing and transient and is related to the concerns young people have of that age with gaining peer acceptance and forming relationships with the opposite sex (Backett and Davison, 1992). As such, alcohol use is often not perceived by young people as "risky" at all (Denscombe and Drucquer, 2000). It is therefore important, firstly, to find out what young people believe matters to them regarding alcohol use such as, for example, the confidence alcohol gives them when "pulling" members of the opposite sex in social situations (Pavis *et al.*, 1997). This is a point that has often been overlooked by many researchers who have taken the line that young people's beliefs are in some way distorted and mistaken such as, for example, the belief that alcohol can help interaction in social situations (O'Hare, 1998). It is perhaps less the case that there are absolute correct beliefs that young people have "got wrong" but more that young people simply construct a different rationale for their behaviour that makes sense given the social contexts in which they live. So, given the positive way alcohol use is perceived, a considerable challenge lies in trying to teach young people about the risks involved in drinking. The difficulty lies in trying to change collective attitudes and expectations surrounding alcohol use, particularly young people's perceptions of the social norms governing drinking behaviour when such behaviour is perceived as risky by adults but not by young people (Wright, 1999). One possible approach is, via interactive discussion, to help young people collectively explore the inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in such social norms (such norm-setting is popular in USA programmes according to Hansen and McNeal, 1999) and the possible consequences that arise from actual behaviour *via* the use of role-play (Wright, 1999).

Alternatively, there could be a shift in emphasis away from alcohol use towards changing attitudes regarding the appeal of non- or low alcoholic drinks and the social acceptability of non-drinkers. A growth in the market for alcohol-free alternatives and an identified shift in public attitudes more generally has led some researchers to suggest that alcohol-free drinks should be presented as acceptable alternatives to young people. This may be successful if such drinks are marketed according to the images young people find attractive and are also pleasant tasting (McLaughlin, 1989). It may be, however, that such drinks are popular as a result of shifts in attitudes towards drink driving and hence have become socially acceptable alternatives. For younger people, who do not yet drive, changing attitudes will be difficult as the positive reasons for drinking given by young people in previous sections may still prevail, particularly in real-life situations. Focusing on changing attitudes towards non-drinkers in terms of greater tolerance (if not social acceptability) may be another useful approach (Aitken, 1978; Wright, 1999). To a degree, attitudes may already be changing with young people suggesting the decision not to drink is a matter of individual choice and that young people *per se* should not be under pressure to drink (McLaughlin, 1989). In particular, young people could be encouraged to challenge the stereotypical misconceptions of non-drinkers as introverted and unpopular (as found in Aitken's 1978 study) and to question the desirability of displays of extroverted behaviour seen by young people to be popular and associated with being drunk (Aitken, 1978). McLaughlin (1989) therefore suggests that social values supporting the choice not to drink should be encouraged, promoted and sustained. However, this apparent shift in attitudes found by McLaughlin may be over-stated as the expression of such views may be more an espousing of public discourses surrounding freedom of choice, a point that will be returned to later. In different contexts, young people will often convey very negative attitudes towards non-drinkers (Giles, 1999). Any attitudes expressed therefore appear to be contradictory and ambivalent. Furthermore, in actual drinking contexts, with their own collective norms and practices, attitudes expressed may be radically different from those expressed in interviews or questionnaires. Nevertheless, it may still be useful to explore such attitudes collectively but the degree to which they can be changed, particularly in the long-term, remains a moot point. It may be possible to change attitudes, or at least raise awareness of the issues, if teachers use an "experimental" approach that incorporates openness to many different techniques in

order to see which are most effective (Anderson *et al.*,1998). And, of course, the messages conveyed have to be relevant and acceptable to the parents of the pupils (Anderson *et al.*, 1998).

Other researchers are more sceptical regarding attitude change. Iannotti, Bush and Weinfurt (1996) found that attitudes toward alcohol use are a product, not a determinant, of alcohol use and attempts to change them will therefore be largely ineffective. However they remain optimistic, suggesting that healthy attitudes can be instilled at an early age before alcohol use begins. This may have a tangible effect on subsequent drinking behaviour, and the long-term attitudes that then develop as a result of this may be less in favour of excessive drinking.

Given the overall discrepancy between young people's and teachers' perceptions of risk regarding alcohol use, it is not surprising that young people often perceive alcohol education itself as largely consisting of adult disapproval of their behaviour (Wright, 1999). Few researchers have taken the time to explore young people's perception of alcohol education in detail, particularly in terms of its varying content and style, and this would perhaps provide a useful starting point for future interventions concerned with developing an approach that is effective.

1.7.4 Content: Skills based approaches

Approaches such as these have a variety of aims but their principal aim is to enable young people to keep themselves safe and free from harm when drinking. In essence, they accept young people will drink but strive to teach young people to learn the skills they need to drink safely and to facilitate the transition towards more adult styles of drinking (Pavis *et al.*, 1997). On a more general level, they may also aid young people's personal and social development. The emphasis is therefore firmly on harm minimisation and safety, and helping young people develop cognitive skills that enable them to use the information they are taught in order to keep themselves free from harm (Wright, 1999).

Many of these skills are of a broad, personal nature (affective skills) whereas others are more specifically geared to coping with drinking situations (social influence skills). For instance, in terms of affective "life" skills, young people may usefully be taught ways of improving their self-esteem, self-confidence and developing a sense of self-empowerment that leads to a growth in personal initiative and motivation to succeed. The rationale behind this is that young people with low

self-esteem, poor self-efficacy and little ambition are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviours. These skills are therefore of more importance than any others (Lynagh, Schofield and Swanson-Fisher, 1997). In conjunction with these skills lies a focus on developing and sustaining healthy relationships with others; i.e., on developing emotional and social literacy (Weare, 2000). Young people, as a result, will be happier, better integrated into society and better motivated to succeed. However, the emphasis given by schools on affective skills has, at least in America, been fairly limited (Hansen and McNeal, 1999). In fact, the development of self-esteem and more generic social skills appears to be actively avoided when it comes to alcohol education. Furthermore, the teaching of affective skills has come under criticism for its underlying assumption that there is something wrong with young people that needs to be "treated", that young people are in some way inadequate and/or their skills inept (May, 1993). Far more emphasis on the "normality" of drinking is perhaps needed, and a greater focus on the social and cultural contexts in which drinking takes place (as opposed to the individualistic focus of much affective skills teaching).

A different approach is perhaps needed for those young people who are experiencing problems associated with their drinking. Whether drinking is a cause or consequence of problems is often difficult to ascertain (Valios, 2001) but it may be necessary to try and establish causality in order to either relieve problems causing drinking such as depression, or treat the drinking itself if it is this that is causing the problems. As has been mentioned previously, certain groups of young people (males, older pupils, those feeling alienated at school) are more at risk of developing drink-related problems than others so it may be useful to target this group prior to the development of any problems. Such an approach, though, does run the risk of stigmatising these groups and perhaps making problems more likely to occur, so sensitivity would be needed. Aside from helping this group to integrate and feel valued within the school community, work could also be done on helping them manage their stress levels and deal with any difficulties experienced (be they inside or outside of school, Pavis *et al.*, 1997). In particular, general coping skills could be taught to prevent alcohol being used as a negative way of coping with problems. At the most extreme end, cognitive-behavioural therapy could be offered to those young people who are experiencing extreme anxiety and using alcohol as a way of reducing their stress levels (Samoluk, Stewart, Sweet and MacDonald, 1999). For instance,

Dean (1990) cited the case of a young girl who, far from using drink to enhance social interaction as many young people do, used it to avoid the stress of interacting. By getting drunk she was "out of" the situation and incapable of joining in conversations and other social activities. This is an example whereby alcohol was used for essentially social practices but in a negative, rather than positive, way.

Alternative approaches to the teaching of skills tend to focus more on social influences (far more common in the USA according to Hansen and McNeal, 1999), though there is disagreement about the underlying philosophies used. Many approaches remain individualistic in nature, focusing on developing personal awareness of high-risk difficult or dangerous situations (Samoluk *et al.*, 1999) and of knowing when to avoid these (Pavis *et al.*, 1997). A focus on "rational" decision-making skills is therefore often emphasised (Weare, 2000). For instance, young offenders wishing to give up drinking were found to successfully apply several methods of so doing, such as avoiding difficult situations, setting limits on the amount drunk and controlling the rate of drinking (McMurran and Whitman, 1990). However, these young people had a good reason to give up and are probably not typical of young drinkers *per se* whose drinking has not been linked to any offences and so have no personally relevant reason to wish to employ such methods.

In addition to decision-making skills, young people may also be taught communication skills allowing them to negotiate and deal with their anxieties surrounding sexual encounters (O' Hare, 1996) and, in line with this, develop assertiveness and an ability to resist pressure from peers to drink (Lynagh *et al.*, 1997; Weare, 2000). The notion of peer resistance is often a cornerstone of skills based teaching around alcohol but is an idea that has also been heavily criticised. The criticisms encapsulate those levelled more generally at "social influence" based education. Foremost amongst these is the idea that social influence approaches are simply too individualistic in nature and, as a result, too narrow in their focus. A broader outlook is needed, some suggest, focusing on a wider range of lifestyles and situations than is currently covered (B.M.A., 1986). In particular, the focus needs to go beyond the influence of friends and look at the influence of the local environment and community, including the wide range of people who live there, and also the influence of the broader socio-economic background young people come from (Iannotti *et al.*, 1996). Young people's drinking is, May (1993) suggests, carried out within specific social contexts (in which it is defined) and organised through social

practices that encourage and restrain its use. The essentially collective nature of alcohol use has been pinpointed by many (Dean, 1990; Gofton, 1990; Pavis *et al.*, 1999) yet appears to be neglected in alcohol education. A consequence of this is that alcohol use is rendered an individual phenomenon, one that is the responsibility of young people themselves, and thus is disconnected from alcohol use in wider society and also the adult norms that surround it. It therefore minimises adult culpability for young people's behaviour and presents alcohol use to young people in a way that lies outside their reality; i.e., one where alcohol use is both "normal" and a learned behaviour. Approaches should therefore look at the role of the family, the media and the essentially cultural "normality" of drinking. In essence, they should focus on socialisation and social learning, teaching children to drink safely in a drinking culture and build on the efforts of parents as well as local and community initiatives (May, 1993). The relative lack of success of many education programmes can therefore be traced to questionable assumptions and an overemphasis on the individual, potentially deviant, nature of alcohol use rather than on its normal and collective use.

1.8 Evaluating interventions

Evaluation of educational interventions in schools has been generally lacking yet is clearly needed, particularly with regard to the effect such interventions have on young people's behaviour (Lynagh *et al.*, 1997). Unfortunately, the evidence that does exist is far from clear-cut, often producing inconclusive and contradictory findings. There have been few interventions and many of those that have been carried out suffer from a variety of shortcomings such as a lack of control groups, inadequate randomisation of participants and non-validated measurements. Many use sample sizes that are too small to produce significant results, there are too few longitudinal studies and very few actually focus on measuring changes in behaviour (Lynagh *et al.*, 1997). Nevertheless, several issues arise from these findings that are worthy of further discussion.

1.8.1 Non UK-based interventions

In a review of interventions carried out mostly in the USA with 10-18 year olds Foxcroft, Lister-Sharp and Lowe (1997) focused specifically on the changes in young people's behaviour that occur as a result of intervention. They believed that changes

in knowledge and attitudes were not enough to aim for, and that successful interventions are those that actually produce a decline in harmful alcohol related incidents or a decrease in alcohol consumption. However, they found that very few evaluations of interventions had been carried out in a methodologically sound manner using experimental and quasi-experimental designs. Of those that were, 16 were partially effective in the short term compared to 11 that were ineffective (in fact some actually produced an increase in drinking!). Most of the programmes evaluated were knowledge-based and/or taught social skills. However, Foxcroft *et al.*, could detect few differences between the content of those programmes that were effective and those that were ineffective.

Some programmes in the USA and elsewhere, however, do not look to a change in behaviour as indicative of success. For instance, Reis and Riley (2002) looked at how computer software can be used to reduce alcohol related harm by changing an individual's expectations of alcohol use and thus their intentions to drink. This software consisted of a series of vignettes that informed users of the negative consequences of drinking and allowed them to make decisions that resulted in negative or positive consequences depending on whether or not they carried on drinking. The results of the intervention were that young people exhibited a shift towards more "realistic" expectations of alcohol e.g., they saw it as less socially enhancing, and they also exhibited an intention to drink less (particularly more moderate drinkers). This evaluation, however, raises many questions, not the least of which is whether its effects actually last for any length of time. Secondly, it only has an effect in that young people exhibit an *intention* to change. This does not mean they will actually change and if they do not then the intervention will lack any real value. Finally, the intervention involved the use of artificial, perhaps unrealistic, contexts on computer. Even if young people's expectations and intentions do change this may not transfer to actual drinking situations, particularly as such situations involve interpersonal, social dimensions impossible to capture on computer yet crucial to the way young people drink. Actual change may well require environmental change rather than a focus on individual behaviour. Also, the intervention does not appear to work for heavy drinkers who may be the people who need it most.

Another evaluation (Ross, Richard and Potvin, 1998) carried out on an intervention in Quebec, Canada one year after its implementation, focused on changes in young people's knowledge, beliefs and skills such as decision making and self-

efficacy in resisting peer-pressure. This evaluation was carried out via the use of two questionnaires, one administered prior to the intervention and one after. This classroom-based intervention, aimed at 12-13 year olds, was one that provided information, aimed to clarify young people's values and beliefs, taught them decision-making and peer resistance skills via modelling, and also focused strongly on the external influences young people may be exposed to. In evaluating this study, Ross *et al.* encountered a common problem in that there was a loss of about 34 per cent of participants in the post test phase and that these were older young people who were more likely to engage in unsupervised alcohol use. The intervention was therefore not evaluated for those who perhaps needed it most. With regard to those who did take part, Ross *et al.* (1998) found there to be no increase in knowledge and no positive change in beliefs amongst young people. Worse, there was actually a decrease in young people's self efficacy with respect to decision-making and peer resistance skills. They suggest this may be because young people are made more aware of the external influences they face and this alters their perception of their own personal competence in the face of such influences. This is particularly so if the young people are more likely to engage in unsupervised activities and is related to the perception of consumption amongst their friends. Ross *et al.* conclude that interventions need to involve more specifically aspects of young people's drinking environments; e.g., parental, peer and community components.

Some interventions, however, do have a degree of success. An example of this is the SHAHRP programme in Australia (McBride, Midford, Farrington and Philips, 1998). Again, this was a solely classroom-based intervention as the whole-school based approach, advocated by many, was thought to be too resource intensive. Unlike other evaluations, however, this one was longitudinal in nature with the evaluation carried out after phase one of the intervention had been implemented; i.e., prior to young people engaging in the behaviour. The programme had several aims, founded on a harm minimisation goal, among which were to increase knowledge and change attitudes, reduce consumption and change the contexts of use, and, finally, reduce alcohol related harm. Its technique was to teach an interactive skills-based programme focusing on social resistance, to impart practical knowledge and normative information, and to engage young people in group discussions and decision-making based on their own real-life experiences.

The results after phase one were that knowledge had increased, attitudes had become more positive, there were no significant changes in the contexts of use, consumption had risen but more slowly than in control groups, and there was less alcohol related harm in the intervention group then in the control group. McBride *et al.* (2000) therefore concluded that knowledge and attitudes do not predict consumption as this behaviour change occurred at the same time as the changes in knowledge and attitudes. Therefore, focusing on knowledge and attitudes on the assumption that these will lead to a change in behaviour may be mistaken. McBride *et al.* conclude that the programme will be most successful if it targets young people just after supervised initial use but prior to the commencement of unsupervised use. This, they suggest, will be the best way to increase the prevalence of safe alcohol use, as the majority of harms occur when young people drink in unsupervised circumstances. Overall, the programme lends some support to the possibility that a classroom-based intervention can be effective to some degree, and is also a lot cheaper than a more costly whole school based intervention. A final point in this study is that the attrition rate was again high (some 26 per cent) between the baseline and follow up evaluations and those young people who were missing were those with more unsafe drinking practices, beliefs and attitudes. Not only does this affect the generalisability of the findings it also suggests that the intervention, as with that of Ross *et al.* (1998), did not target the group who needed it most. It may be that the programme will not be so effective with those who are more at risk; however, only other evaluated interventions will be able to clarify this.

1.8.2 UK-based interventions

Evaluations based in the UK have been rare and are greatly needed. Most of those that have been carried out are incorporated into more general evaluations of drug-based education. For instance, Hurry and Lloyd (1997) carried out just such an evaluation looking at the effect of approaches focusing on life-skills and social resistance. The focus of their evaluation was mainly on primary schools as, in agreement with previous researchers, they suggest that it is at this age that young people are more likely to listen to teachers and have also not yet had any significant experience with drugs or alcohol. Furthermore, there is more time available in the curriculum for such teaching and it may be easier to catch "high-risk" groups at this stage. They concluded that approaches focusing on life-skills are effective but peer and parental

components would be useful in order to strengthen such approaches. However, in comparison to other drugs, there was no effect on experimentation with alcohol as a result of exposure to school interventions. This, in part, may be to due to the varying social mores of parents, who are more condoning of alcohol use and therefore more likely to encourage experimentation at home. The results of the study, however, do not give any indication of long-term effects and also used a very small sample so may not be particularly generalisable.

A wider review of drug and alcohol education in schools carried out by OFSTED (1997) with a variety of approaches found that knowledge did increase but, as most of these effects were only evident in the short-term, there is no indication of whether this was a sustained effect. Peer resistance was found to have some positive effect on young people's ability to say no, particularly if teaching focused on real-life experiences. However, whether this applied as strongly to alcohol use alone is not clear. In terms of methods, peer education was found to be useful, particularly for imparting what young people may perceive to be "credible" information. The interactive and participatory approach of much teaching was, however, found to be highly effective. Nevertheless OFSTED (1997) concluded that more teacher training was needed as many teachers lacked the knowledge and skills, *ergo* the confidence, to teach alcohol and drug education. In particular, and not surprisingly, more careful monitoring and evaluation of interventions was requested. OFSTED also pinpointed the need for the assessment of pupils before and after intervention. Despite researchers' recommendations there has been little attempt made in schools to assess where pupils are at in terms of their baseline knowledge, attitudes and experience. Also, as with other studies, longitudinal research is lacking and this is particularly pertinent with regard to any possible changes in behaviour that occur, although behaviour change as a rule does not appear to be seen as an important goal in its own right. Also, the number of excluded pupils who did not take part in the evaluations was an issue because, as with other studies, such pupils may actually be those most at risk. Finally, OFSTED stress the need for a coordinated and multi-agency approach to the delivery of such education with particular reference to the structure of education within the framework of the PSHE programme.

Other researchers have attempted to evaluate the success of the holistic "health promoting" school approach rather than just classroom-based approaches. An example is Moon, Muller, Rogers, Thompson, Speller and Roderick's (1999)

evaluation of the success of the Wessex Healthy Schools Award Scheme, a scheme designed to encourage schools to become health promoting. The main aim of this scheme was to promote well-being in school and was inclusive in nature, incorporating both school-based and community-based initiatives. Moon *et al.*'s 3-year evaluation assessed, via questionnaires, any changes in knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and behaviour of young people in relation to alcohol use. In addition it also assessed, via interviews, the perceptions, knowledge and opinions of the adults involved (e.g., parents, teachers, etc.). With regard to young people they found that there was little change in pupils' knowledge overall about alcohol although levels of knowledge at baseline were high to start with. Of more interest were changes in pupils' behaviour. Here, they found that only older females showed a significant change in consumption with males generally, and older males particularly, exhibiting an *increase* in consumption. As older males are more likely to have problems with drinking this would suggest that the scheme had little effect on those who need it most. How to target this group in particular therefore remains a challenge for those designing education programmes. In terms of the adults, many felt the scheme had value, but many complained of a lack of consultation and only 50 per cent of teachers felt they had been properly prepared. Time and a lack of resources were also pinpointed as a particular problem in implementation. The whole school approach therefore does not appear to be fully implemented at present nor is it overly successful, although some progress does appear to have been made. Firm conclusions cannot be drawn as the sample was very small and the statistical results therefore had low power. Also, no attempt was made to take into account external influences, e.g., the media, on young people's behaviour that may have impacted on the results of the study. And, as always, it is not clear whether the changes that were found in alcohol use would be sustained; for instance, the positive results found in older girls.

A comprehensive review of the effectiveness of drugs based education was carried out in the UK by Allott, Paxton and Leonard (1999), and this also incorporated a significant component dedicated to the teaching of alcohol use. Their paper highlighted the importance of such a focus through reference to a government white paper that suggested approaches to tackling drug misuse should, by necessity, include alcohol. Their review focused on the evaluations that have been carried out to date of teaching methods, their aim being to ascertain which method, or combination of methods, appeared to be most effective. This was achieved through an exploration of

the divergent methods employed by four different types of provider; teachers, the police, peers and parents (the latter hitherto largely overlooked).

Teacher-led programmes tended to fall into three distinct types. The first of these consisted of curricular programmes. These were very comprehensive programmes that aimed to provide information and teach life skills and were normative; i.e., focusing on the behavioural norms of others. Methods of delivery were both didactic and interactive. Examples of such programmes were the DIPSI project and the Project Charlie programme previously evaluated by Hurry and Lloyd (1997). The comprehensive nature of such programmes was found to be most effective and the emphasis on social influence appropriate. For instance, in the Project Charlie programme, knowledge was found to increase overall and resistance skills were found to be effective in one cohort although not others. In general, pupils exposed to these programmes were less likely to experiment with drugs than those who were not. However, whether such findings applied to the use of alcohol was less than clear.

A second type of teacher-led programme was that of "TIE" (Theatre In Education). This approach taught the pupils affective, cognitive and life skills However, little in the way of evaluation of this type of programme has been carried out. Allott *et al.* (1999) concluded that such programmes may probably be more effective in changing attitudes than in increasing knowledge.

The third type of teacher-led programme was that of resource packs designed for the National Curriculum, e.g., the Drug Studies Pack. These provided information only and were delivered in a more traditional lecturing style of teaching. Such programmes appeared to increase pupil awareness around drugs but were generally not well liked and their implementation was, overall, poor. Despite this low fidelity they did have the advantage of being easy to integrate into the National Curriculum. By contrast "TIE" and curricular programmes were easy to implement but were difficult to fit into the structure of the National Curriculum thus making it harder for teachers to organise them and work them into the daily timetable.

Allott *et al.* (1999) point out that the conclusions reached have to remain tentative as evaluations tended to rely on small sample sizes and the self-selecting nature of these samples makes generalisation difficult. Furthermore, the effectiveness of a programme is not dependent on the quality of the programme *per se* but more on the attitudes, experience and self-efficacy of the teachers who deliver them. Overall,

there did appear to be a lack of support for teachers perhaps explaining the poor fidelity of some of the programmes. Another point they make is that the role of the community, both in terms of a general background to the pupil's experience and in providing a consistent coordinated approach to drug education, has not been focused on, yet may clearly have an effect on how well programmes are received and the success of their implementation. As a final point, those programmes that appear to work best were, they suggest, those that used interactive methods and were maintained across the school careers of pupils.

The second area Allott *et al.* (1999) looked at were interventions delivered by the police, of which there were three types. The first type consisted of informational interventions, which worked on the assumption that an increase in knowledge would lead to a change in attitudes and thus a change in behaviour. Allott *et al.* report that such programmes were actually counter-productive leading to an increase in knowledge but also a change toward more positive attitudes toward drugs and alcohol and an actual increase in drug-taking behaviour! The second type of programme they looked at was the DARE project established in the 1990s. This programme aimed to teach normative education and improve peer resistance skills. It was very much an approach focusing on social influence. In the short term this project appeared to change attitudes and increase knowledge but resistance skills appeared to be worse with fewer pupils subsequently reporting that they will abstain from experimentation. In the long term, its effects were generally negligible.

The third type of intervention delivered by police was the "Learning for Life" programme, which focused on teaching pupils more generic life skills and is a programme easily integrated into the National Curriculum and maintained throughout school life. There has been only one evaluation of this project and this found that it was largely ineffective on all counts. There were difficulties with all the evaluations of police-led programmes in that there was little agreement regarding which outcome measures were most appropriate (a problem besetting all interventions), a lack of control groups and, once again, a high attrition rate. The biggest problem overall, however, was the small number of evaluations to date that have been carried out.

In sum, the advantages of the DARE and Learning for Life programmes are that they are inclusive in nature in that they involve inter-agency partnerships and the local community. However, only the Learning for Life programme is easily integrated into the National Curriculum. In fact, the DARE and informational interventions do

not involve teachers at all making their delivery less straightforward, although of course both may be more effective than the Learning for Life approach. All three programmes however, fail to take into account, or provide for, the role of parents in influencing young people's use of drugs and alcohol.

The third area reviewed by Allott *et al.* (1999) was that of peer delivered education; e.g., the YAP scheme. This approach was often considered to be successful regarding attitude change, possibly because peers have a credibility others lack and so may be more likely to be listened to. Primarily, such approaches teach resistance skills and the ages and experiences of the peer educators can vary greatly. The effectiveness of such programmes has been generally lauded, and this is thought to be because peers are effective communicators who are able to impart information in a way that is relevant; i.e., grounded in young people's experiences. Part of this success may also be because the methods used are very interactive and participatory. In addition, such programmes also appear to meet the needs of target groups as they are delivered by people living directly in the community of which young people are a part. On the minus side, however, they are not easily integrated into the National Curriculum nor are they are easily maintained over the course of young people's school life. Furthermore, their diversity may make it difficult to pinpoint which are the most effective and which are not. Also, the evaluations of these programmes were carried out using small samples (and often in one setting) casting doubts over the degree to which their findings can be generalised.

The final group of programmes focused upon by Allott *et al.* (1999) were those targeted at parents, the aim being to enable parents to educate their own children. Such programmes therefore taught parents to provide good communication skills and the modelling of appropriate behaviour. They typically provided information, support for the family, encouraged the development of personal skills and helped facilitate family interaction via the development of good communication. An example of such a programme is Project Pride which took place in both the home and the classroom. A participatory approach, this project focused on providing information, developing good communication skills and also taught resistance skills to young people as well as helping them improve their decision-making skills. There have been few evaluations of such schemes, often involving a biased sample of self-selected groups, although one such intervention did increase knowledge of parental attitudes as a result of better communication leading to a positive change in beliefs

and an expressed intention to change behaviour. However, such programmes suffered from low participation as a result of restrictions of time, location and also the stigma for parents of being involved with their children in a drugs and alcohol evaluation. The advantage of such programmes, however, was that they were firmly rooted in the community and so were more directly needs-driven and could also be maintained over time as long as parents were willing.

Overall, however, there has been a dearth of evaluation, often focusing only on outcomes of interventions. Allott *et al.* (1999) suggest that there should also be a focus on how such programmes are delivered i.e., are they being delivered properly as this may seriously affect the success of a good programme. Also, there is the issue of cultural applicability as many of the programmes have been based on ideas developed in the USA where certain issues, such as gun control, may be different and have less relevance here. Allott *et al.* also endorse May's (1993) criticisms in that there is too much of an emphasis on peer resistance and not enough on other factors such as the role parents may play. Overall, the approaches that appear to work best are those that are participatory, are grounded in the community and combine a mixture of information, normative education, life skills training and also some peer resistance training. In terms of who delivers them, teachers are effective in that they integrate the material into the National Curriculum and maintain the programmes whereas the police can ground such approaches in the context of the local community. Peers are useful in that they seem most successful in directly addressing the needs of young people and parents are effective simply because they have so much influence on the views of young people. A combination of all four types of delivery would therefore seem optimal.

1.9 Conclusions

To sum up, the most effective approach would appear to be to teach alcohol education as part of the National Curriculum and within the broader structure of the PSHE/Citizenship programme using a combination of different methods and providers (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). However, there are few evaluations of such education and there clearly needs to be agreement on what outcome measures are most appropriate. In terms of their own approach Alcohol Concern stress that it is necessary to assess young people's knowledge and understanding of alcohol (before and after intervention) as well as the degree to which they are developing appropriate

skills and a change in attitudes. They suggest that personal qualities such as the development of self-esteem and confidence are not conducive to measurement but nevertheless are also worthwhile outcomes of such programmes (Alcohol Concern, 2001a).

In general there are, despite the many failures, some programmes that have met with success in reducing alcohol related harmful behaviour, both in the medium and the short term. However, it is worth reiterating that the big problem appears to be that the content of those programmes that are effective is very similar to the content of those that are ineffective (Murgraff *et al.*, 1997). It therefore seems essential to identify which specific components of a programme are the ones that are effective, or pinpoint the factors that are contributing either positively or negatively to the success of a particular programme. Only then can further precise, targeted and preferably longitudinal evaluations take place before more effective and less wasteful programmes be developed. At the moment, however, such a state of affairs seems a long way off. Wright (1999) suggests it is essential that more baseline research is conducted with young people, research that focuses on young people's perceptions and understandings of alcohol use and does so in a way that illuminates differences in attitudes, knowledge and behaviour in relation to young people's various life circumstances such as class, gender, religion, ethnicity and geography. Bearing this in mind, the next chapter will go on to look at some of the psychological theories underpinning educational interventions and, in light of their relative lack of success, offer a critique of these theories and suggest an alternative approach towards the issue of alcohol use amongst those aged 16 and under.

CHAPTER 2: PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES UNDERLYING YOUNG PEOPLE'S DRINKING- A CRITICAL REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The first aim of this chapter will be to review the many and varied psychological theories that have been put forward to explain why young people drink. These are of particular interest as many of these theoretical perspectives are used to inform the development of the alcohol education programmes outlined in the latter half of Chapter One. The second aim of this chapter will then be critically to evaluate these theories and will do so by looking at three core areas of theoretical debate. First, it will examine differences in the way "normal" and "deviant" drinking are presented and then, in a similar vein, it will look at the debate surrounding what constitutes "harmful" or "risky" drinking. Finally, the chapter will end by looking at the degree to which the research that has been reviewed focuses on the individual (as opposed to any social element) and will assess the implications this has with regard to the way alcohol use amongst young people is conceptualised and subsequent interventions are formulated.

2.2 Influences on young people's drinking

2.2.1 Intra-personal and genetic factors

There appear to be few genetic influences on young people's drinking. However, at the extreme end of alcohol misuse, there is evidence of a genetic predisposition towards alcoholism arising from studies of adopted children and twins (B.M.A., 1986). Other biological influences on young people's drinking have, however, been identified. For example, in Finland an increase in adolescent drunkenness between 1981 and 1997 has been found to be strongly associated with a shift towards earlier biological maturation, measured in terms of age at first menstrual period or first ejaculation (Lintonen, Rimpela, Vikat and Rimpela, 2000). Biological factors are also thought to underlie motivational systems in young people, such as the need to seek sensations. Sensation-seeking, in conjunction with the developmental phenomena of egocentrism and in particular a sense of personal fable (a belief in one's own uniqueness and invulnerability), were found to be associated with a greater degree of risk-taking in young people (Greene, Krcmar, Walter, Rubin and Hale, 2000). As a result, young people were more inclined to consume higher amounts of alcohol.

Other reasons given for drinking in young people relate more to their emotional states. For instance, many young people say they drink in order to make them feel good. Alcohol is therefore used to alter their mood, to change their personal feelings, to help them relax and to give them a "buzz" (Pavis, Cunningham-Burley and Amos, 1997; Pavis, Cunningham-Burley and Amos, 1998). In particular, young people have an expectation of this effect, which is an important driving force behind their reasons to drink. Males especially have an expectation of sexual enhancement that, unlike women, appears to be independent of the context in which they drink (Rauch and Bryant, 2000).

Other emotional reasons for drinking are, however, less positive and less geared towards the attainment of pleasure. Qualitative studies of 15 year olds have found that a small, but significant, minority said drinking was a means of reducing stress and coping with life (Pavis *et al.*, 1997). Alcohol, for these young people, is seen as an emotional prop used to help them cope with difficult situations. Potentially, the use of alcohol by this group may become personally damaging, if not socially unacceptable. This was illustrated by research carried out by Thombs and Beck (1994). They found that drinking for reasons of stress control tended to distinguish heavy from high-consequence drinkers. That is to say, heavy drinkers drank for positive reasons and experienced few problems. High-consequence drinkers, on the other hand, drank to control stress and experienced many problems with their drinking. Such drinkers are, according to Thombs and Beck, using alcohol to ameliorate negative feelings and "escape" from everyday life. They also exhibit defiant and rebellious traits, a point endorsed by Fergusson, Lynskey and Horwood (1996) who found that conduct problems in childhood underpinned both alcohol misuse and rates of juvenile offending. The profile of such drinkers was that they were largely male, prone to social isolation and had less opportunity for social mobility (Thombs and Beck, 1994).

An underlying biological reason for such drinking is thought to be that individuals who drink this way are more prone to anxiety. Individuals who are high in anxiety-sensitivity will tend to exhibit patterns of drinking that are more coping-motivated (Samoluk, Stewart, Sweet and MacDonald, 1999). This is particularly so if they drink alone or are in situations that are negatively reinforcing such as those involving conflict or physical discomfort. Samoluk *et al.* found that such individuals drank more when they were alone than when they were with people, and that low

anxiety sensitive individuals did not. They therefore suggest that drinkers high in anxiety are perhaps more prone to higher levels of alcohol consumption and the problems that are associated with this, particularly as a coping-motivated style of drinking is often associated with solitary drinking.

The above factors are, for the most part, reasons for drinking that are located in the individual. However, young people do not live in a vacuum and many of their reasons for drinking, and influences on it, arise out of the immediate social contexts in which they live. Some of the most important of these will now be examined.

2.2.2 Interpersonal influences- parents

The family is the primary agent of socialisation for young people and it is through parents that the majority of young people are introduced to alcohol. The influence of parents on young people's subsequent drinking behaviour is therefore likely to be significant. Much of the research to date has focused on the effect adult problem drinkers have on young people and, by and large, tends to view such influences as pathological (Wright, 1999). Children of problem drinkers are seen as more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and to have a range of conduct disorders (Alcohol Concern, 2001a).

However, young people are not inevitably going to become dysfunctional, as a range of protective factors appear to operate that soften the effects of problem drinking. For example, young people may have a resilient personality or have a close relationship with one or both parents (Wright, 1999). In fact, overall, those young people who suffered long-term negative consequences were more likely to have experienced family conflict in addition to parental problem drinking (Velleman and Orford, 1993). For instance, a history of family substance abuse and conflict within the family are thought to be underlying risk factors in rates of both juvenile alcohol misuse and offending (Fergusson *et al.*, 1996). It is therefore less the direct effects of parental drinking *per se* but more the resultant family disharmony that may cause dysfunction in young people. The mediating effect of family structure and available support therefore has a significant influence on young people's ability to cope and the likelihood they will become problem drinkers themselves.

Such factors also underlie parental influence in families where there are no problem drinkers. Parental attitudes and behaviour have long been thought to have a significant impact on the drinking behaviour of young people in general. The

widespread use and acceptability of alcohol has led many researchers to suggest that the most positive outcomes can be achieved when parents provide young children with a model of sensible drinking; i.e., they neither abstain nor drink heavily (Wright, 1999). The importance of such modelling has often been overlooked yet young people's attitudes towards drink may fundamentally be tied to, and learnt from, the observable behaviours of those adults around them in their formative years (May, 1993). For instance, exposure to parental drunkenness, in conjunction with a lack of parental supervision, was found to be a factor underlying excessive drunkenness and violent behaviour in a sample of 12-20 year olds (Rossow, Pape and Wichstrom, 1999). However, appropriate drinking behaviour must be consistent with the attitudes towards drinking expressed by parents (B.M.A., 1986).

In fact, young people's perceptions of their parents' attitudes may have more influence on them than their parents' behaviour (Lowe, Foxcroft and Sibley, 1993). The pervasiveness of such attitudes is thought to continue long into adolescence. For instance, amongst 15-25 year olds, the perceived social norms of parents in relation to drinking was found to be significantly associated with the frequency of heavy drinking in adolescence (Oostven, Knibbe and De Vries, 1996). Particularly important in this regard is parental approval and consent. Sixty-two per cent of 11-15 year old drinkers say their parents do not mind them drinking, a much higher total than for smoking and the use of illicit drugs (Goddard and Higgins, 2000). Such approval reflects the social acceptability of alcohol but must be married to appropriate parental behaviour as drinking amongst young people was found to be high amongst those whose parents approved of their children's drinking but yet also drank heavily (Lowe, Foxcroft and Sibley, 1993).

Parental attitudes have been characterised as reflecting the degree of parental support and control there is in a family. These, in conjunction with family structure, have therefore been suggested as indirect but crucial determinants of young people's drinking behaviour. Young people have been found to drink more if levels of support and control in the family are low, and this is even more the case in non-nuclear family structures (Foxcroft and Lowe, 1991). Foxcroft and Lowe also suggest that the relationships between support, control, and subsequent drinking may be curvilinear. That is to say, high levels of support or control may also result in excessive drinking behaviour, particularly if a high level of one occurs in conjunction with a low level of the other. Furthermore, high levels of both support and control may result in young

people becoming excessively socially conforming and usually abstinent. It is worth noting that abstinence may itself be considered deviant in society at large and perhaps more so amongst young people where heavy drinking is more tolerated. Foxcroft and Lowe therefore suggest it is better to aim for moderate levels of both support and control within a family.

To sum up, the family can clearly be seen to have an important influence on young people's drinking behaviour and attitudes. Parental modelling of sensible drinking behaviour, in conjunction with appropriate attitudes, therefore appears to achieve the most positive outcomes. In terms of indirect effects, a moderate level of support and control in the family appears to be optimal.

2.2.3 Interpersonal influences-peers

It has been noted in previous sections that, as young people grow older, they increasingly move towards drinking more with peers than with their parents. This occurs in conjunction with a move towards drinking in unsupervised circumstances and a general increase in alcohol consumption *per se*. This has led many to suggest that peers tend to encourage one another to drink more and has led to the somewhat negative accusation by some researchers that peer pressure is largely responsible for the rise in teenage drinking. Indeed, peer influence was one of the primary reasons young people gave for drinking in a qualitative study of 15 year olds in Scotland (Pavis *et al.*, 1997).

A cursory examination of the data suggests this may well be the case. For example, amongst 11-15 year olds, 80 per cent of those who drank once a week also said their friends drank compared to just five per cent of non-drinkers (Goddard and Higgins, 2000). Conversely, less than 0.5 per cent of regular drinkers said they had no friends who drank compared to 36 per cent of non-drinkers. Overall, those who drank the most cited peers as having a bigger influence on their behaviour than adults (B.M.A., 1986). The relative "wetness" of friends, for instance, was found to be an underlying influence on excessive drinking in conjunction with violent behaviour (Rossow, Pape and Wichstrom, 1999). The influence of peers therefore appears to be clear-cut. However, the picture may not be this simple.

It could also be the case for instance that, rather than being influenced by the drinking of their peers, young people actively select friends who drink the same amount they do. This is more a process of peer selection or association than one of

peer influence (Wright, 1999). Evidence for this comes from research that shows the amount friends are perceived to drink was a product, not a precursor, of adolescent substance use (Ianotti, Bush and Weinfurt, 1996). In other words, young people would appear to choose friends on the basis that they are perceived as drinking similar amounts to themselves. Interestingly, it does not matter how much their friends actually use, it is the perceptions and belief that they do that is of importance. Although there will be some influence on young people by friends, the process is very much two-way and interactive. Young people are not simply "passive" in receiving influences, they are also active and Dorn (1983) found that, in one peer group at least, there was more evidence of individual independence than of passive group compliance.

Other reasons for the level of drinking amongst groups of young people therefore need to be posited. One such explanation would be that drinking encourages social facilitation, particularly relevant to young people as they undergo the transition towards adulthood and independence and are forging both new friendships and romantic connections. Indeed, this is the most prevalent reason given for drinking in many studies, including those of Pavis *et al.* (1997; 1998). Experimental evidence supports this explanation. For instance, the need for peer acceptance was found to be a far less important factor in explaining differences in drinking patterns than social facilitation (Thombs and Beck, 1994). Research investigating the direct effect of peer pressure on the frequency of heavy drinking found its influence was minimal (Oostven, Knibbe and De Vries, 1996). Of far greater influence were the desire to socialise (of which drinking was a side issue) and the perceived social norms of the group. However, these social norms were not experienced as "pressure"; instead, they were simply reinforcing the norms of the group as a whole, and reflected the norms held by young people's parents. This would suggest that young people select friends with similar norms to themselves (and who therefore drink similarly) and do so on the basis of the norms they have learnt from their parents. In fact it is of great interest that, given the evidence that exists regarding the influence of parents on drinking, such influences are so often ignored by researchers who prefer to focus instead on peer influence.

Wright (1999) suggests that such a focus reflects moral disapproval of the drinking behaviour of young people. By focusing on peer influence, the behaviour of "good" children, doing things adults do not like, can be attributed to the influence of

"bad" others. This notion of "bad" children contaminating "good" is examined in more detail by May (1993). He points out that young people's drinking behaviour should more usefully be seen as a normal part of growing up and, for the majority of young people, their drinking does not represent a significant problem, certainly not to the extent the media often portray. Furthermore, research evidence does not support the notion that young people are being "contaminated" by their peers. More accurately, young people derive their attitudes to alcohol from the behaviour of their parents. Peer groups do have some influence, but this influence could be a positive one. The social norms of a group, noted previously as important, may work to promote belonging and may therefore function to restrain rather than promote problematic behaviours.

May (1993) suggests that the reason for the focus on peer influence is because certain groups of adults may find the social behaviour young people engage in difficult to control. In applying interventions, they are attempting to influence young people themselves and, furthermore, by attributing such behaviour to the malign influence of others, they are thus able to deny responsibility for the failure of any interventions. A side effect of the focus of peer pressure is that it also abdicates responsibility for young people's behaviour on the part of parents, teachers and the juvenile drinkers themselves. The overall implication, therefore, is that peer influence should be seen more positively and that the focus for interventions should be elsewhere, such as on parents and the operation of wider socio-cultural norms and values.

2.2.4 The media and advertising

Another possible source of external influence comes from the mass media. In many ways, the mass media can be seen as another set of "voices" battling to gain influence over young people, and the messages they convey are often at odds with those of in the health promotion field. This is because the mass media do not convey information neutrally, and so those with the power and resources to gain access to the media are those whose messages are more commonly portrayed. By far and away the most powerful and influential groups with access to the media are those with a vested interest in the promotion of alcohol. Though public health groups do have access to the media, their resources and power are overshadowed by those in the alcohol industry who are able to use advertising and brand marketing to promote their

products. The media are therefore characterised by a series of conflicting messages surrounding alcohol use, perhaps reflecting the ambivalent nature of alcohol use in society generally (Casswell, 1997).

Alcohol, in fact, is one of the most heavily advertised products in the UK with £189.5 million being spent on advertising in 1996 (Alcohol Concern, 1997). The degree to which advertising encourages people to start drinking, or to increase consumption, remains however a matter for debate. This was typified by the debate surrounding the marketing of alcopops in the 1990s. Such drinks were seen as deliberately targeted at young teenagers and there were fears that they would encourage increased consumption. However, whilst such drinks were certainly found to be appealing to young people (Hughes, MacKintosh, Hastings, Wheeler, Watson and Inglis, 1997) there was no evidence that consumption of alcohol had increased as a result. Advertising, however, may work in more subtle ways. It may work to change young people's social norms surrounding drinking or challenge adults' moral disapproval of drinking in young people (Wright, 1999).

Research on the effects of advertising has produced mixed results. Some research has shown small but significant relationships between exposure to adverts and young people's consumption of alcohol and their attitudes to it. Wright (1999) cites Strickland's data (1983) which showed that a five minute increase in exposure to alcohol resulted in a half a unit daily increase in alcohol consumption. However, this impact may only have been short-term. Other research showed that children who could remember more alcohol adverts held more favourable beliefs about alcohol and intended to drink more of it when they were older (Wright, 1999). Research in the UK suggests that, in general, young people like, remember and enjoy alcohol adverts. For example, 11-16 year olds often say they chose alcohol adverts as their favourite because they were humorous (Nelson and White, 1992) but those who chose such adverts as their favourites were most commonly drinkers.

Alcohol advertising therefore gets through to young people and certainly appeals to them. However, there is little direct evidence that alcohol consumption increases as a result, certainly in the long term. Young people are aware of advertising messages and their subtle influence, and can be taught to resist these messages (Wright, 1999). Overall, advertising may have less influence than factors such as the family, social settings and cultural norms (Hastings, MacKintosh and Aitken, 1992).

2.2.5 Socio-cultural contexts and meanings

Having considered some of the major personal and interpersonal influences on young people's drinking it is important to consider next the contexts in which such drinking takes place. Where and in what situations young people drink may have a profound influence on their behaviour. Unfortunately, much research has tended to ignore the situated and essentially social nature of drinking, perhaps as a result of the individualisation of young people's behaviour in many studies. This section will therefore look at young people's drinking behaviour within the contexts in which it takes place. It will go on to consider the location of young people's drinking behaviour within wider social and economic contexts and examine the *meaning* drinking has for young people within these contexts.

Although largely overlooked, the influence of the social context in which drinking takes place has been analysed in a few quantitative studies. For instance, what young people expect with regard to the effects of drink has been found to be context-dependent. Expectancies of tension reduction and increased social assertiveness have been found to vary according to whether the context is convivial, personal and intimate, or one associated with negative coping (O' Hare, 1998). Expectancies of sexual enhancement were found to apply only in personal and intimate contexts. Within such contexts there was also a key gender difference. Females had higher expectations of sexual enhancement in a relationship context than in a blind-date context. Male's expectations were the same in both (Rauch and Bryant, 2000). The context of drinking was also found to have an influence on those with affective disorders. Those individuals high in anxiety were found to drink more in solitary contexts than in social ones (Samoluk *et al.*, 1999). Drinking behaviour will therefore vary according to the setting.

Such research, however, has tended to focus on hypothetical contexts and maintains an individualistic perspective. Young people's social worlds are actually far more diverse and complex than such studies would suggest and, perhaps more importantly, are perhaps far more rooted in the practices and structures of wider society. Patterns of drinking may therefore reflect the society in which young people find themselves and, in the UK, this is essentially a "wet" culture where drinking is well established, socially acceptable and often encouraged. For instance, Tolvanen's (1998) study of alcohol use in the elderly found that drinking was rooted far more in cultural norms surrounding alcohol use than in what it meant to be elderly. However,

patterns of drinking in young people are also fundamentally rooted in other aspects of their lives, both on a micro and a macro social level. Discussion of the following studies will illustrate this.

Cross-cultural studies, for instance, have found very different drinking patterns to be in evidence amongst adolescents, reflecting the different role alcohol has in different societies. For example, in North Western European societies young people drink in a manner characterised as "rebellious". Such drinking is carried out for the purposes of intoxication and as a way of rebelling against disapproving adults. In Mediterranean societies, however, drinking is "innovative" and is marked by a choice of beverage and drinking context different to those used by adults (Engels and Knibbe, 2000). In all countries, the function of such drinking is seen as a developmental one, namely that of allowing young people to become independent, form intimate relationships and integrate into peer groups. The differences in the way these are expressed, however, reflect the underlying cultural norms surrounding drinking in the country in which they are located.

Every country also has its own economic, historical and social background, the consequences of which are that young people's drinking is, to a degree, constrained by the social and economic resources they have at their disposal. For instance, in Finland, economic expansion during the 1980s meant that the average weekly allowance of young people increased markedly. This rise coincided with a marked increase in alcohol consumption amongst young people reflecting their greater degree of purchasing power (Lintonen *et al.*, 2000). The particular economic and social circumstances of a country therefore form the backdrop in which young people's drinking takes place. This is the same in the UK as anywhere else and, within the UK, there is similar diversity within regions.

This is not to suggest that young people drink in a way that is simply shaped by the circumstances in which they find themselves. Young people are active participants in a multiplicity of social worlds, and seek to create a sense of identity and meaning in these worlds. However, the choices they make, and the reasons they have for drinking, are always constrained by the wider contexts in which they live. This was reflected in Pavis and Cunningham-Burley's (1999) study of street culture in a sample of young Scottish men living in one particular town. These young men used alcohol to create a sense of excitement and facilitate social interaction; it was a fundamental element of their leisure time. Much of their time was used either to

engage in drinking related behaviour or to tell stories about their drinking exploits. Pavis and Cunningham-Burley suggested that the central role alcohol played in these young men's lives can be rooted in the particular social and economic circumstances in which they found themselves. This particular town had witnessed the decline of traditional working class industries and so the traditional pathways into a secure job had disappeared. As such, these young men had diminished prospects and were living in contexts of job insecurity, relative poverty and the operation of the benefits system. As a group they had become marginalised and alienated from the rest of the community. They had therefore created their own "space" on the street and used alcohol (and other drugs) to provide themselves with a sense of meaning. Alcohol enabled them to gain peer status and provided them with a sense of excitement and purpose in life.

The social worlds of young people are also prone to change and drinking patterns, along with reasons for drinking, change accordingly. For example, those young people in work or unemployment tend to drink more than those still in school (Pavis *et al.*, 1998). This is not just a case of having more disposable income; it also reflects changes in social settings and relationships. Young people may undertake different social activities and have new networks of friends, which may incorporate involving themselves in drinking behaviour of a different form. This may reflect changes in leisure, as young people move increasingly towards spending their leisure time in pubs and clubs. The choices young people make regarding such changes are nevertheless constrained by their specific economic and educational circumstances.

The reasons young people give for drinking, and the meaning it has for them, are therefore not just influenced by the social contexts in which they live; they arise out of them. For instance, Brain, Parker and Carnwath (2000) found that young people characterise alcohol use as a form of consumption to be carried out in a hedonistic manner; i.e., they drink in order to get a "buzz". Such reasons can perhaps be related to the consumerist culture of wider society, founded as it is perhaps on the principle of "instant gratification". The stress young people place on drinking as a form of social facilitation may also be significant. This may reflect a society where technological advances have led to multiple and various forms of communication being introduced such as e-mail and text messaging, few of which require face-to-face contact. Drinking may therefore be a way of allowing people to engage with each other in person. Certainly, studies such as that carried out by Giles (1999) found that young

people work very hard to construct an image of drinking as essentially social, and drinking behaviour, however "wild", as essentially positive. Given the demands made of young people in the UK today, and the expectations placed upon them either at work or at college, drinking may also be seen as a useful "time-out" from the pressures of modern living, indicative of a culture that places high emphasis on productivity and achievement.

Young people's reasons for drinking, and the choices they make regarding their particular drinking lifestyle, can therefore be seen to be rooted in the society and culture in which they live. The context of drinking is therefore an extremely important factor to consider when looking at alcohol use in young people. Such contexts can range from those at a micro level (e.g., the particular pub or set of friends a young person drinks with) to those at a macro level (e.g., the socio-economic features of a particular region or even country). The social norms and values operating within such contexts are the fundamental resources from which the meanings young people give to alcohol use are then created.

2.3 Key theoretical debates

2.3.1 Drinking amongst young people- deviant or normal?

An initial question to ask regarding the research reviewed is why there should be a focus on the drinking of young people at all? Alcohol is an established part of life in British culture and an important form of recreation for a large sector of society. If adults can legally use alcohol and enjoy themselves then why should it be a surprise when young people do the same? As was seen in the previous chapter frequent attention is paid to the apparently "risky" nature of such drinking and the potential harm that it can cause to young people and to society in general. The same, however, could be said to be true for adults so why the focus on young people or, more pertinently, why the concern? Many researchers have pinpointed the potential for harm as residing in the unique style, location and practices that surround young people's drinking and, for a minority of young people, such harm is actual and may genuinely represent a cause for concern (as can be seen in the statistics regarding hospital admissions and those suffering personal injury). For the majority of young people, however, drinking, even heavy drinking, does not necessarily constitute a "problem" so it is perhaps necessary to place young people's drinking in perspective and look more closely at how the "problematic" nature of young people's drinking is constructed in research.

It is researchers themselves who frequently define the "problem" of young people's drinking. This, in essence, gives an outsider's perspective on the activities of a different group of people within society. As this perspective tends to be from the standpoint of an older adult, the emphasis is perhaps not so much on young people's drinking but on the young people themselves. At the centre of much research, therefore, lie different perspectives on the nature of "young people", a nature that is believed to be reflected in the way young people engage in an activity perceived as largely adult. Broadly speaking, two specific perspectives on young people and drinking can be identified in the literature.

The first of these largely views the drinking behaviour of young people as "delinquent" or "deviant". The implications of this view are that young people are in some way bad, or at least "deficient", and that drinking is a reflection of this and may lead to trouble, either for the individual or for society. Drinking is therefore a problem to be corrected and the focus of such correction is on the young people themselves, as they are the source of the behaviour.

There are many instances of such an approach in the literature which, theoretically, is often underpinned by the Problem Behaviour Theory of Jessor and Jessor (1977). This approach is one that focuses on the individual and argues that certain individuals will be predisposed to a variety of problem behaviours of which drinking, particularly heavy drinking, is but one manifestation. Problem Behaviour theorists also claim that such behaviours exist in clusters, e.g., drunkenness and offending (Fergusson, Lynskey and Horwood, 1996) or substance misuse, drink-driving and public drunkenness (Karlsson and Romelsjo, 1997), all of which allow them to pinpoint the source of such behaviours as residing in the personality or the beliefs of the adolescent individual. For instance, Greene *et al's* (2000) study proposed that some young people are more predisposed toward sensation-seeking behaviour and therefore more inclined to take risks with their health. In addition, they may hold developmentally related egocentric beliefs that they are invulnerable and unique and will therefore come to no harm. Such beliefs, often seen as "irrational" and "unrealistic", lead some researchers to propose that it is the correction of such beliefs that should be the aim of much health promotion. Indeed, this was the aim of the intervention carried out by Reis and Riley (2002) in the USA, which aimed to correct young people's "unrealistic" beliefs regarding the socially enhancing effects of alcohol. However, it may be somewhat patronising to assume that young people are

in some way thinking incorrectly. Qualitative research has tended to find that, rather than being irrational, young people are engaged in constructing their own rationalities for alcohol use (Backett and Davison, 1992).

Although Problem Behaviour theorists locate the source of such behaviour as residing in the individual, they have varied in their attribution of the causes of such behaviour. Some researchers, such as Greene *et al.* (2000), have pinpointed the cause as being a developmental one whilst others point to personality deficiencies such as poor self-control, cognitive deficits such as having a low IQ (Fergusson *et al.*, 1996) or emotional disorders such as being inherently anxious (Samoluk *et al.*, 1999). Other researchers, however, have pinpointed causes external to the individual (although still essentially a problem *of* the individual), suggesting there are environmental factors that may predispose individuals toward delinquent behaviour such as coming from a disadvantaged background (Fergusson *et al.*, 1996). Many have focused on the influence significant others such as parents or peers have on individuals.

Often, these latter approaches draw on Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) which proposes that behaviour is largely learnt via the modelling and subsequent reinforcement of such behaviour by others. Young people, it is argued, learn how to use alcohol, in particular learning when, where, what types and how much to consume in different circumstances. The influence of parents in this regard is thought to be particularly strong (Foxcroft and Lowe, 1997) although, controversially, most attention has been focused on the influence of peers, as was discussed earlier. The view of young people presented here is that, rather than being inherently delinquent, they are malleable and to some degree vulnerable to "contamination" by others (Anderson, Plant and Plant, 1998). From this viewpoint come approaches to the problem of alcohol use that advocate strengthening young people's ability to resist such "malign" influences or unlearn the "problematic" behaviour they have thus far been taught. Again, the onus is very much on the beliefs and behaviours of the individual and, whilst seeing the individual as at risk, views the influence of other young peers as malign and, yet again, delinquent. Such views have been challenged by a variety of other researchers who, as explained earlier, have found more support for the notion of peer selection rather than peer pressure.

Overall, whatever the theoretical approach, much research has tended to portray adolescent drinking as "deviant" and constituting a problem. This is largely an unhelpful view for two reasons. First, it may serve to demonise young people and

result in interventions that are ineffective or work only to alienate young people. Second, a view that regards most drinking by young people as deviant may inadvertently mask aspects of young people's drinking that are genuinely a problem for them. An alternative approach, one that regards young people's drinking as essentially normal, may allow any genuinely harmful aspects to be illuminated. Indeed, there is now a shift among researchers toward this view, particularly amongst British and European researchers. There is less of a shift in the USA where attitudes towards adolescent drinking are stricter and the legal age for drinking higher. In Britain in particular, drinking is now seen by many as being an important part of growing up (Shiner and Newburn, 2001) and researchers who support this view are keen to stress its essential normality, even for heavy drinking (Harnett, Herring, Thom and Kelly, 1999).

Many young people are introduced to alcohol in the home at a relatively young age (Marsh, Dobbs and White, 1986) and so, even then, it is presented to them as part and parcel of British culture with a long and established history of "celebration" and consociate belonging (Dean, 1990). As they grow up, young people will inevitably undergo a transition towards taking part in "adult" leisure activities of which drinking is one of the most significant. As such it is a very "normal" thing to do and the fact that 90 per cent or more young people have engaged in drinking by the age of 16 suggest that "delinquency" is an inappropriate concept to use if tarring all young people with the same negative brush is to be avoided. To a large degree, delinquency can therefore be said to be a category created and defined by researchers (Dean, 1990). Learning to enter and be a part of the adult world is a natural process for young people, involving many different processes and drinking may even have benefits as part of this overall process. For example, it may facilitate the formation of romantic relationships and, perhaps more importantly, facilitate integration into peer groups (Engels and Knibbe, 2000). Certainly, socialisation is often cited as a key reason for drinking amongst young people, in particular alcohol's dis-inhibiting effect, which can facilitate conversation and make it easier for young people to approach and talk to others (Pavis *et al.*, 1997). For young people then, alcohol is not only a part of adult culture that they experiment with and learn how to use, it is also a means by which other developmental processes can be facilitated.

Thus, in a time when young people are also striving for independence and a sense of place in the adult world, alcohol may be one way of allowing them to

articulate their social identity (Engels and Knibbe, 2000). The developmental needs of young people may vary according to age and so, therefore, does the way alcohol is used. For instance, early use of alcohol centres around experimentation then, as young people move to drinking in unsupervised environments with their peers, the emphasis moves to feeling good, having "fun" and losing control (Shiner and Newburn, 2001). At this age, drinks such as strong ciders are popular primarily because they can allow people to get drunk quickly (Hughes *et al.*, 1997). They therefore serve a purpose in terms of facilitating a sense of fun and allowing young people to integrate and belong. Fairly soon after this the purpose of drinking shifts to that of forming relationships where alcohol is seen as a lubricant by which this can be achieved. To young people drinking to excess is either accidental (arising from lack of experience) or more commonly it is purposeful, to create a sense of fun. An important part of becoming independent and constructing a sense of identity as a group is to share a set of norms that in some way subvert adult norms regarding how drink should be taken and the norms of behaviour regarding alcohol related conduct (Dean, 1990). In this way, drinking with peers can be seen as a "time-out" from adult social norms, a demarcation of a separate social identity and a deliberate subversion of more traditional patterns of drinking and the rules regarding these (Traeen and Kvalem, 1996).

Drinking is therefore socially structured and so whether or not it is a problem depends on who is defining the drinking behaviour, how tolerant such people are of the specific norms of such groups and also the context in which drinking takes place (Gofton, 1990). From the point of view of *young people themselves*, and this has often been overlooked, their drinking is simply a normal part of growing up and performs important social and developmental functions. Norms and practices, including drinking to excess and binge drinking, can be viewed as part of this process. They may be different from those of mainstream society (and hence why they may be seen as delinquent) but they are far from deviant in terms of what young people normally do. Nevertheless, and somewhat paradoxically, it may still be advantageous for young people to describe their drinking as deviant in order to create space between their own norms and those of adults. However, this is different from the meaning of deviancy ascribed by many researchers where the implication is one of individual abnormality requiring intervention and correction. So, having established the relative normality of young people's drinking, the question then needs be to be asked: what constitutes

"harmful" and/or "risky" drinking and why is this a particular concern when it comes to young people?

2.3.2 Deconstructing "harm" and "risk"

Alcohol Concern (2001a) provide a definition of harmful drinking as drinking that can "adversely affect health, both physically and psychologically, or results in law breaking or other risk-taking activity". For young people, they suggest this can either refer to a single occasion of drinking or to more long-term patterns of use. In using such a definition the emphasis therefore switches from alcohol use to alcohol *misuse*. Most of the "harm" discussed by researchers, however, tends to refer to indirect effects, or to its potential for, rather than actual, harm.

For instance, in terms of effects on health, some evidence is provided of actual harm such as hospital admissions for alcohol poisoning (Valios, 2001; Alcohol Concern, 2000). The numbers of young people involved here are, however, relatively small. Overall, young people remain one of the healthiest groups in the population and reported effects on health tend to be minor, such as hangovers and/or being sick (Marsh *et al.*, 1986). Most of these health effects arise from single occasion drinking and are generally not considered harmful by young people themselves. Instead, they are seen as part and parcel of drinking for "fun" and, given the collective nature of much of young people's drinking, are frequently used in young people's narratives to embellish stories and construct a sense of shared excitement and feeling of togetherness (Pavis and Cunningham-Burley, 1999). Yet the apparent rise in "binge-drinking" amongst young people remains an apparent cause for concern amongst many researchers. On the one hand, as was mentioned before, this may represent a moral disapproval of such behaviour, behaviour that appears to subvert accepted "adult" practices of drinking by involving excessive drinking without restraint and with deliberate intent to intoxicate (Gofton, 1990). On the other hand, there are also genuine concerns with regard to the *indirect* effects such drinking may have on the individual and on others. These effects have been well documented in the literature, and include law-breaking and other risk-taking activities such as vandalism, violence, accidents and the practice of unsafe sex. Furthermore, it has been suggested that alcohol use may actually form a "gateway" to the use of harder drugs, primarily as a result of drinking in environments shared by users of illicit drugs (Goddard and Higgins, 2000; Sutherland and Willner, 1998). The difficulty with such effects is that

it is extremely difficult to prove any direct causal links (with the possible exception of alcohol intake and violence in young males, Fergusson *et al.*, 1996). For instance, alcohol use may not only result in spontaneous unsafe sex, it can also be used as a pre-meditated excuse and justification for such activity.

Alcohol use is therefore one of a set of factors that interplay in a complex manner when engaging in potentially dangerous or illegal activities. Whether alcohol leads to risk-taking, or risk-taking individuals are more likely to drink alcohol, or both, remains a moot point. It is therefore often difficult to tease out the exact "harm" alcohol is actually causing in these situations. Certainly, the physical effects of alcohol will vary according to a variety of factors such as differences in weight, sex and metabolism and the degree of experience and therefore tolerance a young person has of alcohol (Murgraff, Parrot and Bennet, 1999). Even more important is the context in which such drinking takes place. For instance, drinking near a railway line is likely to be far more hazardous than drinking in a friend's house. It therefore cannot be claimed in black and white terms that drinking a certain amount of alcohol will have a certain "harmful" effect. As such, defining "safe" or "harmful" levels becomes very problematic. Nevertheless, government recommendations regarding "safe" limits of alcohol have recently been switched to daily rather than weekly limits in order to address such single occasion drinking (Matheson and Summerfield, 1998). Whilst this may help to raise general awareness regarding the potential physical "harm" involved in binge drinking *per se* it is unlikely, given the complexity of factors involved, to be particularly useful regarding risky or illegal behaviour. Such limits are only applicable to adult levels of drinking and also pertain to health risks that are not generally seen by young people as relevant (Wright, 1999). In fact, there is evidence to suggest that young people generally consider alcohol to be a "safe" alternative to the use of other drugs (Murgraff *et al.*, 1999). Furthermore, risky and illegal behaviour, through which most of the harm pertaining to young people is alleged to occur, is often undertaken by those young people classified as "moderate" rather than heavy drinkers (Murgraff *et al.*, 1999). The message appears to be that young people are going to binge drink and the best approach therefore is to assist them in doing this safely. What has been missing from much of the research are young people's own perceptions of "risk" and "harm" in relation to alcohol use and a focus on how young people interpret alcohol messages regarding "safe" levels.

In terms of the psychologically harmful effects of alcohol use, there is little empirical evidence to suggest that single occasion drinking is directly detrimental to the mental health of young people. Some research has alluded to an alcohol-related increase in suicides amongst young people (Shiner and Newburn, 2001) but whether this is directly due to alcohol's dis-inhibitory effect, or is a result of young people with underlying depression drinking more, is unclear. This does, however, raise some interesting issues regarding the reasons why young people drink. Overall, these have largely been reported as positive; i.e., to enhance social facilitation or to enhance mood (Pavis *et al.*, 1997). However, there have also been reports of young people drinking for more negative reasons. For instance, Dean (1990) cited the case of a girl who drank to excess in order to cope with social situations she found extremely difficult. Laboratory experiments by Samoluk *et al.* (1999) found that drinking to excess in order to cope with difficult situations was widely evident in those individuals with underlying levels of high anxiety. Other research has suggested that some groups of young people may also drink to cope with external pressures such as parental expectations regarding academic studies (Denscombe and Drucquer, 2000). Whilst alcohol use does not *cause* these difficulties, the notion that it can then be used as a prop or crutch to help young people cope has led some to suggest that drinking to excess may then become an established pattern for these young people (Valios, 2001). Drinking no longer becomes group-centred and positively evaluated but instead may become a solitary, reflexive and predominantly drug-centred activity (Dean, 1990), placing young people at risk of becoming dependent on alcohol. In the long-term, this could result in serious psychological and physical health consequences. Albeit a minority, this is an important group of young people who are therefore genuinely at risk.

Overall, however, there have been few studies carried out examining the degree to which patterns of drinking in young people are carried forward later in life. Certainly, there is agreement that if young people continue to drink in the same manner, particularly with regard to binge drinking, they will eventually suffer serious physical and psychological health problems. Such drinking would then indeed warrant the label of harmful. There is, however, contradictory and inconsistent evidence on this issue (B.M.A., 1986; Murgraff *et al.*, 1999). Furthermore, patterns of drinking in the short-term are generally found to be poor predictors of long-term patterns of drinking (Wright, 1999). Neither can it be assumed that adults who drink heavily did

so when they were younger. Other circumstances may intervene to cause an onset of such drinking such as a major life event (e.g., bereavement) or the development of mental health problems. Young people themselves are also generally aware that there is a potential long-term health risk (Black and Weare, 1989) but few envisage this will be a problem. Most say they will have cut down drastically when they get older as a result of the onset of responsibilities such as marriage and having children (Backett and Davison, 1992). Such claims, of course, may also be used as a way of justifying their excessive intake when young; i.e., heavy drinking is only temporary and "harm" only occurs in the long-term.

2.3.3 Diversity and contexts- the individual and the social

A perennial debate within psychology concerns the degree to which it is the individual who is given primacy or the social practices and structures in which they live. Research on alcohol use amongst young people, as with so many other areas, reflects this debate. Largely, much of the analytical research has been conducted from a positivist framework giving primacy to the individual. Such an approach was evident in the previous section where Problem Behaviour Theory (Jessor and Jessor, 1977) was used to construct young people's behaviour as deviant. Also highly influential in this regard is the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), later extended into the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1988). Widely applied in many areas of psychology, this particular theoretical model proposes that young people's drinking behaviour can be predicted from what they say they would do in certain situations and circumstances. Central to this model is the notion of a unitary individual with discrete beliefs and attitudes, who makes rational decisions about their actions on the basis of potential consequences, perceived social norms and their own perceived drinking skills (Wright, 1999). There have, however, been many criticisms of this model. For instance, the causal relationships it proposes have rarely been proved and in some cases, actually disproved; e.g., Iannotti *et al.* (1996) who found that drinking behaviour could *precede* the formation of attitudes. Secondly, it presents a rather "static", mechanical view of the individual which does not really address the dynamism inherent in everyday situations of human interaction, and the perhaps unpredictable nature of human behaviour in these situations (particularly when under the influence). Also missing in this regard are the influences of emotion

(heightened by alcohol) and the influence of past experience on an individual's behaviour.

Thirdly, and perhaps most fundamentally, attitudes and beliefs are seen as discrete and located within the individual. Consequently, "social norms" are also seen as perceived and internalised on an individual basis. However, much of the previous research has suggested that, far from acting in accordance with such perceived norms, young people drink in a way that allows them "time out" from the normal social rules of behaviour (Traeen and Kvalem, 1996; Wright, 1999). This, perhaps cultural phenomenon, suggests that social norms are not "cast in stone" but instead are reworked and redefined in a collective manner, and are done so according to the situation and group of people within which the person is situated. Many discursive psychologists therefore suggest that attitudes and beliefs may be more usefully conceptualised as essentially social in nature, located not within the individual but instead constructed via language in the course of interaction (Potter, 1996). "Attitudes" are therefore highly variable according to the contexts/situations in which they are constructed and are perhaps more accurately conceptualised as socially created "meanings" that both arise from, and define, the contexts in which they are embedded.

Awareness of a more socially orientated approach highlights the lack of attention paid by previous research to cultural, social and environmental influences on behaviour. In so doing, the *diversity* of drinking behaviour has often been overlooked, leading to stereotypical views of young people and over-generalisation; e.g., in terms of young people being "deviant". This is not to say that contextual influences have been completely ignored, merely understated. For instance, drinking context was found to have an effect on alcohol-related expectancies (O'Hare, 1998; Rauch and Bryant, 2000) and consumption (Rauch and Bryant, 2000; Samoluk *et al.*, 1999). However, within such studies, the focus is still on the rational decision-making individual and the role of the context is underplayed. This is despite the fact that aspects of the drinking setting, such as the time, location and personal characteristics such as gender (Greenfield and Room, 1997) have been found to contribute more to variations in consumption than any alcohol-specific beliefs and norms.

Other studies, however, do take a broader view, noting the effect on young people's drinking consumption of economic factors such as weekly allowance (Lintonen *et al.*, 2000), environmental factors such as the type of community in which

young people live (Harnett *et al.*, 1999; Iannotti *et al.*, 1996) and social factors such as family background (Foxcroft and Lowe, 1991). The best of these studies locate alcohol use amongst young people firmly in its historical, economic and cultural context. Gofton (1990), for example, outlined how traditional, predominantly male, working-class patterns of drinking in the North of England were socially structured around specific practices and rituals with norms and values that arose out of, and helped reproduce, the economic and social conditions of the local community. Economic and social change has since occurred on a large scale, resulting in vast changes in the way young people drink. For instance, the decline of traditional industries, an increase in economic wealth and the growth of consumerism has resulted in young people having more resources in terms of time and money and engaging in patterns of drinking that are now firmly linked to consumption and leisure. This is reflected in the practices surrounding drinking which is now largely a youth-oriented activity, involving various drinks and settings, a large number of people (both men and women), and pub "crawls" rather than just being centred on one "local" pub. Young people's norms and values are those related to consumption such as individual style and choice (the clothes worn, the drinks and locations preferred) and leisure such as sexual liaisons, getting drunk and using alcohol as a means of personal transformation; i.e., as a way to take "time out" from everyday life. Leisure and consumption, rather than work and community, are, Gofton suggests, now the means by which young people construct a sense of status and identity. Culturally, alcohol has therefore become a central part of young people's lives and an integral part of social participation with their peer groups, and this itself is embedded in a long history of alcohol use in Britain as a source and method of collective celebration and consociate belonging (Dean, 1990). Such an analysis shows how drinking behaviour can be seen to be fundamentally situated in a variety of social, cultural, economic and political contexts.

Gofton's analysis, however, focused largely on young people within just one area of the UK. The implications of his study are that drinking practices will vary across cultures (as Engels and Knibbe, 2000, found in different areas of Europe) as well as within cultures and, even within communities, there will be variation in drinking practices amongst young people, sometimes as a result of belonging to different ethnic groups (Denscombe and Drucquer, 2000) or sometimes just as a result of belonging to different sub-cultures such as "Goths" (Dean, 1990). Such sub-

cultures have often been ignored in research (Wright, 1999) yet they highlight the diversity that exists amongst young people. It is important to take account of this variation in drinking practices and the norms, values and meanings that alcohol use has for young people within the context of their everyday lives. Drinking behaviour does not exist in a vacuum; it is embedded in everyday contexts and the wider social and economic contexts that enshroud these. How alcohol use is organised, the influence of the local and the broader culture, and the social structure of the particular drinking group are all instrumental in therefore creating (and eroding) the values and meanings that order such use.

Following on from this discussion, the next chapter will offer a review and critique of the different methodologies underpinning the theories that have been debated here. In so doing, a rationale will be constructed for the use of an alternative theoretical and methodological framework, one that will provide the foundations upon which the studies in this thesis will then be carried out.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter has three objectives. First, it presents a methodological critique of the research literature reviewed in the previous two chapters. Second, it proposes the use of an alternative methodological and theoretical framework based around discourse analytic principles. Finally, it outlines how this framework can be drawn on and used as a basis upon which to carry out the studies reported in this thesis.

3.2 Methodological evaluation

3.2.1 Descriptive studies

The majority of research on alcohol use amongst young people is largely descriptive in nature and focuses predominantly on young people's behaviour. The preferred method for this type of study is that of the survey. Survey methods have much to recommend them and, as could be seen in the previous two chapters, give rise to many important findings. In particular, they enable broad patterns of alcohol use to be established and allow trends to be pinpointed, forming a basis for future research and possible interventions. However, there are also several limitations to this type of methodology which affect the conclusions that can be drawn from it. Perhaps the most salient problem of all with such research is that, despite its ubiquitous nature, it is often difficult to make comparisons between studies. There are a number of reasons for this, relating to both design and content.

Design issues

There is a great deal of inconsistency among surveys with regard to the particular age groups they choose to focus upon. For example, some concentrate on a narrow range of ages e.g., 15-16 year olds (Miller and Plant, 2000), whilst, for others, a broader age range is preferred, e.g., 10-15 year olds (Balding, 2001). However, even amongst those who use a wider range of ages there is variation in the particular age groups studied. Aitken (1978) for example, focused on 10-14 year olds, whilst 11-15 year olds was the preferred cohort of Goddard and Higgins (2000). Such variation makes it difficult to draw general conclusions regarding alcohol use in young people particularly because, as was discussed in Chapter One, the behaviour of young people varies greatly according to age. Conclusions can therefore only be drawn after careful analysis of the data sets but these are not always clearly disaggregated in terms of age.

Such comparisons, where possible, are made even more difficult by the fact that very few surveys have a nationwide focus and generally tend to rely on samples taken from specific areas of the UK. For example, Miller and Plant (2000) focused on one specific area of Scotland, Goddard and Higgins (2000) on the whole of England, and Sutherland and Shepherd (2001) on three towns within England. Comparing regional differences in alcohol use is therefore difficult as no survey appears to focus on exactly the same regions. It is therefore difficult to tease out what such differences could be, and what the specific effects of living in different regions have on patterns of alcohol use, or whether such effects may be due to other factors. A similar point relates to studies carried outside of the UK. The lack of a truly national survey makes comparing findings in the UK to those carried out in Europe (Lintonen, Rimpela, Vikat and Rimpela, 2000; Oostven, Knibbe and De Vries, 1996), USA (McCall, 1997) and Australia (Fergusson, Lynskey and Horwood, 1996) tentative at best. When doing so there is a danger of over-generalising the results of one country and ignoring the diversity that lies within (Engels and Knibbe, 2000).

A further point here, related to the focus on different regions, concerns how representative such UK surveys therefore are in terms of the particular cross section of young people drawn upon. The patterns of use found by Miller and Plant (2000) in Scotland may not be applicable to those living elsewhere in the UK. Similarly, the findings of Bean, Wilkinson, Whynes and Giggs (1988) in Nottingham may not be applicable to those living elsewhere in England. Furthermore, in some studies the sample sizes used are very small e.g., 384 in Aitken's (1978) study and cannot even be considered representative of the region from which they are selected. Although most researchers do seem to be aware of these limitations, caution still needs to be exercised regarding the degree to which the findings of one study can be extrapolated to young people in general.

Factors such as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background and whether the location is urban or rural also need to be taken into account. Most surveys do, in fact, take gender into account but fare less well when it comes to representing ethnicity. To achieve a good spread of young people from varying socio-economic backgrounds and location a variety of different sampling techniques are often used. Frequently, the sample of young people is obtained from schools. Sometimes many schools are used in order to obtain a good representative spread. For instance, Miller and Plant (2000) obtained a sample of 2641 young people from 227 schools. Other researchers prefer to

focus on a smaller number of schools; e.g., Sutherland and Willner (1998) obtained their sample of 5383 young people from only 6 schools. Such a small number of schools may mean the sample is unrepresentative so various techniques are used to overcome this. Goddard and Higgins (2000), for instance, used a quota sample of schools where they selected schools on the basis of their selection policies, gender mix and the type of school they were; e.g., grant-maintained. Alternative approaches were to select an equal number of schools from urban and rural areas (Bean, Wilkinson, Whynes and Giggs,1988), select schools according to size (Rossow, Pape and Wichstrom, 1999) or just simply to select randomly according to region (Aitken, 1978). Whilst all such approaches are valid they may also lead to under or over representation to a greater or lesser degree (as was the case with class in Aitken's study and a resultant bias towards high achievers in Pavis, Cunningham-Burley and Amos' 1997 study) and, once more, render comparison of findings difficult.

As well as being specific to a certain area, many descriptive studies are also specific to a certain time. This is a result of the abundant use of cross sectional designs as opposed to longitudinal ones. The strength of cross-sectional designs is that they usefully allow local variations in behaviour to be highlighted. They also, if carried out yearly (e.g., Goddard and Higgins 2000), biennially or even after a gap of some years (Denscombe and Drucquer, 2000) show trends and changes in drinking behaviour in the population of young people over time. However, what such studies do not show is how the drinking behaviour of a *particular group* of young people changes over time. This would be extremely useful as there is little research on whether the increase in drinking, particularly binge drinking, amongst young people is reflected in their drinking patterns as they get older. So far, what little research there has been has produced very unclear results. It would also allow for relationships to be more clearly established between young people's drinking and possible antecedents or consequences of such behaviour. For instance, one of the few longitudinal studies that has been carried out (Fergusson, Lynskey and Horwood, 1996) established a relationship between the IQ and behavioural conduct of young people at age 8, and their subsequent alcohol use and offending behaviour at age 15/16. Carrying out more longitudinal studies therefore appears to be highly desirable despite being more time-consuming.

Content issues

The most common instrument used by researchers when conducting surveys is that of the questionnaire which relies on self-report by the participants. Whilst the reliability of the items used has often been found to be robust the validity of such an instrument for measuring behaviour has often been called into question (Lynagh, Schofield and Swanson-Fisher, 1997; Sharp and Lowe, 1989). Perhaps one of the biggest concerns centres around the lack of standardisation of the questions used (Sharp and Lowe, 1989, Wright, 1999). For instance, in trying to obtain a measure of young people's drinking patterns, some researchers ask questions pertaining to frequency i.e., how often a week they drink whilst others ask about the amount they drank in the last seven days (Balding, 2001) Whilst the latter question may lead to more accuracy in terms of recall it may not actually be representative in terms of the usual weekly drinking pattern of a young person, whatever that may be.

The wording of a question may also create problems for young people. Sutherland and Willner (1998), for instance, report that when young people were asked about "regular use" they persistently confused this with "have ever used" leading to much higher estimates of drinking behaviour as a result. Often, young people have to interpret for themselves what the question means; e.g., they have to decide for themselves when they were last "really drunk" (Lintonen, Rimpela, Vikat and Rimpela, 2000) and may have varying criteria for this. Similarly, when asked when they had their first "proper" drink young people reported that they were confused as to what constituted such a drink (Marsh, Dobbs and White, 1986). Goddard and Higgins (2000) to some extent remedied this problem by explaining beforehand to young people that a proper drink was a "whole" one; i.e., a full glass and not just a sip or taste.

There is also no standardised format with which to respond to such questions, as possible responses range from giving open-ended answers, using Likert Scales (e.g., Greene, Krcmar, Walters, Rubin, Hale and Hale, 2000) or simply placing ticks next to an appropriate answer (e.g., Anderson, Plant and Plant, 1998). Statistically speaking, the most valid and reliable answers are likely to be obtained from questions that are more complex in structure (Wright, 1999). However, the increase in questionnaire length occurring as a result may produce a rise in the number of missing responses. Care also needs to be taken in pitching the questions at a level appropriate to the age group being surveyed. Some younger and/or less fluent people may not

always understand the questions they are being asked, particularly if they are more complex in nature (Goddard and Higgins, 2000). A remedy to this may be to administer the questionnaires face-to-face with younger people as Aitken (1978) did so that any difficult questions are explained, albeit at the risk of losing some standardisation.

Another potential problem with survey data concerns the predefined categories used by researchers when analysing their data. Based on the answers young people give, researchers then classify them into light, moderate or heavy drinkers and treat them as such throughout their analysis. However, the criteria for such classification are variable and often fairly arbitrary (Shiner and Newburn, 2001). Often these are based on "unit" consumption but different researchers classify these in different ways. For instance, Anderson *et al.* (1998) define a "heavy" drinker as someone who consumes 11 units or more in one session (if male). Other researchers use more conservative estimates so it is possible for the same person to be a heavy drinker in one study and a moderate drinker in another. Such a lack of standardisation means extreme caution should be paid to conclusions reached. Another problem with such definitions is that they are treated in absolute terms. No account is taken of individual variations in weight, experience with drinking, the overall length of drinking episode or indeed the context in which drinking takes place (Shiner and Newburn, 2001). All of these may have an effect on the consequences of drinking and may be more salient than the amount *per se*. For example, Donovan and McEwan (1995) found that the context in which drink was taken strongly influenced any subsequent participation in risky sex. Furthermore, the validity of using "units" as a measure of safe drinking is itself questionable as these are based on recommended levels for adult drinking. The different metabolisms of young people bring into question the degree to which it is appropriate to apply such measures of drinking to young people. The degree of variation amongst young people in terms of their size and weight makes any conclusions regarding harmful drinking difficult to draw with any certainty (Wright, 1999).

All such considerations assume of course that an accurate measure of the amount drunk can be obtained in the first place. As reported in Chapter One, young people increasingly move towards drinking in unsupervised environments where drinks are mixed, frequently taken in non-standard measures and rarely closely monitored (Wright, 1999). Whether young people can therefore give an accurate

measure of their own drinking remains open to question for, as Marsh *et al.* (1986) note, young people are asked to respond to questions about their usual patterns of drinking but, in practice, such patterns are very irregular. One possible remedy for this may be to ask young people to fill in drinking diaries as O'Hare (1998) suggests. However, this requires a lot of conscientious effort on the part of young people. They may forget and, at any rate, will still be filling in such diaries retrospectively. There is still no guarantee they will remember accurately what they have been drinking whilst under the influence.

This issue reflects perhaps the biggest concern surrounding the use of survey methods. Can the responses given be considered accurate and therefore valid as many inconsistencies have been reported in survey research. For example, in Anderson *et al.*'s (1998) study, young people often claimed that the largest amount that they had ever drunk was lower than the amount they claim to have had on their last drinking occasion! There may be several reasons for such discrepancies. Young people may have misunderstood the question or perhaps simply could not remember the largest amount they had ever drunk. Such faulty recall may be commonplace and may be compounded by the fact that young people were drunk at the time they had this amount and thus suffering from alcohol induced amnesia. Alternatively, the question may refer to an event that occurred a long time ago. Marsh *et al.* (1986) for example, found that 17 year olds reported having had their first drink at a later age than did 13 year olds. This may represent a trend towards starting to drink at an earlier age, differences in definition of what constitutes a first drink or it may simply involve difficulties in remembering.

Inaccurate answers may also be given more deliberately. Under or over reporting of amounts drunk is a big threat to validity in survey research (Wright, 1999). There may be several reasons for both. Under reporting may be a result of young people not wishing to be to seen to drink too much (a "social desirability" bias according to Greene, Krcmar, Walters, Rubin, Hale and Hale, 2000) even though the reports are confidential and anonymous. The questions may sometimes be of a sensitive nature i.e., inquiring about offending behaviour (Fergusson *et al.*, 1996) or sexual activities (Donovan and McEwan, 1995), which young people may prefer not to be totally honest about for similar reasons. Conversely, young people may wish to overstate the amount they drink out of bravado or perhaps to align themselves with perceived social norms regarding drinking. Furthermore, given the haphazard nature

of young people's drinking e.g., mixing drinks, using non-standard containers, etc., it would be impossible for young people to report how much they had drunk even if they wanted to. The actual degree of over or under reporting can therefore never really be ascertained but greater honesty is more likely to be achieved with confidential and anonymous surveys than with face-to-face interviews such as those carried out by Aitken (1978) and, given the impracticality of using behavioural measures of actual drinking, may be the best that can be achieved. One way to improve such measures would be to ask people whilst they are actually in drinking venues, as Oostven, Knibbe and De Vries (1996) did, though this approach is perhaps limited to those who are legally old enough to drink. It may also be that answering the questionnaire at home (as the 16-17 year olds in Marsh *et al.*'s 1986 sample did) would result in more honest answers as young people may feel under less pressure than if they were formally sat down at school, although this may depend on who is with them when they are filling in the questionnaire. Despite these concerns, there remains a fair degree of agreement between surveys on self-report measures so perhaps it is better to bear the potential threats to validity in mind, rather than abandon the use of such methods outright.

A further issue arises regarding the number of young people who did not, for whatever reason, respond to the questions. Such non-response rates in schools are around two to three percent (Miller and Plant, 2000). For instance, three percent of young people in Rossow *et al.*'s sample did not respond and a large number of these were thought to be young people with learning difficulties or those originating from immigrant populations, two groups who may be at a higher risk of substance misuse. In longitudinal studies, the non-response rate increases notably over time, particularly among males (Lintonen *et al.*, 2000) and, more pertinently, among those more likely to be alcohol abusers (Ianotti *et al.*, 1996). Sometimes an entire school may refuse to take part (Marsh *et al.*, 1986), concerned about their reputation and reluctant to have rates of alcohol use amongst their pupils highlighted. A more serious problem appears to be that young people who are excluded from school are also unable to take part. Rates of alcohol abuse amongst these people are higher than average with the result, perhaps, that the degree of harmful drinking amongst young people is under-estimated. There is the danger that groups who are particularly high at risk and need attention "disappear" from the statistics altogether.

In terms of data presentation, the results of surveys are often presented as "averages" for each category of interest; e.g., males aged 15 living in the North-West (as in Goddard and Higgins, 2000). Such data may, however, be biased in cases where there are a large number of heavy drinkers or abstainers. This can result in distorted averages that give an impression of generally high levels of drinking in an age group where, in reality, there is simply a large number of heavy drinkers (with everyone else drinking at moderate or light levels). It may therefore be preferable to use median or modal scores instead but these are rarely reported. An even more salient point here is that the use of such broad categories may obscure actual variations or patterns amongst a particular minority of young people (Shiner and Newburn, 2001). For instance, Denscombe and Drucquer (2000) found variations in drinking amongst subgroups of Asians that would not be picked up in a larger survey. As such, larger surveys may lack cultural sensitivity. It is also interesting to note that few surveys compare their results with surveys of drinking in the adult population at large. Consumption in the adult population has risen markedly in the last few decades (O.N.S., 2004) and it may be that rises in frequency and consumption of alcohol, or changes in drinking patterns, are simply reflecting more general trends in the population at large. This calls into question the degree to which it is young people who are seen as having, or even being, the problem.

As a final point, it is worth emphasising the overwhelming focus on behaviour by survey research at large. Given the concerns expressed by many that young people do not "know" enough about alcohol it seems odd that there are very few surveys that explore young people's level of alcohol related knowledge (Shiner and Newburn, 2001). Earlier studies by Jahoda and Crammond (1972) and Marsh *et al.* (1986) did attempt this but since then such surveys have been thin on the ground. Recent surveys that have done so, e.g., Bean *et al.* (1988), have tended to focus only on the over 16s. Furthermore, there is little emphasis on finding out about young people's experience with alcohol. This is surprising given that it is more likely to be this experience, or lack of it, that contributes to young people getting into difficulties with alcohol rather than the amount they drink *per se*. In sum, surveys are very useful in providing snapshots of broad patterns and drinking trends. However, they are limited when it comes to capturing the diversity of drinking patterns amongst young people and poor at demonstrating why, and in what circumstances, such drinking occurs.

3.2.2 Analytical studies- quantitative

Design issues

In relation to the number of studies that focus on young people's reported drinking behaviour, there are comparatively few that seek to explain *why* young people drink. Those that do, and use a quantitative methodology incorporating the use of questionnaires, tend to have shortcomings similar to those found in descriptive studies. For instance, such studies are overwhelmingly carried out in the USA or in Canada (e.g., Samoluk, Stewart, Sweet and MacDonald, 1999) and are limited in terms of applicability to the UK. For example, in most US states the legal age for drinking in bars is 21 whereas in the UK it is 18. Drinking amongst young people in the USA may therefore be less culturally acceptable as a result. As such, the reasons young people give for drinking in the USA may therefore be different to those in the UK so some caution is needed when extrapolating results.

A second point to make is that most of the analytical work on young people in the USA tends to be carried out on young people *over* the age of 16 (usually between the ages of 16 and 18). There may be several reasons for this, some of which may be practical and involve issues of ethics and access to younger people. The primary reason, however, appears to be that it is the 16 and over age group who are seen as having, or as creating, problems around their drinking. It may be that the USA has less of a problem with drinking among the under 16s and that this is, or is seen as, largely a British or European (e.g., Lintonen *et al.*, 2000) phenomenon. The focus on illegal under-age drinking in the USA may therefore centre on a much older age group than it does in the UK.

The samples used in such studies are also predominantly drawn from colleges and universities (e.g., Rauch and Bryant, 2000; O' Hare, 1998). It is easy to see why this should be so, as young people in such institutions are easy to access and often have the time and motivation to take part. However, it is highly unlikely that these samples are representative of young people in the USA as a whole. Caution is therefore needed when drawing conclusions from such research and generalising them to other young people. Even those studies that focused on samples of other young people tended to be un-representative. For example, Iannotti *et al.* (1996) used an exclusively African-American sample. Many of the studies were also cross sectional in nature so whether any results are maintained over time remains open to question.

Cross-sectional research does have advantages, however, in that it allows relationships to be established between a pre-defined set of variables relevant to drinking behaviour. This allows precise specification of some of the factors underlying why it is that young people drink. In such studies the instruments used are often considered reliable, and have been tested for validity many times previously; e.g., the Social Context of Drinking Scale (Rauch and Bryant, 2000) and the Drinking Motives Questionnaire (Samoluk *et al.*, 1999). There is, however, a difficulty with the use of such instruments in that they often ask participants to say what they would do in certain contexts but do not tap into what *actually* happens in such contexts. There is therefore an element of speculation involved on the participants' behalf (Rauch and Bryant, 2000). There is no guarantee that what participants say they would do is what they would actually do, no matter how strong their beliefs, as the unpredictable and fluid nature of real-life drinking contexts makes such claims provisional at best. A question mark may therefore remain over the external validity of some of this research. More fundamentally, such research may also fail to capture the dynamic and essentially interactive nature of alcohol use, providing a rather static and individualistic picture that perhaps lacks authenticity.

Alternatively, and more rarely, some researchers have used experiments to investigate the variables of interest. This allows for even tighter control and a degree of observation and monitoring to be possible. Rather than having to imagine or speculate, participants are tested to see what they actually *do*. Unfortunately, the nature of the experiment is such that it has to be held in laboratory type conditions. This means that, although participants are actually engaging in a real life situation (e.g., Samoluk *et al.*, 1999) it is not a situational context they are familiar with; i.e., not one they encounter from day to day. Therefore, how they behave in a laboratory situation, although of interest in itself, may be of limited relevance in terms of how they act in the many different settings in the outside world. For instance, in the laboratory, participants are aware of their status as participants and may react in a way they feel researchers want them to, rather than in the way they would naturally act. So, again, the external validity of such research could be questioned. Furthermore, in experiments, it is only possible to test a limited number of variables at any one time. In real-life contexts there may be any number of factors at work that influence drinking and it may be impossible to control for all these factors in a laboratory.

Other quantitative techniques that have been used are the structured interview and observation. However, these also appear to suffer from a lack of external validity. For instance, MacCall (1998) asked bartenders how likely they were to serve underage females they perceived as having varying degrees of attractiveness. However, in so doing, he asked them to rate pictures rather than the women themselves. This misses out on all sorts of subtle interactive information that may affect their judgements such as tone of voice, facial expressions, etc. Such techniques also tend to rely on limited and unrepresentative samples as they are time-consuming, and, in the case of observation (e.g., how many bottles of Hooch someone drinks in a pub), may only provide a snapshot sample that, taken out of a wider context, may be misleading.

3.2.3 Analytical studies- qualitative

In contrast to analytical quantitative research, there has actually been a reasonable amount of analytical qualitative work carried out in the UK on young people's use of alcohol. Such research has been useful in providing situated and contextual explorations of the meanings and values underlying the reasons why young people drink. However, there are methodological issues here too that merit further discussion.

For instance, the nature of qualitative work is such that it often focuses on very small samples of people. Numbers used, for example, can range from 106 (Pavis *et al.*, 1997; 1998) to 40 (Tolvanen, 1998) or even as low as 4 (Gough and Edwards, 1998). The findings of such research are normally not generalisable to young people at large though this is often not the aim of such research anyway, focusing as it does on diversity and complexity. Perhaps more problematic is that, because such research is limited in terms of numbers, it does not explore this diversity in full. For instance, most research is typically carried out in one context such as a flat (Gough and Edwards, 1998), school (Hughes *et al.*, 1997), locality (Pavis and Cunningham-Burley, 1999) or is confined to one geographical area such as a specific town (Gofton, 1990). Whilst these venues provide interesting insights, they do not always provide accounts that speak for all the various young people who live there. For instance, Pavis *et al.*'s (1999) research focused exclusively on young males, leaving out the female population. Gough and Edwards' (1998) research was also carried out exclusively with males, and these men came from middle class backgrounds in an affluent area of Manchester. Giles' (1999) study was carried out with students who

may also have come from predominantly middle class backgrounds. There is also a bias in the studies towards research carried out in Scotland (Dean 1990; Hughes *et al.*, 1997; Pavis *et al.*, 1998; Pavis and Cunningham-Burley, 1999). Often missing therefore are studies that focus on women, young people from working class areas (Pavis and Cunningham-Burley's 1999 study aside) and, particularly, on people from different ethnic backgrounds. Greater coverage of England would also be welcomed and it is interesting to note that not one qualitative study appears to have been carried out in Wales. A better balance of studies in different areas and with different groups of people may be required in the long term.

A number of different methods have also been employed, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. The most common technique is the interview, often carried out with participants on an individual basis. Such a method may, if the rapport is good, be an excellent way of eliciting detailed accounts of the meanings of alcohol use. However, it is not without its problems. For example, such meanings are obtained outside of, and are therefore divorced from, the various contexts in which actual drinking takes place. The meanings produced may therefore be more a product of the interviewer/interviewee interaction rather than being embedded in, and deriving from, these contexts. Secondly, there is an inbuilt power relationship between the researcher and interviewee, often enhanced by an age gap, which may inhibit the interviewee from giving frank answers. The interviewer may also tend to take control of the interview, preventing the interviewee from talking about the topics they wish to. An alternative method is to use focus groups which are excellent ways of obtaining a record of meanings that are co-constructed in interaction (Wilkinson, 1998), much as they would be in young people's usual drinking settings. This is particularly so if they are also drinking at the same time as they were in Gough and Edward's (1998) study (although ethically and legally this is not possible for younger people). However, there is still a degree of artificiality inherent as it is not a wholly "natural" drinking setting. Most participants are aware that the group is contrived rather than being a naturally occurring one involving spontaneous discussion. An alternative technique, one used by Pavis and Cunningham-Burley (1999), is to observe such interaction in real-life settings. Covert observation has its risks and may be ethically questionable but participant observation, as used by Pavis and Cunningham-Burley, can be highly fruitful in terms of the insights it provides. It is a time consuming method as the researcher needs to gain acceptance by the group in order to work with them and, of

course, there is the question of whether the participants ever really act naturally when the researcher is around, particularly if they have some idea of the purpose of his/her involvement as was the case in Pavis and Cunningham-Burleys' study. Nevertheless, over time, insights into the meanings underlying young people's drinking can emerge.

3.3 The approach of this research- discourse analysis as a methodology

The review of the literature carried out in previous chapters appears to show that very little in the way of discourse analytic research has been carried out on young people and drinking, with the exception perhaps of Giles' study on identity construction and drinking (1999). This is particularly so with the 11-16 age group, mainly because such research requires the use of interviews and/or focus groups which can be difficult to arrange and organise. A second reason relates to the popularity of questionnaire research which (despite its flaws) is nevertheless easy to administer and is a method that has acquired scientific respectability (not to mention public familiarity). It was the aim of this thesis, however, to bring something different to this research area using an epistemology that, it will be argued, can perhaps produce novel insights into the seemingly "problematic" nature of young people's drinking. Furthermore, it has sometimes been said that discourse analytic research is weak when it comes to offering practical applications of research. Willig (1999), amongst others, has argued that it is not necessarily the case that discourse analytic research cannot produce anything of practical value. Her own research with Gillies (Gillies and Willig, 1997) on smoking amongst working class women went a long way to showing why, through a focus on the different positioning strategies women use, working class women do not readily give up despite the financial and health benefits were they to do so. Insights derived from this study, for example, could be extremely useful in informing the development of health programmes which are often morally loaded yet fail to take into account how, for example, some women join in with the vilification of these "bad" smokers and simultaneously position themselves as "good", i.e., moral smokers. In other words, morally laden ads could work to vindicate some women's smoking behaviour! It is this type of insight that it is hoped will be brought to this thesis, particularly as, to date, alcohol education appears to be having little effect in reducing consumption or changing drinking behaviour.

Of course, as Gillies (1997) suggests, there is a moral element to research and here this applies to the question of whether young people should be encouraged to

give up drinking. What right have researchers or anybody else to tell them this? Certainly, from a public health perspective, the statistics on risk and harm discussed in Chapter One would appear to suggest discouraging drinking would be a good thing yet, at the same time, the same principles do not appear to apply to adults. It is hoped that the research in this thesis will shed some light on this issue in particular.

3.4 Epistemological issues

The approach adopted, discourse analysis, has been chosen mainly on epistemological grounds. Like many researchers, e.g., Potter and Wetherell (1987), Parker (1992) this encapsulates a broad rejection of the idea that there exists an external psychological and social reality that can be objectively measured through the use of instruments such as questionnaires and experiments. Instead, reality is best seen as multiple, fluid, and largely constructed through the use of language and other symbolic texts (although Potter (1996) tends to give primacy to the role of language only). In so doing, this thesis will align itself with the principles of social constructionism (Wetherell and Maybin, 1996) which, with a focus on the constructed nature of reality through language emphasises that, as human beings, we are fundamentally *socially* constituted through and through. That is to say we are both a product of, and yet help to change/recreate, through interaction with others, the particular time and place in which we live.

Discourse analysts, however, have had some disagreements over the extent to which a purely relativist position is, or should, be assumed. Some, such as Edwards and Potter (1992), take a fairly strong relativist position and argue that there can be no objectively definable reality as such; instead they argue that reality is constituted through discourse and this therefore should be the focus of analysis. Others, such as Parker (1992), have challenged this view as it depoliticises psychology and suggests that things which have material effects on people such as unemployment and ill health are not accorded any object status (and subsequently may not be critiqued and challenged). This thesis concurs with the latter view in that alcohol, as was seen in Chapter One, has a very "real" status in people's daily lives sometimes with quite severe material effects!

The use of alcohol (and the encouragement not to use it) is, the literature would suggest, tied quite strongly to current social practices, structures and ways of speaking all of which have a particular history. Therefore, for the purposes of this

thesis, the chosen method of analysis will be Foucauldian discourse analysis as this method facilitates an exploration of the historically and socially situated resources people draw on in order to construct, and re-construct, present day social and psychological realities. In so doing, people fundamentally construct their own subjectivities, i.e., their sense of who they are, what they can be and what they can think/feel. The types of subjectivities available to people however are, it will be argued, constrained by the resources available to them, often with very specific material outcomes.

3.5 The choice of studies

For this research, four different studies will be carried out. The first will look at young people's own discourses around drinking and assess these in the light of literature that has sought to specify the "real reasons" young people drink. Focus groups will be used here because they are a valuable way of obtaining discourses that are co-constructed (as they would be in everyday interaction). The second study will then look at educational discourses, specifically those present in educational materials, to see what subject positions young people are presented with in relation to drinking. The third study will also focus on education but will instead look at discourses as they are delivered "live" in the classroom by a number of different educators. The final study, also using focus groups, will look at young people's own constructions of this education and assess these in the light of the analyses carried out in the earlier studies. Exact details of the samples used, and how the data were collected, are given prior to each analysis.

3.6 Carrying out a Foucauldian discourse analysis

Unlike other methods of qualitative analysis, such as grounded theory for example, there is no pre-defined step-by-step method to follow when carrying out discourse analysis. However, a number of authors (Parker, 1992; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Willig, 2001) have proposed some general steps researchers can take that may help to provide structure to an analysis, as well as a clearer sense of direction and focus of ideas. These authors have also highlighted some important theoretical principles, largely relating to the nature of language and interaction, which need to be considered before carrying out any analysis. Prior to carrying out the analyses in this project, time was therefore taken to reflect on these principles and to think about how these may

relate to the aims of the project. The following section will describe in more detail how these principles relate to the way in which analyses were carried out. Subsequent sections will then go on to describe the different stages through which the analyses progressed.

3.6.1 Analytic principles- features of discourse

Action orientation

Almost without exception, researchers using discourse analysis reject the notion that language is a neutral medium to be used primarily as a tool for interpersonal communication. Instead, they see language as a resource that is drawn on and used flexibly to achieve certain functions within interaction; i.e., it helps to shape, create and recreate social and psychological realities in an ongoing and fluid manner. For those psychologists working within the field of discursive psychology e.g., Potter and Edwards (1992), the focus is on how certain discursive outcomes are achieved (through the use of discursive strategies) within the context of the interaction itself. For a Foucauldian analyst, however, the focus is much broader. These analysts place a heavy emphasis on the construction of subjectivity; i.e., on the discursive possibilities that are made available to people in terms of how they can act, think and feel. Thus, there is a focus not only on discursive outcomes but also on material outcomes in the everyday world in which people live.

Context

Most discourse analysts view language as context dependent to a greater or lesser degree, although the definition of what constitutes "context" is often a matter of debate. Conversation analysts such as Schegloff (1997) view the context as being that of the surrounding discourse; e.g., an answer to some form of question. Other discourse analysts go further and view the context as comprising those speakers who are uttering the discourse, where the interaction is taking place (and when) and under what circumstances. Foucauldian analysts perhaps take the broadest view of all as they would see the context as also constituting the wider social and historical circumstances in which the particular discursive interaction is taking place; e.g., the particular history of the topic under discussion, the relationship it has to social institutions and practices (and those of other cultures), and the social and cultural

positioning of the participants in relation to the topic. This latter view is the one that will be adhered to throughout the analyses carried out in this thesis.

Variability and diversity

Another key principle centres around the notion that language use is highly diverse and variable. Such diversity is apparent, not just between different speakers, but also within the same speaker whose speech may be littered with inconsistencies and contradictions. Such inconsistencies are related to the different functions of the discourses used and the contexts in which they are spoken. Discourse analysts such as Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest it would therefore be difficult to sustain the argument that people possess a unitary and stable set of attitudes. Instead, different discursive positions are continually taken up, reworked and redefined throughout the course of interaction. However, many discourse analysts also point out the high degree of similarity that appears to exist between certain, broader, ways of speaking about the world, and they argue it is these broader discourses or systems of meaning that are drawn on and used flexibly and diversely by speakers throughout interaction. Foucauldian analysts e.g. Willig (2001), are particularly interested in the relationship between these discursive "resources" and wider social structures and practices. They are concerned with the type of practices certain ways of speaking legitimate, the systems that are perpetuated and the interests that are served. Questions of power are therefore of immense interest to Foucauldian analysts. As such, their focus would be on who is using the discourses in question and from what position (e.g., in relation to gender, ethnicity and class), how the discourses are employed/used, whether these are the dominant ways of speaking about social/psychological realities, whether there are alternative repressed discourses whose voice is not being heard, and what the implications are in terms of the type of people we can be and the type of things we can do. These are the type of concerns that will be addressed in this thesis.

Bearing the above principles in mind the analysis of each study was then carried out according to procedural steps recommended by Willig (2001), and utilising suggestions made by Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Parker (1992).

3.6.2 Carrying out the analysis

Coding

Having collected a large amount of data, the first step in the analysis was to find a way of organising it and rendering it manageable. Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest that a useful first step is therefore to code the data. This form of coding is not intended to offer a formal classification of what is there (as it might be in, say, content analysis) but simply to enable the researcher to be able to manage large amounts of data and organise it into meaningful chunks. To be able to do this required immersion in the data through a lengthy process of reading and re-reading. Whilst doing so, initial thoughts and ideas were jotted down in note form for future reference. With the research questions in mind the next step after this was to read the data once more and annotate the text in the form of relevant themes such as, for example, "physical violence", "breaking rules", "parental drinking", "being ill", etc. At this early stage, as many themes as possible were generated in order to avoid missing any important aspects of the data. Upon completion of this process the themes were then written down on large sheets of paper in order to get an idea of their overall number and type, and of the relationships that may exist between them. On separate pieces of paper the themes were then re-written in a way that grouped together those of a similar type, such as "parental drinking" and "parental control". Depending on the study in question, the result was the creation of somewhere between ten and twenty more general themes derived from the data. As this was often too unwieldy a number on which to carry out more detailed analysis, decisions had to be made as to which themes to concentrate on.

Selecting salient themes

This process necessarily involved a degree of subjectivity but this is not to imply the judgements were arbitrary. The themes chosen were carefully selected on the basis of two criteria. The first of these was that the theme appeared to be fairly ubiquitous through the data and, as such, was of importance to the participants; an example being "drinking to get drunk". The second criterion was that the theme was relevant to the topic of this thesis, in particular to the topics mentioned from a public health perspective in the literature review. A good example of this is that of "physical harm" (occurring as a result of accidents or violent assault). This does not, of course, imply that themes which were left out are unimportant. For instance, there were many

themes in the data for the first study that related to the construction of gender and these may be highly important given the current focus in the media (and by researchers/policymakers) on the increasing amount women drink and the suggestion they are now adopting "male" drinking patterns. Such constructions of gender, however, were less in evidence in data obtained from the other studies and were thought, overall, to be less pertinent to the aims and goals of this project than would a focus on themes relating more specifically to harm and risk, protection of the young and the need for fun/ freedom, etc.

Discourse construction

The next stage in the analysis was to consider these themes, e.g., "physical harm", "childhood", "control", etc. as discursive objects, and to look at the ways these are constructed within the data. This required going back to the data and re-reading the texts, noting not just explicit references but also implicit ones. This is of key importance because, as Willig (2001) points out, the lack of a direct reference to an object can say a lot about how it is constructed; e.g., as "unknowable". Of key importance, however, was to consider the many *different* ways in which each of the objects is constructed. For example "childhood" was constructed sometimes as a time of innocence and vulnerability, at others as a time of rebellion and freedom from adult rules and norms as to how to behave. These discursive constructions were then located, where possible, within wider societal discourses such as discourses of rationality, discourses of risk or bio-medical discourses.

Focusing on action

The next stage in the analysis was to consider what functions such discursive constructions may have; i.e., what does constructing the object in this way achieve within this particular point in the text, and in relation to other discourses around it. For example, in Chapter Five, it will be argued that constructing young people as vulnerable to the effects of alcohol works to justify a need for them to exert self-control whilst drinking, thus rendering them responsible for their own drinking behaviour.

Positioning

Following on from this the next key stage in the analysis was to look at how subjects themselves are constructed, at how they are positioned discursively within specific networks of meaning, and the implications adopting these positions has for what can be said and done. For instance, in Chapter Six, a maternal discourse is drawn on and used to position female educators as naturally caring and nurturing. Within this discursive location, female educators can position themselves as people who have children's best interests at heart which effectively shuts off claims that they may instead be attempting to control behaviour that might be considered socially unacceptable.

Discourses in practice

The next stage of the analysis involved considering the ways in which the discourses (and the positions contained within them) may open up, or close down, possibilities for action; i.e., ways in which certain forms of practise become legitimated forms of behaviour. For instance, Chapter Four shows that one of the most dominant discourses used by young people is that of drinking for pleasure and fun. Often, such fun is conceived as deriving from the transgression of social norms of behaviour, achieved only through drinking to lose control as, at least at this point in time, young people can then not be held accountable for their actions. The discourse of pleasure therefore legitimates drinking to excess as a practice, as it is only through this practice that young people can escape and be free from societal constraints.

Subjectivity

Folllowing on from this, the final part of the analysis therefore involves some consideration of the implications that taking up various subject positions would have, not just for what people do, but also for what they can think and feel. For instance, referring back to the example above, young people may adopt the subject position offered to them of the "wild" and rebellious drinker and, when engaging in behaviour that breaks rules, will do so without guilt and will feel no sense of responsibility when accidents or mishaps occur.

Presenting the analysis

Once complete, the analysis for each part of the study often proved to be very lengthy and complex. The final part of the analytical process therefore involved re-organising and editing the material so that it had a logical and coherent structure, and could be presented in a comprehensible form that was both persuasive and plausible to the reader. Inevitably, in so doing, some material had to be omitted. However, such selection was made with care, with attention paid throughout to the key focus of the thesis; namely the dichotomous nature of alcohol use in terms of its costs and benefits, and the subsequent debate surrounding the role alcohol education plays, or should play, within society.

3.7 Warranting the research

Traditional criteria of reliability and validity do not generally apply to this type of research but this does not mean it therefore lacks rigour. Several researchers (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Taylor and Yates, 2001; Wood and Kroger, 2000) have suggested a number of criteria that are useful in evaluating qualitative research with the ones most relevant to this project outlined below.

1) Relevance: that the work has some connection with a widely publicised social issue.
2) Application: that the research has the potential to be applied; e.g., in terms of the future development of alcohol education programmes.
3) Rigour: in terms of attention to detail and explication of the analytical process.
4) Coherence: creating a persuasive argument.
5) It is located in relation to previously published work.

It is hoped that all these criteria will be judged to have been met upon completion of each research study.

CHAPTER 4: YOUNG PEOPLE'S DISCOURSES AROUND DRINKING

4.1 Introduction and aims of the study

The aim of this first study was to explore the discourses young people draw upon when talking about their own drinking. This was an interesting study to carry out as there had been little previous research on this topic using a discourse analytic methodology. In particular, it will be useful to compare the findings of this research to those in the mainstream literature. In this literature it was found that young people engaged in drinking primarily for purposes of social facilitation, relaxation, stress relief and for fun (e.g., Pavis, Cunningham-Burley and Amos, 1997). However, often these were questionnaire studies where such categories were pre-defined and presented to young people as an option to tick. The advantage of using the methodology in this study was that it gave young people an opportunity to talk without restriction, often resulting in the creation of elaborate expositions very rich in meaning. Another advantage of this research is that gave young people a chance to talk together about drinking (often in a very informal fashion) which also encouraged rich disclosure and, it could be argued, is a more natural day to day process than filling out questionnaires, at least when it comes to drinking!

4.2 Sample selection

The first decision made in this study was to restrict the sample to a manageable area in terms of data collection, which in this instance was the county of Dorset (where the researcher resided). This was largely an exploratory study with no previous research to use as a guide so it is unclear at this stage whether different discourses would be identified were young people from other regions of the UK to be selected. This would be a useful avenue for further research but, as an exploratory study intending to get a flavour of the range of discourses used, this sample was adequate. Besides, as it transpired, there was considerable variation in the background of those young people who did take part. For instance, one of the schools was a well known private school whilst another was a school defined by the government as "failing". Furthermore, two of the schools were in urban locations and two in rural locations so there was sufficient diversity amongst the young people who took part for the researcher to claim that as wide a range of discourses as possible had been sampled. In total, four schools took part overall with two or three groups of young people taking part from each (resulting in a total of twelve transcripts overall). As with all the schools who

took part in this project, none has been identified by name at any stage nor will they be until the school in question has seen a summary of the findings and indicated that they are happy to be acknowledged. Nevertheless, it is possible to give a breakdown of the demographic details of each group as follows.

Transcript details

Transcript 1: Three male participants, aged 14-15. Rural

Transcript 2: Seven female participants, aged 14-15. Rural.

Transcript 3: Four female participants and three male participants, aged 14-15. Rural.

Transcript 4: Five female participants, aged 15-16. Urban

Transcript 5: Four female participants and three male participants, aged 15-16. Urban.

Transcript 6: Six female participants, aged 13-14. Rural.

Transcript 7: Six male participants, aged 13-14. Rural.

Transcript 8: Three male participants and one female participant, aged 13-14. Rural.

Transcript 9: Four male participants, aged 14-15. Urban.

Transcript 10: Three female participants, aged 14-15. Urban.

Transcript 11: Three female participants and one male participant, aged 13-14. Urban.

Transcript 12: Five female participants and two male participants, aged 12-13. Urban.

Full transcripts of all the data are available on request.

4.3 Procedure

Head-teachers of all secondary schools within the Bournemouth and Poole area of Dorset were sent a letter explaining the purpose of the research and given an invitation to take part. As a result of this approach four schools responded positively and were then sent consent forms to be signed by both the head-teacher and each individual child's parents/guardian. These forms were on an opt-in basis in line with University policy. Having obtained the necessary consent, the researcher then contacted the schools again to arrange a series of mutually convenient dates on which the research could take place. Many of the schools had very busy schedules and so visits had to be arranged to take place over a number of different days. However, the

schools were always highly cooperative making the actual acquisition of data far easier than anticipated. Upon arrival at a school the researcher was usually directed to an available empty room. Often, the sound quality was highly variable (with the rooms ranging from a busy canteen to a quiet lounge) and there were occasionally a large number of background distractions to contend with, ranging from lawnmowers to mobile phones. Groups arrived at the locations on or around the time requested, were greeted and then made themselves comfortable. The purpose of the research was then explained to them, and any questions they had answered. If they were happy with the proceedings the focus groups got under way. The format of these groups consisted of the researcher asking a number of informal questions (prepared in advance by the researcher) around young people's drinking, the aim being to prompt a series of small discussions amongst each group of young people. A copy of these questions can be found in Appendix A. The most successful groups were those where the researcher had to say relatively little. Only in one instance did the group prove relatively uncommunicative as a result of which the group was drawn to an early close (after about ten minutes). Upon completion of the session, which usually coincided with the pupil's morning/lunch breaks, participants were thanked for their time and any questions they had were then answered. They were then given a debriefing statement outlining the nature of the research and providing further contact details. This statement reiterated the purpose(s) of the study, thanked participants for their time and reassured them that the data would be treated confidentially. Once participants had left the researcher then debriefed the head teacher as to the nature of the research, although care was taken not to disclose any details regarding what was said in the actual focus group. With the debriefing completed the researcher then departed.

4.4 Transcription

Once the material was collected it was transcribed according to the general principles outlined by Jefferson (1984). However, as this was a Foucauldian discourse analysis it was not felt necessary to transcribe all the minutiae of conversation such as, for example, slight changes in intonation. Instead, only significant pauses, increases in pitch and utterances such as laughter were included.

4.5 Theoretical background

Most of the theoretical background to this study lies in mainstream research (e.g., Oostven, Knibbe and DeVries, 1997) which found young people offered the following reasons for drinking: social facilitation, stress relief, boredom, fun and bonding with friends. Also of note, however, is qualitative research by Mathrani (1998) where young people talked about how they liked to drink for hedonistic purposes, and research by Brain, Howard and Carnwath (2000) which located young people's drinking within the context of wider social practices and economic structures. Brain *et al.* found that the hedonistic consumption outlined by Mathrani was a widespread phenomenon and related it to young people's increased financial wherewithal and an increasingly consumerist attitude to the purchasing of alcohol which, Brain argues, forms part of a wider psycho-active repertoire. Also of relevance here is research by O'Malley and Valverde (2004) which discusses how discourses of pleasure and fun are, in relation to alcohol, made increasingly "invisible" in wider society the more problematic and threatening the behaviour associated with them becomes. Such discourses are replaced, as can often be seen in the media, with discourses of threat and danger.

4.6 Analysis- an overview

When offered the chance, young people often gave full and very detailed accounts of their drinking experiences that were largely anecdotal in nature. Stories of particular episodes functioned as narratives within which young people constructed both themselves and alcohol in very particular ways. Foremost amongst these were the all too visible discourses of pleasure and fun alluded to by O'Malley and Valverde (2004) as being repressed by wider society. Drinking was often constructed as inevitable and normative, as a result of which the choice not to drink heavily was frequently constructed as problematic. Working together as a group young people often constructed very elaborate and highly humorous "stories" around events that happened as a result of being drunk. Within such discourses, young people constructed themselves in the following ways: as drinking in order to deliberately lose control (and be drunk), as having the autonomy to choose to get drunk, choosing to do so for the purpose of achieving certain hedonistic ends (such as sexual relations) and, in the process, behaving in a way that transgresses certain moral and social codes of

behaviour. In fact, overall, there is an escapist quality to these discourses where new rules and standards apply, and the normal social order is turned upside down.

An alternative set of discourses, however, also appears to be in operation whereby young people draw on discourses of risk and danger to construct their drinking as potentially harmful. This, to some degree, accords with research outlined in Chapter One that pinpointed the risks of young people drinking to excess. However, for these young people such discourses appear to be drawn on as a resource to construct yet further a rebellious, and wild, identity. When severe consequences are described these are usually couched in terms of happening to other people maintaining further the idea of danger as excitement. Overall, it could therefore be said that young people work to construct what to others would seem irrational behaviour, as rational. This rationality is couched in notions of drinking as pure indulgence, as exciting, transformative and as a way of challenging, rebelling against, and breaking, wider social norms.

4.7 Breaking the rules- discourses of pleasure and fun

Excerpt 1, Transcript 2

F2: Some things when you're drunk it's so funny though cos (0.5) cos it's like throwing a candle in that lake she had this singing happy [birthday candle]

F4: [And she] threw it in the lake

F2: It was driving me mad and I threw it in the lake and it went urghhh blurgh blurgh and I was stood by the lake for about an hour just laughing my head off and everyone was like where's S and I was there like (DRAWS SHARP INTAKE OF BREATH)

LOUD LAUGHTER

F2: It was so funny

F5: Oh (0.5) it was hilarious

The above extract is a fairly typical example of the type of story young people construct around their drinking. At its heart is a discourse of pleasure and fun that is easily identifiable not just from the direct references in the story itself but also in the breathless way it was told by the participants and the laughter it invokes from the rest of the group. Specifically constructed as an event that could *only* happen when they were drunk, this discourse is typical in that involves a reconstruction of events that are not recognisable as usual behaviour (in this instance throwing a birthday cake in the lake). In so doing participants in this group are constructing for themselves "wild" identities similar to that found by Giles (1999) in his research. However, in this case,

such identities are constructed for the purposes of enjoyment, a hedonistic indulgence in breaking the rules, of doing the unexpected, something which the imbibing of alcohol and the state of being drunk gives them permission to do (at least within the norms of this peer group). In so doing, the transformative and escapist nature of being drunk becomes apparent and the rationale of being drunk (because it is fun) established.

Also of interest is the fact that the above extract is fairly typical of those constructed by young women. Recent increases in the number of women binge drinking (Alcohol Concern, 2000) suggest that it is now fairly commonplace for women to drink as much as men, reflecting recent changes in the demographics of drinking behaviour of young people. Increasing numbers of women entering education and the workforce has resulted in a change in women's roles within society, particularly as this has occurred in line with a decline in traditionally male dominated industries (Dean, 1990). A major consequence of this is that women are now more likely to engage in similar behaviour to that of men. For young people, with greater economic freedom and a night-time economy centred around alcohol, this involves engaging in drinking practices reflective of the leisure practices of the day. Such practices, in a high-pressure, performance oriented economy, appear more and more therefore to centre around being able to escape from daily constraints and break free from daily hassles, as well offering an opportunity to indulge in the hedonistic gratification encouraged by a "work hard play hard" culture. The "problem", as O'Malley and Valverde (2004) have defined it, is that such practices result in behaviour that is seen as disruptive to the social order and has deleterious effects both on the economy and on the quality of life of others. This is illustrated in young people's construction of wild behaviour that is perhaps less than harmless, as can be seen below.

4.8 The enjoyment of danger- discourses of risk

Excerpt 2, Transcript 3

M4: My dad's friend shot himself in the foot when he was drunk
LAUGHTER

R: Seriously

M4: Yea

R: With a gun?

M4: Yea with a gun it was quite funny

M2: Amazing

M1: We had a firework party and um all of the men had been drinking and then the fireworks started up and a firework went through our shed.......and one went into our house and then hit my stepdad which is his own fault though it was him who'd been drinking

LAUGHTER

M1: But that was potentially dangerous

The above extract provides a good example of how risk is constructed as humorous when it is associated with drunken behaviour. Two incidents which, if they were related as happening to sober people in everyday situations, would be seen as extremely serious are here treated as sources of amusement. This appears to represent an attempt to construct a discourse that challenges the dominant notion of risk as something to be avoided, an undesirable phenomenon (consider the number of potential risks to people that are portrayed as sources of serious concern in the media such as the MRA bug, the MMR vaccination and so on). Here, the risks are portrayed as part and parcel of losing control when drunk, as an essential element of being able to break the normal rules of behaviour (by behaving seemingly irrationally through putting people's lives at risk). In Crossley's (2000) research into the sexual behaviour of gay men many of these men chose to take the risk of not wearing a condom because they viewed risk and danger as part of being human and adding to their quality of life. A similar process may be in operation here, with getting drunk being seen as an acceptable way of breaking the rules and reaching this level of excitement without necessarily having to be held accountable as can be seen in the extract below.

4.9 Being "dangerous": The avoidance of accountability

Excerpt 3, Transcript 6

F4: Yea you can like get drunk and then you you don't know what you're doing you do something else stupid and that can lead to something else

F6: You can do things illegal as well (R: Right) which you can get into trouble for and not really realise what you've done and you wake up and you find you've a big fine or whatever in jail

R: Hm yea yea you hear that quite often don't you

F6: Yea (0.5) like people who've woke up the next day and not really remembered

Many of the anecdotes young people relate, be they in relation to risk or to pleasure, are constructed around the notion of drinking to lose control. Getting drunk is therefore a way to break free of societal norms and restrictions and at the same time

construct a lack of accountability for the behaviour that arises as a result. However, this does not mean such behaviour is necessarily universally approved of as can be seen in the above extract (Excerpt 3), where such behaviour is judged as morally dubious and resulting in punitive consequences. This is as an interesting discourse as it matches those that centre around "controlling" risk, as will be seen later in the analysis of educational materials.

4.10 Discourses of risk: Not so funny?

Excerpt 4, Transcript 7

M3: My uncle has a flat in London and he was he was having a really big party and he had a pool um and they were all outside and one of the people I think fell unconscious and (INAUDIBLE) something and fell in the pool (R: Hm) but um (1.0)

M2: Did he die?

M3: There were loads of people there so [they just]

M6: [Yea fished him out]

M3: So if they yea if he fell in the pool yea what would happen they had to get him out and he's like (1.5) (R: Yea) yea and they no I don't know I don't know

PAUSE (3.0)

M5: And um there was this person who was walking out the pub and he was completely like drunk and he fell asleep in the middle of the road

LOUD LAUGHTER

M5: And he um he was killed he was run over by a car (3.0)

In the above extract, however, there is a different construction of the notion of risk perhaps epitomising some resistance to the dominant construction of danger as excitement. One of the participants, drawing on a familial discourse centred around the normally enjoyable pastime of family get-togethers, formulates an anecdote that describes a near fatal occurrence as a result of drinking too much (which ties in with the earlier literature warning of the danger of accidents). Delivered in a sombre tone, this story does not elicit laughter but silence, and is an occasion where risk is not constructed as humorous. Perhaps having a greater impact, however, is M5's brief story which the rest of the group take to be a humorous anecdote indicating the expectation that the dominant discourse (of danger as fun) will be re-established. In this case, however, it is not as M5 constructs the outcome in terms of a fatality and elicits silence from the group. In Foucauldian terms this is therefore an example of how resistance can be exercised against a more powerful "dominant" discourse.

4.11 Hard to resist- wild drinking as a normative practice

Excerpt 5, Transcript 1

M2: Your friends are always saying oh try this try this (R: Yea) it's really hard cos you don't want to look like a bit of a chicken (R: Yea) so you just go and do it anyway (1.0)

M3: Then again you don't want to be an idiot do you?

M2: Yea you don't want to feel like they could laugh at you if they say no (R: Hmm) so you say yes (R: Hmm) but even though you know it's the wrong it's the wrong way (R: Right) you just do it anyway cos you don't wanna look like a fool in front of your mates

In the above extract, the dominant nature of the discourse that constructs young people as needing to be wild drinkers is both challenged yet also passively accepted. The young men in this extract draw on the notion of "peer pressure" to explain their risky behaviour as being subject to group norms similar to those identified by Iannotti, Bush and Weinfurt (1996). This is achieved by drawing on notions of masculinity that construct risk-taking amongst young men as a part and parcel of being a man and not a "chicken", and the need for conformity with group norms is portrayed as paramount. In so doing the young men collude with the voices of disapproval that decry drunken behaviour whilst simultaneously explaining, and justifying, their participation in it. Drawing on notions of peer pressure may therefore be one way for young people (particularly men) to avoid social censure from wider society, whilst in practice remaining a part of the social sub-culture it seems so compulsory for them to be a part of (and so necessary, perhaps, to their sense of identity).

Bearing in mind the findings from this analysis, the next two chapters will explore the discourses present in educational materials. Education has the expressed aim of helping young people avoid the dangers associated with drinking and, it will be argued, the more covert aim of controlling behaviour considered to be at odds with the norms and practices of wider society.

CHAPTER 5: WITHIN AND BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF ALCOHOL EDUCATION RESOURCES

5.1 Introduction and aims of the study

This chapter is the first of two that will focus on identifying, and analysing, discourses presented to young people through the medium of alcohol education. In this chapter the focus will be on educational leaflets and pamphlets aimed at promoting "safe" drinking. The audience with whom these discourses engage is, however, broad in scope consisting not only of young people in general but also teachers and parents.

The main aim of this study was, therefore, to explore the type and range of discourses that would emerge from the different positions or "voices" adopted by these materials as they attempt to engage with their "readers". A secondary aim, to be discussed in the final chapter, will be to compare such discourses more closely with those originating from classroom-based alcohol education, and to compare both of these with young people's own discourses around the nature of alcohol use, considering finally what the implications of this might be for the future of alcohol education and for how the topic of young people and alcohol use is approached more generally both in the research literature, and in wider society.

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Selecting the data: rationale for the study

The data in this study comprised a variety of different educational resources aimed at 11-15 year olds, parents and teachers. These are produced by a wide variety of groups and organisations (e.g., the Portman Group, Hope UK and Alcohol Concern) whose stated aim is to prevent some of the harm caused by alcohol misuse amongst young people. This harm reduction philosophy is very similar to that of many educational programmes in schools. However, educational programmes, as mentioned previously, often have very specific aims such as increasing young people's knowledge around alcohol, changing their attitudes and beliefs around alcohol, and reducing their levels of consumption (Alcohol Concern 2001a; Weare 2000). Educational resources, on the other hand, rarely make such specific claims in terms of targets or outcomes. Nevertheless, given that they can be used in the classroom as part of more general education programmes, it would seem reasonable to suppose that they have been designed with at least some of these targets in mind.

Deriving a data set from these educational resources has many and varied advantages. Firstly, the pool of data is extremely wide ranging in that the resources are designed for large, and divergent, target groups and, furthermore, the various organisations that produce them often have different foci and philosophies (though their publicly stated aim of harm reduction is the same). For instance, Hope UK is a Christian organisation that designs material according to biblical principles, whereas the Portman Group is a branch of the drinks industry who may be as much concerned to avoid government sanctions as they are to reduce harm amongst the young. A second point to make regarding the data concerns the fact that they are designed for public consumption. Data collection therefore bypasses some of the practical and ethical constraints encountered in other studies reported in this thesis, such as the need for informed consent and the influence of the demand characteristics of the research on the text. Furthermore, as the data are in written format, they can be analysed directly in the form in which they were meant to be consumed and do not have to be converted from spoken to written transcript (a process that inevitably involves some reconstruction on the part of the researcher). Finally, such material is also widely distributed in schools throughout the country. Given its mass exposure, it may therefore be influential in shaping both public and personal discourses around alcohol use and on the way in which alcohol use amongst young people is tackled practically at both a local and a national level. In short, such resources may have power and material influence, and for that reason alone justify analysis and inclusion in this study. The study may therefore be of great practical relevance in providing insights into why educational resources have, to date, been largely ineffective in achieving their stated aims (Plant and Plant, 1992).

5.2.2 Procedure

An initial decision was made to restrict the analysis to those materials that have been produced in the UK for a UK audience. There are a multitude of materials available that have been produced in other countries (most notably the USA) but the applicability of such material to the UK may be limited, and could restrict the scope of any practical application of the findings of this research. Using an appropriate range of search terms, an initial web-based search was carried out to identify the range of educational resources available, and the organisations that were producing them. From this search it was evident that there were a great many resources

available. The next step was therefore to search the websites of all the organisations, following their links to resources and education, and obtain a list of those resources that were the most commonly cited and recommended. This proved to be fruitful as most organisations readily promote material produced by other groups (in addition to promoting their own products). Many websites also contained forums in which teachers and PSHE consultants were able to recommend the resources they preferred and thought were most effective. The result was a shortlist of 200 of the most prevalent, and the most preferred, educational resources.

Decisions then had to be made as to which materials were to be selected for analysis. As the focus of this study was to be on written materials it was decided that materials produced on video, DVD or CDROM were to be excluded (but perhaps could be usefully analysed in a future study). Materials were also only included if they had been produced in the last ten years (i.e., from 1994 onwards) in order that the content of such materials was up to date. The remaining written materials were then filtered according to the age group at which they were targeted, retaining only those designed for an 11-15 year age group. Materials aimed at parents and teachers were also retained, as long as they were relevant to the same age group. A key issue at this stage concerned the financial resources available for purchasing and obtaining these resources. It was decided, regretfully, to omit those materials whose cost were prohibitive; i.e., over £25. This meant that many larger resource packs were not included in the analysis, although the sheer size of such packs may have meant that such material would have been impractical for the purposes of the analysis carried out in this study. It is possible, therefore, that some relevant data may have been overlooked although the full range of discourses available on young people's alcohol use has, hopefully, largely been captured in the variety of data that were studied.

Having short-listed 30 leaflets and resource packs the next step was to contact the publishers in order to obtain the data. In some cases, the required materials had been deleted or were out of print. Some publishers promised to send material but subsequently failed to do so, despite several follow-up phone calls. Most, however, were highly cooperative, even waiving the charge price on occasion once the purpose of the enquiry was explained. In all, three resource packs and thirteen leaflets/booklets were obtained for analysis. A full list of all the resources used, and the sources from whence they came, can be found in Appendix B.

5.3 Analysis

5.3.1 Issues surrounding the data

There are several features of the data in this study that distinguish them from data used elsewhere in the thesis. Firstly, the data have not been produced in response to direct questions asked by the researcher. The context in which they have been produced is therefore entirely different in that these are detailed texts designed for public consumption by young people, teachers and parents for the purposes of education (as well as for commercial use). Awareness of this different context, and its implications, will be alluded to throughout the analysis. Secondly, the data are neither spoken nor interactional in nature. They therefore lack the spontaneity and dialogic nature of everyday discourse, as, inevitably, they will have undergone many processes of editing and re-writing through an unknown number of stages. However, this does not render them any less natural (lack of naturalism being a concern for some researchers, e.g., Potter 1996) as the context in which they have been produced could be still be termed "everyday" (i.e., one of education and commercial publication). Furthermore, there can also be no claims of "contamination" of the data by the researcher.

However, the exact ways in which the data were produced remain unknown, nor can it be known how many people were involved in the production of the data or what the particular input of each person was. Engagement with the discourses within the data, and negotiation and debate surrounding them, therefore occurs in a somewhat different sense in this study in that the readers engage in this process with the material; i.e., the conversation is essentially one between the data and the reader of the texts. This highlights the importance of adopting a reflexive approach towards the process of analysis. A further point concerns the presence in the materials of numerous pictures and illustrations that are designed to complement the data. Parker (1992) advocates that these are themselves to be considered texts and require as much attention and analysis as do the written texts. Other discourse analysts such as Potter (1996) however, consider only the written word i.e., language to be of primary relevance in analysis. This analysis will adopt the latter approach but with some concessions to Parker in that pictures/illustrations will be incorporated into the analysis on occasions where the interpretations of textual meaning would be significantly weakened by their omission.

5.3.2 Analytic approach

This study will draw heavily on the framework for analysis outlined by Willig (2001) i.e. consisting largely of a Foucaldian style analysis but will also draw on insights from the critical discursive approach of Edley (2001). The focus will therefore be on the discursive resources drawn on and used in the data, and the relationships these have to wider social structures and practices. Where relevant, there will also be reference to the rhetorical and dilemmatic nature of language (Billig, 1991). Of particular importance in this analysis, however, will be Parker's (1992) emphasis on how discourses can work to position people in certain ways, and constrain them into certain ways of being and thinking. The ideological power of the discourses present in the data, when linked to wider social practices and structures, will therefore be considered in terms of the implications they have for health promotion and for alcohol education in particular.

5.3.3 Personal reflections on the data

Careful reading and rereading of the material revealed some interesting, and unexpected, aspects of the data. Perhaps most striking, initially, was the similarity of the data in terms of the way in which the materials were structured. Often the leaflets were divided up into a series of discrete sections, each of which dealt with (what was clearly considered to be) an important aspect of alcohol use amongst young people. Frequently, such sections consisted of material presented as `fact` and were often embellished with various quotations, usually from young people and often only vaguely attributed. On occasion, each section was also accompanied by several illustrations, some of which were humorous and some of which were more disturbing and foreboding in tone. Variations on this structure were to include photo stories or cartoon strips depicting various scenarios where drinking was set within a typical context such as a party or a night out. These functioned as self-contained narratives with a discrete beginning and ending (similar to a play) and most commonly represented a disaster scenario with its own tragic or happy ending. Alternatively, issues around alcohol use were presented in the form of a problem page with questions posed to, and answered by, an "agony aunt". Such similarity in structure formed a useful basis on which to conduct the analysis, particularly as the language used throughout the material was often rich in detail and highly variable.

The overall feel of the material was also quite negative. The general impression given is that drinking is a largely hazardous and unwise pastime in which to engage, with potentially dire consequences and few redeeming features. This would initially seem surprising given the high esteem alcohol is held in British culture, not to mention its ubiquitous use (presumably also by those who designed the leaflets!). This apparent contradiction, and the limited mention of any possible social or developmental benefits of drinking (aside from a dark vein of humour underlying the description of some of the more unpleasant consequences), underpinned much of the analysis in this study.

Another important aspect of the data to note was the amount of space devoted to describing how alcohol was made and produced. This appears on the surface to be quite incongruous with the rest of the material but may function to locate alcohol's position in the economy, as one example of an industrial product designed for purchase, consumption and profit. In this way, alcohol is presented as a part of our way of life, of our economic system, and therefore has the effect of normalising alcohol and thus legitimising its existence. The scientific language used may also help to construct the material as factual and, by drawing on such "expert" discourses, work to validate the material *per se* as authoritative, objective and educational (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984).

5.3.4 Theoretical background to the study

In general, health education has been thought to provide individuals with various discursive elements through which they can build different versions of themselves; i.e., it works to produce identity (Gastaldo, 1997). The particular discursive resources available with which to build identity are contingent and situated; i.e., strongly tied to the time and place in which they are located. UK society, in the late 20th/early 21st century, has, for instance, often been described as a "risk" society, whereby the organising principle of social life is that of constant threat or danger to the self (Adkins, 2001; Giddens, 1991). People in this society also live under a form of democratic government that has, since the beginning of the eighteenth century, placed considerable emphasis on the primacy of the individual and valued notions of freedom of choice, responsibility and the power of rational thought. The type of identity thought to be fostered under these conditions is that of the liberal humanist, a free agent concerned with avoiding risk. Education materials may therefore be one way of

providing the resources through which such an identity can be built (a Foucauldian "technology of the self"), the effects of which have important practical implications. For instance, in materials designed to help prevent the spread of HIV, the reader is enjoined to construct a liberal humanist identity that places the responsibility for health promoting behaviour (and avoiding risk) upon the individual and, simultaneously, partially absolves the government from taking any responsibility for tackling the issues at a societal level (Fraser, 2004). In short, health education could be considered to be a means by which the government can control the population's behaviour without using coercion; i.e., people are effectively invited to "police" themselves (Adkins, 2001; Gastaldo, 1997; Lupton, 1993)

This study aims to carry out an analysis similar to that used by Fraser but focusing instead on alcohol education materials. This is a particularly interesting avenue to pursue because drinking is different from other health damaging behaviours in that it is also widely regarded as life-enhancing (as was seen in young people's discourses in the last chapter). Potentially, this could create a conundrum for alcohol education material in that fostering an identity that is incommensurate with drinking would also mean denying the positive aspects of alcohol use, and, at a practical level, diminish its impact as an educational resource. The key focus of this study was therefore on the way in which notions of identity and self were worked up and constructed in discourse; specifically, whether the type of identity presented is similar to that outlined by Fraser, and whether, and how, this is an identity commensurate with the practice of drinking.

After preliminary coding the most salient feature of the data appeared to be that three seemingly different versions of the self (and others) were worked up and constructed. These were the passive/vulnerable self, the autonomous self and the rational self. Such constructions were used to characterise the interaction between young people and alcohol in very specific ways, drawing on a variety of different discourses in the process. Each type of self was located textually within a different conceptual theme. For instance, the passive self was often embedded within the theme of the effects of alcohol, the agentic self within the theme of young people's reasons for drinking and the rational self within the theme of "safe" drinking. However, there was a degree of overlap between these selves; i.e., the boundaries between them appeared quite fluid and therefore they were not stable or fixed constructions. This may be because, although they appear different and are often contradictory, each of

the selves presented had a unifying thread in that all worked to preserve the notion of the liberal humanist identity (although each did so in a rather different way). That is to say, each self works to maintain the integrity of some specific aspect of the liberal identity. Hence, the passive self works to provide the discursive resources through which the reader of the educational materials can construct an identity that must exert control in order to avoid harm, the autonomous self provides the resources for constructing an identity based around the notion of free-will and choice, and the rational self provides the resources for constructing an identity based around the notion of personal responsibility. Therefore, each different aspect of the liberal humanist identity is constructed in a way that is commensurate with an individual who drinks.

In attempting to achieve this commensurability, however, there is a price. Two of the selves (the passive/vulnerable self and the autonomous self) are seemingly oppositional in nature, giving rise to tensions between different aspects of the liberal humanist identity, tensions which are resolved, to a degree, through the formulation of the rational self. It is through the formulation of this self, for instance, that limitations on autonomy are prescribed in order to comply with the need for control. The analysis will conclude by arguing that a function of these materials is therefore to construct the Foucauldian subject, a person able to police themselves and control their own behaviour (behaviour that may pose a threat to the civilised norms of wider society). The following sections will now outline each self in turn, exploring how such selves are constructed and the tensions that operate between them as they resolve the dilemma of being both a drinker and a 21st century liberal humanist.

5.4 The passive and vulnerable self- constructing the need to exert control

5.4.1 Introduction

Without exception, all the documents analysed contained a section on the "effects" of alcohol upon the person. A discourse of cause and effect, familiar within the natural sciences (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984), is drawn upon and used to construct alcohol as an agent that actively causes things to happen within the person. Most commonly, this is achieved by constructing alcohol as a substance that affects the "physical" integrity of the person. For instance, many of the documents featured colourful pictures and full-page spreads detailing and illustrating the changes alcohol can effect on almost every organ in the body.

The analysis in this section explores how this discourse, in two distinct but related ways, operates to construct a version of the self that is embodied, passive and vulnerable. On the one hand, this is achieved by working up a notion of physical frailty and of a person's vulnerability to attack by a "poison" such as alcohol. However, on the other hand, it is also achieved by grounding the effects of alcohol firmly within a reductionist account of human behaviour. Its effects are therefore portrayed as physical first and foremost and it is from these that other, behavioural, changes follow. Behaviour throughout is therefore constructed as contingent on the physical integrity of the body, in particular the brain.

The analysis will then go on to focus on how such behavioural outcomes are constructed as a result of this "attack" on one's physicality. By and large, these outcomes are constructed as unwanted and undesirable, and primarily take two forms. Firstly, they involve the transgression of social norms resulting in ostracism and embarrassment (contrasting markedly with young people's own accounts, a point which will be returned to later). Secondly, they take the form of the emergence of previously restrained instincts such as aggression. It will be argued that such constructions work to discursively establish the need to maintain a sense of control when drinking, and that this is particularly pertinent in relation to young people who are constructed throughout as being especially at risk, and therefore in need of the guidance and protection offered by these materials.

5.4.2 The effects of alcohol

Excerpt 1, Document 12

"Alcohol appears to make people more lively because it affects parts of the brain which are responsible for self-control. Alcohol can lead to:

- Feeling more cheerful, but having slower reactions
- Being more talkative, but having less reliable judgement
- Less self-control with extreme responses- you are more likely to become aggressive or tearful"

The above extract provides a good example of how a reductionist account of human behaviour is used to construct a direct link between alcohol and subsequent behaviour. In this type of account the brain, or at least designated parts of it, is seen as responsible for personal responses and inhibition. It is therefore the brain that is directing emotional and behavioural responses rather than the "person", and these

responses are affected by alcohol as a result of its effect on the brain. Notions of Cartesian dualism are therefore drawn on to construct the mind and body as separate and thus give primacy to the role of the mind in determining behaviour (a formulation seen in bio-medical models of health and illness, according to Ogden, 2000). A powerful discourse, it functions to define *control* over behaviour as inevitable and natural.

A list of contrasts is then provided in this extract that juxtaposes positively evaluated emotional benefits of drinking, such as being more cheerful and talkative, with cognitive deficits such as poor judgment (all of which are controlled by alcohol rather than the brain). Both types of response are constructed as undesirable, thus drawing on a humanist discourse in arguing that rationality is preferable to the expression of emotion (Spelman, 1989), thereby arguing the case for the desirability of remaining in control. The subsequent helplessness of the passive self, having been "taken over" by alcohol, is neatly encapsulated in the following extract.

Excerpt 2, Document 9

"The trouble with alcohol, is there's no off-switch, no going-back".

The effects of alcohol, once they have set in, are therefore constructed as irreversible and this is essentially alcohol's "trouble". People are, in essence, powerless to resist. This sense of vulnerability is heightened further by discourses that specifically construct alcohol use in relation to young people. Two main claims are often made in these discourses; firstly, that drinking involves young people undergoing duress and adversity, and, secondly, that young people themselves are in no way to blame for this. Both such claims are encapsulated in the brief extract below.

Excerpt 3, Document 11

"Children, and young people in particular, often suffer through no fault of their own"

Discourses of children in the West as a "protected species" (Scott, Jackson and Backett-Milburn, 1998), and as less competent than adults (Hutchby and Moran-Ellis, 1998), are drawn on throughout the texts in order to make a claim for their extra special vulnerability. Thus, the central *raison d'etre* of the educational materials is discursively established; i.e., young people need guidance and protection from adults

because they are more susceptible to its effects (as a result of immaturity and inexperience). Such discourses establish an unequal power relationship between adults and young people in that young people are now dependent on adults for protection from risk. It could be argued, a point which will be returned to later, that educational materials are therefore constructing and positioning young people in a way that legitimises adult regulation of their behaviour and, furthermore, that such legitimisation works to effectively deny young people their rights (Burman, 1995), including their right to drink alcohol.

It is interesting to note, also, that a distinction has been made in the above extract between children on the one hand, and young people on the other (who, it is claimed, are even more at risk). Slightly ambiguous, this construction may work to place as more at risk those young people who are closer to adulthood (and therefore more likely to drink). Such young people are therefore constructed as more vulnerable and in need of protection as they get older, a claim that runs contrary to developmental discourses that construct young people as increasingly independent with age. This may highlight a discursive attempt to legitimise control and influence over a group that, in practice, are increasingly independent and engaging in behaviour which subverts the norms of the adult population (Dean, 1990). This point is illustrated further in the following extract.

Excerpt 4, Document 14

"It is important to tell pupils that if a person continues to drink they might eventually collapse, slip into unconsciousness and could *die*."

The first point to note here is that this is another good example of the characteristic construction of alcohol use as potentially lethal, portraying once again the essential vulnerability of the person in primarily physical terms. However, in this extract the teacher, to whom the "advice" is directed, is positioned as both a guardian of young people's welfare and an authority on the dangers of drinking. The warning, presented here in the form of an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986), portrays a heightened sense of vulnerability in young people and, as was suggested previously, may work to position them in a relationship of unequal power, in the sense that they have to rely on teachers for protection. Whilst the construction of the passive self is generalised throughout the texts in order to strengthen the biological basis of its

claims, it is here constructed as *particularly* applicable to young people, in this case on the additional grounds of immaturity. Thus, alcohol is dangerous, but more so to young people than to adults. The claim is made, therefore, that young people need adults to direct, protect and control them. However, through this construction, young people are also absolved from any responsibility for the effects of alcohol, an argument whose claims are open to challenge as will be seen later in the construction of both the autonomous and the rational self.

5.4.3 Behavioural outcomes- transgressing social norms

Excerpt 5, Document 4

"...when taken it tells the brain to slow down....too much can also make someone act in silly ways and do daft things, like dancing wildly, singing a bad song on the karaoke, or kissing a stranger. It can be very embarrassing the next day when friends tell the person what they did when they were drunk."

In this extract, alcohol is constructed as the mischievous guest taking over the very centre of our physical selves, the brain. For instance, telling the brain to "slow down" works to convey the impression that its intention is to disrupt the efficiency of the system. The result is a body out of control; alcohol, not the brain, is now in charge. As a consequence alcohol is therefore able to make the person act in "silly ways" and do "daft things". These acts are constructed as pieces of behaviour that transgress social norms and conventions, here evaluated as essentially a bad thing. For instance, discourses surrounding appropriate romantic behaviour (Hollway, 1989) are used to construct the act of kissing a stranger as abnormal, whilst intensifiers such as "bad" or "wildly" help to construct such behaviour as essentially lacking personal control. The consequences of their actions in term of social ostracism are constructed as enduring in that they live on anecdotally as part of people's ongoing narratives (and reconstructions) of events (although in the first study such drunken anecdotes were seen to be constructed in more positive terms, as part of the wild rebellious identity constructed around social *acceptance* rather than ostracism). This discourse of social ostracism can be seen even more clearly in the following extract.

Excerpt 6, Document 5

"The drink that you thought made you look very cool may have just pushed you over into being a slobbering mess; your alcohol-inspired dancing has just proved that you have no sense of rhythm or co-

ordination; and being sick all over your best friend's shoes has not made you the most popular person in the world. You get the picture?"

Here, the person is again constructed as passively transformed into something undesirable but this time the text uses "street" humour and other, more colourful, description, all of which are personally addressed to the young reader. This strongly works to position the reader as this particular type of person, a position from which the text can then admonish the reader. Throughout the extract a warning against alcohol misuse is constructed that is enshrined within a discourse of friendship and belonging. This is a discourse that has its background in an increasingly impersonal technological age (with more fragmented and diffuse family structures) where social contacts amongst friends are seen as of increasing value and importance (Roseneil, 2000). Hence, the warning centres on social unacceptability amongst friends arising out of a loss of control. Specifically, in this extract, the reader is constructed as drinking in order to try and look "cool"; i.e., to gain acceptance and regard within their immediate social circle. Alcohol, however, is constructed as having taken charge and has thus removed the young person's control over their behaviour, demonstrated in the use of intensifiers such as "slobbering mess" and extreme case formulations such as "being sick all over your best friend's shoes" (cast as an extremely insulting transgression of social norms). The constructed outcome is clearly negative; that of social ostracism and being unpopular. The somewhat threatening and dramatic warning at the end (a phrase familiar from films/TV and perhaps part of a discourse of threat) works to illustrate the seriousness of such a consequence through its contrast to the humorous tone of the rest of the extract.

5.4.4 Behavioural outcomes- unrestrained instincts

Excerpt 7, Document 11

"You're reckless when you're intoxicated, but feel more in control. Alcohol creates a false sense of confidence. Intoxication attacks first those qualities in people which distinguish them from other animals"

In this extract, the effects of alcohol are formulated as a dichotomy, here between feelings and behaviour. Thus, one's behaviour has become uncontrolled and wild yet, conversely, one's feelings are of the opposite persuasion. The construction here is that alcohol aims to deceive in an almost Machiavellian sense, and it is the resultant false

perception of confidence it instils in the person that leads them to behave in unnatural ways. Rather than directly affecting behaviour, an effect is mediated through feelings and thoughts; in psychological terms, a cognitive rather than a behaviourist explanation.

Of most interest in this extract is the claim that, stripped of their ability to control their feelings and thoughts, such effects essentially strip people of their humanity. This works to construct the drunken person as in some way uncivilised and barbaric (and unpleasant) and implies a regression towards a less enlightened way of living. This is a discourse that has its roots in views of human nature developed during the Enlightenment and in the thinking of philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes. Hobbesian philosophy posits the basic nature of people as nasty and brutish but, interestingly, suggests that exercising control over people's behaviour should be the direct role of government rather than the responsibility of the individual, whereas Foucault, for example, saw governmental control as exercised indirectly through the responsibilisation of the individual. Nevertheless, implicit in this discourse is an assumed superiority of humans over other animals in terms of key qualities such as judgement and reason, a discourse that is likely to have roots in religious principles formulated many centuries earlier. This inadvertent triggering of latent instincts is, however, dealt with in a somewhat different way in the following extract

Excerpt 8, Document 15

"Alcohol is a DEPRESSANT drug....it can trigger violent reactions that we're normally able to keep under control"

Often in the texts there is a particular description of alcohol as a "depressant" drug. This construction has a variety of functions. For instance, the use of the term drug is largely negative, inviting comparisons with the life-damaging qualities attributed to "hard drugs" such as heroin. It also has strong connotations of dependency which, as Gillies and Willig (1997) found with female smokers, can work to position the user as a passive victim, a construction here that works to bolster the concept of the passive self. Alcohol is therefore constructed as a powerful, transformative substance with addictive qualities and potentially negative effects on the life of the user and those around them. "Depressant" as a term constructs alcohol in two ways. Firstly, it constructs alcohol as a substance that will inhibit or suppress

many human qualities and, secondly, as having connotations with a negative mood and feeling bad. Taken together, and heightened by the use of block capitals, the phrase functions as a highly negative one. Alcohol could for instance just as easily be described as a recreational tool, as it is in young people's discourses of pleasure (O'Malley and Valverde, 2004).

However, rather than continuing with the portrayal of the person as subdued an opposite, and seemingly paradoxical, claim is made. Alcohol is instead seen here as *causing* extreme emotional and violent behaviour. Nevertheless, such behaviour is portrayed as latent, and has similarities to the claim made in the previous extract that "underneath" we are wild and aggressive in nature and rely on other aspects of ourselves to keep these tendencies "under wraps". By attacking our ability to keep control it is alcohol, not people, which is constructed as dangerous. People are therefore not to blame for the results of their behaviour as these tendencies are natural; we have simply learnt how to suppress (and control) them, a skill that alcohol destroys. In a sense, alcohol is therefore an object that has the potential to undermine characteristics of behaviour that are often invoked as being associated with 20th century western civilisation (such as reason and emotional restraint), characteristics that have their roots in more traditional philosophical and religious schools of thought. Many of the extracts specifically formulate the exact nature of these tendencies and, in so doing, invoke a discourse of "risk" (as can be seen in the following extract).

Excerpt 9, Document 14

"...can lead to people doing things they would not normally do, such as picking fights, having unprotected sex or doing dare devil stunts."

In this extract, the consequences of drinking are worked up in the form of potential risks that may be hazardous to the person, such as physical violence and unsafe sex, yet occur directly as a result of their drinking. This fits once again with Gidden's (2001) description of modern western society as a society overly concerned with risks or threats to the self. Furthermore, in this way, behavioural outcomes are also "explained" in individualistic terms. No discursive space is given to the construction of such outcomes occurring as a result of interactional effects or contextual factors, even though the literature suggests that factors such as family

dynamics (Velleman and Orford, 1993) and cultural practices (Engels and Knibbe, 2000) are of tremendous importance. An argument supporting the need for self-control has therefore been established through the use of the discourse of risk, an argument identified elsewhere in health promotion materials such as that relating to HIV prevention (Adkins, 2001).

5.4.5 Summary

This section has therefore shown ways in which the self is worked up and constructed as passive and vulnerable to the effects of alcohol. Such constructions are formulated as being particularly salient for young people, drawing on developmental discourses of immaturity to position young people as being particularly at risk (as a result of their greater vulnerability) The outcome of such effects, in terms of undesirable and antisocial behaviour, is constructed as justifying the need to be a type of self that remains in control (here in terms of drinking behaviour). Centred firmly on the individual, this need for control is an important facet of the liberal humanist identity.

5.5 The autonomous self- constructing the need to be able to actively make a choice

5.5.1 Introduction

Many of the texts that were analysed featured discrete sections purporting to explain, or account for, why young people drink. These sections were highly variable in both tone and content with a range of reasons presented for drinking (and not drinking). These ranged from those that positively evaluated young people's drinking to those that adopted a more negative stance. In contrast to the previous section, a different set of constructions of the person were employed in these discourses.

The analysis in this section will explore such constructions, with the first and largest part of the analysis showing how there is a change towards a construction of the self as *seemingly* more agentic and able to exercise the capacity to choose. In so doing, a humanist discourse is drawn on which constructs the person as able to act upon the world and, crucially, make choices about their actions (Stevens, 1996). However, this type of construction creates a potential dilemma regarding the practice of drinking. Essentially, tension is created between the ability to choose and the need for control outlined in the previous section. At this point, it is worth referring to the work of Billig (1991) who noted that much of what people say (and write) is

contradictory. He suggested that, in wider society, a number of different and competing ways of describing different aspects of social reality are present (ideologies) and people draw on these ideologies when constructing arguments, often contradicting themselves in the process (thus creating ideological dilemmas). For instance, in Excerpt 10 (below), the choice to drink, and perhaps get drunk, appears to contrast with the need to exercise restraint and not get drunk encapsulated in the passive self. In Billig's terms this could therefore be classified as an ideological opposition existing between discourses of pleasure and discourses of risk, and is an ambiguity present throughout talk about alcohol, whether this is in the media or in the research literature. However, this analysis will argue that, for young people at least, the notion of autonomy and choice presented here is largely illusory. The extracts presented in this section illustrate that the young person is not, and should not be allowed to be, truly autonomous, and is instead constrained by a range of different forces. Thus, the data sustain the principle of choice (and the positive nature of alcohol use) but the main aim, that of controlling young people's behaviour, largely remains intact.

Additionally, there is a further tension that appears to exist around the nature of choice. Enjoining the reader to exercise their free will (illusory as this may be) also implies imbuing them with the ability to choose *not* to drink. However, this runs counter to cultural and social discourses (as well as practices) which emphasise the positive nature of drinking, and is a choice that, when made, would render the purpose of the material, and the arguments it presents, redundant (and, furthermore, negates the need to control young people). Therefore, it will be argued that, in the same way that the choice to drink (including the choice to drink excessively) is, for young people, largely illusory, so too is the choice not to drink. Often, the difficulty created by the invocation of choice is simply resolved by repressing the "non-drinking" discourse. However, analysis of one, atypical, extract will demonstrate that the choice not to drink is, for young people, largely made unavailable.

5.5.2 Drinking- a positive choice

Excerpt 10, Document 4

"...It's fairly normal for people to drink alcohol in our society and most people drink, because they like it. They either like the taste or the effects, or maybe both."

"Sometimes people drink just to get blasted (drunk) as quickly as possible. Most of the time, it's just to be relaxed and sociable... Drinking is okay as long as you keep in some kind of control, it's when it gets out of control that problems can happen."

In the first of the extracts above the practice of drinking is normalised by establishing it as part of "our" culture, one that is undertaken by the majority. The extract goes on to construct reasons why people drink and offers two suggestions, one of taste and one of effect. Drinking is therefore constructed as a matter of personal choice undertaken for pleasure and fun. This is a discourse that is more in accord with those young people themselves use (Giles, 1999) and, arguably, with most adults who drink.

The second extract, however, offers a slightly different formulation, in that it constructs occasions when drinking is undertaken to experience the effects quickly, acutely (as indicated by the use of the intensifier "blasted") and, by implication, deliberately. As has already been noted earlier in this thesis, this type of reason for drinking is frequently volunteered by young people themselves (Mathrani, 1998). It is this type of choice, a construction of binge drinking, that is most often associated with "problematic" drinking amongst young people (Plant and Plant, 1992). Here, however, it is downplayed as being an occasional occurrence (although the statistics presented in the literature review clearly suggest otherwise). This allows a commonplace construction of the choice to drink to be formulated as one of sociability and releasing stress. Put simply, "people" (by implication adults) are constructed as choosing to drink mostly for the purposes of winding down and enjoying themselves. This form of drinking is *legitimised* in that it is a practice that remains under the control of the drinker. This then appears to be the key construction, that drinking is a positive practice whilst it is under the control of the drinker who is able to choose when, and how much, to drink and for what purpose. Although this discourse invokes the notion of control outlined in the previous section, there is a key difference in that it is the person who is now in control of alcohol, rather than *vice versa*, and this enables the notion of personal choice to be incorporated. Thus, adulthood is constructed as involving the ability to choose and yet maintain control whereas, as seen in the previous section, these attributes were denied to young people. The ambivalent, and potentially contradictory, invocation of choice as it therefore applies to young people can be usefully explored further by drawing on Harré and van Langenhove's (1991) concept of "positioning".

5.5.3 Drinking as a more "ambivalent" choice

Excerpt 11, Document 2

"...most people who drink do so to relax, to be sociable, to have a good time, because they find it enjoyable. Be open about this. But make sure you describe the downside of drinking too much- losing control, being silly, taking risks, wasting money."

The contradiction that may arise as a result of the invocation of choice is more apparent in extracts that address themselves to parents rather than young people. In the extract above choice is embedded within a familial discourse that essentially constructs the relationship between the parent and the child. Within such a discourse a variety of relevant positioning occurs. For instance, the material positions itself as the provider of expert advice, the parent as needing guidance on how to give this advice (as well as being the person who should give the advice) and the child as the recipient of the advice. Taken together, these facilitate the construction of the young person as someone who needs guidance (as seen in the previous section), the parent as someone whose role is to guide and the educational materials as a source of "expert" knowledge. Thus, control is exerted over young people indirectly (through enjoining parents to actively exert control).

The nature of drinking is characterised in various ways through these various roles. Initially, for example, a discourse of pleasure is drawn on to characterise the drinker as convivial and drinking as a positive, actively sought after, experience (O'Malley and Valverde, 2004). The subsequent instruction to be "open" positions parents as people who may otherwise keep the positive side of drinking a secret in order to put their kids off. This constructs the parents as essentially protective (of the vulnerable child) yet also prohibitory (as controlling). At the same time, the appeal to openness positions the data as non-prohibitive (and therefore non-controlling) and, in terms of the discursive strategies outlined by Potter and Wetherell (1987), disclaims any vested interest in needing to protect the young person. As such, it makes a claim to objectivity, thus rendering its descriptions factual in nature, illustrating the subtlety of the control engendered by the leaflets. This sense of objective balance is further enhanced when negative as well as positive aspects of drinking are introduced. However, another ideological dilemma arises in that drinking is simultaneously constructed as both a desirable and not so desirable pastime. The dilemma is reconciled in this extract by characterising the difference between the two as one of

degree. Put simply, drinking is fine, but drinking too much is not. Attempts to qualify and formulate what exactly constitutes drinking too much are then offered, involving characterisations of risk taking, carelessness with money and behaviour that does not fit in with normal conventions ("being silly"), all of which are negative outcomes previously outlined in section 5.4.

There are, however, ways that such constructions could be open to challenge, challenges which are not offered here. For instance, an alternative discourse could be forwarded that the whole point of drinking is to *resist* cultural norms of behaviour and break free of societal conventions by becoming uninhibited and wild (Crossley, 2001). Furthermore, a key reason often given by young people for drinking is to comply with *teenage* norms for behaviour, norms that often emphasise transgression and rebellion against more adult norms of behaving (Oostven, Knibbe and De Vries, 1995). This would tie in with Foucault's suggestion that, where power is exerted, points of resistance will also occur (Fox, 1997) and the drinking practices of young people may be a "real-life" example of this.

The powerful assumption within the discourse in the above extract, however, is that control of one's behaviour is the normative, *and therefore chosen*, way to behave. Choice is therefore constructed in a very specific and limited way; i.e., allied to control and normative behaviour. Young people can therefore only choose to behave in a way that is socially acceptable (although, as was pointed out above, what is socially acceptable behaviour for adults may be very different to what is considered socially acceptable for young people, but nevertheless the same point applies). The ideal of freedom of choice, as a fundamental aspect of the liberal self, is nevertheless upheld. The following extracts will look more closely at the limitations placed on young people's autonomy, demonstrating that true freedom of choice is never really an option for young people.

5.5.4 Limitations on choice- social (un)acceptability

Excerpt 12, Document 13

"So you think getting drunk is a laugh? You might think that having a few drinks makes you the life and soul of the party. Your mates are laughing, aren't they? What you don't realise is that they're laughing at you. They think you're a prat, though they won't say it to your face. They'll just say it when you're not around."

This extract differs from others in that it addresses the reader directly, and does so in a very distinctive style. The tone is confrontational, hostile and is constructed in the style of a heated conversation whereby the author admonishes the reader and presents them with some "home truths" (positioning themselves perhaps as a "straight talking" friend or partner). In so doing the reader is positioned as someone who gets intoxicated in order to both enjoy themselves and to make themselves popular with others. This is epitomised in the use of the common cliché "life and soul of the party", a term that forms part of a wider discourse of conviviality. At the same time, however, the reader is positioned as a person deceived by alcohol (thus invoking the passive self) and blind to the "truth" that people are ridiculing and laughing at them, scathing about their behaviour.

The function of this particular construction is to present the exuberant excesses of drinking as undesirable, and socially unacceptable to other young people. Not surprisingly, there are tensions here with earlier, positive, constructions of the drinker as sociable and having fun (evident in most of the data in the first study) and elsewhere in the literature it is apparent that such notions of social unacceptability are not shared by young people (Pavis, Cunningham-Burley and Amos, 1997). The function of the discourse in this case appears to be to construct a version of the self that exercises choice but only within certain discursively defined parameters i.e., the person can choose to drink but must not overdo it and this need for restraint is legitimated by constructing it as a social norm operating at the level of the group, a construction that young people sometimes themselves use (Gofton, 1990) but more often than not they challenge (Giles, 1999). This discourse of social unacceptability renders both the liberal humanist qualities of control and choice commensurable with the practice of drinking. An example of how young people's *reasons* for drinking (in terms of wider societal norms) are constructed as socially unacceptable can be seen in the following extract

Excerpt 13, Document 12

"Why did you drink? Was it for one of the following reasons?

- Because your friends drink
- Because of a lack of other entertainment
- To see how it feels
- To overcome shyness or awkwardness

- To impress
- Because you like the taste"

In this extract a list format is used to construct several different possible reasons for choosing to drink. Ostensibly an open-ended question directly addressed to the reader, the question very quickly becomes closed and the possible alternative answers provided for the reader (thus the choices available are already pre-selected and defined). Most of the characteristics in this list are fairly negative in nature and work to construct the young person in perhaps similarly negative ways. For instance, the young drinker is formulated as making negative choices in relation to their drinking effectively constructing them as unable to make their own entertainment, contain their curiosity, insecure and, to a degree, weak-willed. As mentioned previously, the list presented is very different from reasons given elsewhere for why young people drink which generally incorporate more positive evaluations; e.g., to have fun, to be sociable, etc (Pavis *et al.*, 1997). The chief function of such a list appears to be to construct drinking as an essentially negative pastime when carried out by young people (thus denying them these positive evaluations). This may work yet again to construct young people as being in need of guidance and, potentially, to subjugate themselves to the control of adults (and, therefore, to deny them the choice of drinking for fun).

5.5.5 Limitations on choice- social pressures

Excerpt 14, Document 2

"What am I going to do about my son? I know he's been drinking again. It's those friends of his leading him astray. At this rate he'll fail his exams and ruin his life before he's even started and he's not even 15 yet. What's it going to be next?"

This extract uses a familial discourse to construct a mother's maternal concerns over her son's drinking in the form of worries she has about his lack of choice in how to behave. The claim made is that "friends" have led the boy astray, thus the choice to drink is not his but arises out of peer pressure, a common explanation for teenage drinking in the research literature (May, 98), and evident in young people's discourses in the first study. This apparent lack of choice is constructed as having serious consequences in terms of educational failure and, potentially, the ruination of the

young man's life. Also hinted at is the notion that drinking is the beginning of a path towards other, unstated, dangers and threats. This latter "discourse of risk" harks back to those in the preceding section concerning the effects of drinking and the dangers this presents to the vulnerable and passive person. Here, however, the dangers surrounding drinking do not directly emanate from alcohol but from external factors (in this case friends). In other words, choice is ascribed to young people, but at the same time is proscribed and delimited. As such, the integrity of drinking as a practice is preserved whilst revealing the limits on choice for young people (but not for adults, who are rarely referred to as being under the influence of others), thus justifying once more the need for adult control.

5.5.5 Limitations on choice- cultural pressures

Excerpt 15, Document 11

"BOTTLE TRAINING. The average teenager has spent thousand of hours in front of the TV and the most common beverage shown is alcohol. Drinking scenes occupy almost one hour per day of viewing time on British TV. There is a pub, licensed restaurant or off-license for every 230 adults in Britain. Alcohol is on sale in every large supermarket. Liquor is glamourised in advertisements which appear practically everywhere.......Children are more likely to recall characters created by beer advertisers than those from children's stories"

In this extract, the title "BOTTLE TRAINING" (an imaginative pun) evokes images of the tiny helpless child, nurtured by caring parents. This familiar parental discourse (constructing an extreme version of the vulnerable child) is extended throughout the extract into a broader metaphor, with society taking on the role of the parents, and the bottle of alcohol replacing the milk in an altogether more sinister form of nurturing, that of teaching the child how to drink alcohol. Society is a place where TV is the ubiquitous form of leisure, and alcohol, through this cultural medium, is established as a normal, positively evaluated, and ever present part of British culture. The ubiquitous and inescapable nature of alcohol permeates society so fundamentally that children are more aware of its presence than they are of other artefacts more traditionally associated with childhood.

Thus, a message is constructed whereby images of childhood are replaced by images of drinking; innocence is effectively itself being intoxicated. This is a powerful construction tapping into fundamental cultural values alluded to earlier regarding the preciousness of childhood (Scott, Jackson and Backett-Milburn, 1998)

and portrays a world where children do not *choose* to drink but instead learn to drink in the same way they may learn to talk and walk, etc. (a discourse that derives from psychological perspectives such as Bandura's social learning theory, perhaps). Dualist notions are once more drawn on to construct the individual and society as interdependent yet also distinct. The individual is, in a sense, therefore portrayed as the victim of socialisation. Alcohol is, in essence, so entrenched in the culture that it is very difficult to learn not to drink, or to have the choice not to do so. A "role" for this particular leaflet (which offers more of a challenge to the notion of alcohol use as a positive choice than other leaflets do) has therefore been set up whereby it can raise young people's awareness of these pressures, and perhaps encourage some form of resistance (through re-learning), but at the same time renders transparent the limitations on young people's autonomy should they wish to do so. The final two extracts in this section further illustrate the limits on young people's autonomy through reference to the rarely discussed choice not to drink.

5.5.7 Limitations on autonomy- the "choice" not to drink

Excerpt 16, Document 1

"...health, religious and cultural beliefs...want to stay in control, because of responsibilities for driving, operating machinery, being in charge of a child..."

In this extract, a variety of reasons for choosing not to drink are presented and constructed in the format of a short list. Here, such choice is clearly portrayed as constrained, involving prohibitions or restrictions placed upon the individual by their culture or religion, or by their life circumstances. As such, the choice that is constructed appears to be no choice at all; all sense of the autonomous self appears to be lost. An alternative way of reading this, therefore, is that people would therefore choose to drink *if they were able to*. Constructions such as these do not allow the voice of a non-drinker (who actively chooses not to drink) to be heard. Only on one occasion in the data is the voice of the non-drinker heard, and is shown in the following extract.

Excerpt 17, Document 14

"It is important to stress that everyone has a RIGHT to choose for themselves. No one should ridicule another person because of the choice they have made. Some people can enjoy themselves just as much

without drinking alcohol and they are not being "spoil-sports". It is important to respect other people's views"

Here, the choice not to drink is constructed in very strong terms. It is formulated in terms of "choice" being a fundamental human freedom that deserves respect and should be free from sanction and social censure. Rose (1989) suggests that this notion of choice ties in extremely strongly with a liberal humanist identity, drawing on the idea that people are not only free but are also obliged to be free. However, the use of the terms "they" and "other people's views" also position non-drinkers as making a choice that is in some way different to both the writer and the reader, and therefore somehow not part of the norm. In this sense, they are constructed, in Joffe's (1997) terms, as the "other"; i.e., an out-group whose views differ from the minority in-group (who will choose to drink). At the same time, non-drinkers are portrayed as a minority whose rights must be respected (drawing on a democratic discourse strongly associated with the liberal humanist position). Yet the construction of non-drinkers as an out-group suggests that the choice not to drink may be severely restricted (particularly in light of the social/cultural pressures referred to in earlier extracts). Furthermore, in practice, most people do in fact drink, which may allow the choice not to drink to be accommodated and used here, primarily, as a rhetorical tool to bolster the democratic argument without presenting any great challenge to the practice of drinking itself.

5.5.8 Summary

Throughout all the previous extracts choice and personal agency are presented as positively evaluated characteristics commensurate, it would seem, with the building of a liberal, free identity. However, deconstruction of the various extracts presented above suggests that the autonomy ascribed to young people is largely illusory. The choice to drink is positively evaluated only as long as control is retained, negatively if it is not. There is no choice to freely drink "excessively" or wildly. Where such drinking occurs this is constructed as being a result of social and cultural pressures. Furthermore, there is another tension in that the choice not to drink is seen as similarly problematic (even though it guarantees control of one-self) in that the positive aspects of drinking (in so much as it is related to adult practices) are then open to challenge. Resolution of the apparent tension between the need for control

and freedom to choose occurs in the formulation of the final self, that of the rational, responsible and "safe" drinker.

5.6 The rational self- constructing responsibility in the form of the "safe" drinker

5.6.1 Introduction

This section explores the way in which discourses within the data attempt to reconcile the notion of drinking as a pastime people choose to engage in for enjoyment with the notion that drinking, for young people, is a negative experience with potentially dire consequences. To achieve this, a different set of constructions around the nature of the self are brought into play. It is through these constructions that the notion of "safe" drinking is formulated, a notion that is presented as the "message" of many of these promotional materials. Successfully accomplishing the construction of the safe drinker essentially involves eschewing the extremes of external influences acting upon the passive individual, and the desire of an individual to indulge in "wild" risky behaviour. However, discourses of control and choice are still in evidence (and built upon further) but are here subsumed within the formulation of a more all-encompassing type of self (which still presupposes the need for control and the capacity for limited, socially proscribed, autonomy). The safe drinker is constructed within these extracts as autonomous, self-directing and yet always acting in accordance with the characteristics commonly attributed to the liberal humanist individual. The safe drinker is therefore essentially a rational self; a self able to make decisions, be in control and, crucially, able to take responsibility for their (largely consistent) behaviour. In essence, this is the archetypal Foucaldian self; i.e., an individual able to police themselves through a process of self-surveillance (Gastaldo, 1997). The feasibility of the safe drinking message appears to be fundamentally dependent on this discursive construction.

The following extracts will provide analytic examples of the way in which the characteristics associated with the rational self (decision-making, autonomy and responsibility) are constructed within the texts, and this will then be followed by an analysis of one of the more explicit formulations offered of this type of self. Finally, there will be consideration of the way in which a moral dimension to this self is incorporated, whereby rational individuals are considered worthy of reward in that they are able to take care of themselves (and others). The analysis will end by showing how this self is legitimised in terms of its authenticity.

5.6.2 Characteristics of the rational self- decision-making

Excerpt 18, Document 1

"To drink or not to drink, that is your decision. If you decide to drink, think!"

This sentence neatly encapsulates how the reader is positioned as a certain type of person; i.e., the type of person who will drink safely. The choice whether or not to drink is constructed in terms of a black and white decision and, having made the decision to drink, the reader is then instructed to be the type of person who thinks, plans and perhaps makes themselves aware of potential pitfalls for which appropriate pre-emptive action can be taken. The reader is therefore positioned as a "safe" drinker on the grounds that they are a rational self-determining individual.

5.6.3 Characteristics of the rational self- autonomy

Excerpt 19, Document 7

"Don't let people pressurise you into drinking. Sometimes it's useful to have your own response planned in advance. It could be anything from 'I've got a lot on tomorrow' to simply 'No thanks, I've had enough'."

Here, the reader is requested to position themselves as an autonomous individual able to resist external pressures (contrary to the discourses outlined in the previous section) and to stick to a decision by formulating a plan of action for use in a social context where such pressures may be present. Suggestions for this plan are constructed in terms of using verbally recognised techniques such as refusals and excuses, techniques that are acceptable within a drinking context, and are familiar as part of the skills young people are encouraged to adopt in much of the alcohol education literature (Weare, 2000).

5.6.4 Characteristics of the rational self- responsibility

Excerpt 20, Document 3

"Remember- alcohol is widely used in our society and this can sometimes result in us forgetting that it's a drug. Individuals are expected to take responsibility for their drinking and their behaviour afterwards."

In this extract, dualist notions are once more drawn on to construct both society and its practices, and the individual who lives within it (yet is separate from it). The first

part of the construction formulates a reminder of the ubiquitous nature of alcohol in a shared society ("our society") and the consequence this may have in terms of overlooking the more dangerous elements of alcohol use, articulated in the use of the term "drug" and all its negative connotations of dependency and damaging effects (as discussed in section 5.4.4). This is then constructed as the problem of the individual, distinct from society, and not the problem of alcohol or the society in which it is used (thereby drawing, yet again, on dualist notions). Responsibility for any damaging effects is effectively placed at the door of the individual. This constructs the individual as entirely self-directed and accountable for their behaviour and, logically, for drinking in a "safe" manner. This is a quite striking discourse in so much as it almost entirely contradicts discourses within the same document on the effects of drinking where the individual, particularly the young person, is considered prone to malign forces (be they alcohol, advertising or peers), in need of protection and therefore not responsible for their behaviour. However, such a discourse is commensurate with the demands of the safe drinking message; if the individual is not ascribed some degree of autonomy then there is no point requesting them to do anything! The next extract works to construct more fully the identity of the safe drinker and incorporates all the characteristics discussed previously.

5.6.5 The rational "safe" drinker- responsibilisation of the self

Excerpt 21, Document 15

"When we have all the relevant information we need to make choices about alcohol and how we are going to use it, it is important to THINK about the choice we have to make. Thinking through our decisions is important before we are faced with a situation which involves alcohol in order to prepare ourselves and our response. We have to be able to live with the choices we make and be prepared to take responsibility for the consequences of our choices whether good or bad. I am the only person responsible for making my choices. My choices = My behaviour = My responsibility."

This extract encompasses all the characteristics attributed to the liberal individual in one all-encompassing model of the person. It is very reminiscent of models of the person as an information processor, a discourse familiar within cognitive psychology and, perhaps, is also the type of self that is assumed to exist in psychological models such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Not surprising perhaps, given that such models have been developed in an historical and cultural context (20th/21st century western liberalism) that positively evaluate such

characteristics. Within such a discourse the person is constructed as the recipient of information which they then weigh up and evaluate before coming to a decision and deciding upon an appropriate course of action to take, all of which occurs within a hypothetical drinking context. Actions will have consequences, so this discursive model emphasises the notion that the individual has to be accountable for, and take responsibility for, the choices they make and the actions they engage in. This is reiterated and reinforced in the mantra like "I am the only person responsible for my choices" and the mechanistic nature of this construction is emphasised further by reducing the advice given to a mathematical equation. The self that is constructed here is one who is almost living in a social vacuum, a self unfettered by emotional concerns, invariable and subject to the influence of no person and no background circumstance. This, in essence, is the self that is able to engage in safe drinking, in all respects the type of responsibilised Foucaldian self readers are encouraged to become throughout the health promotion literature (e.g., Fraser 2004). This type of self may therefore, for young people, be presented as what it means to become an "adult"; i.e., neither vulnerable nor, of course, rebellious.

5.6.6 The virtue of the "safe" drinker

Excerpt 22, Document 9

" You'll be able to look out for your mates and calm them down if things get out of hand. You're more likely to make a hit with someone you're keen to impress. You may even have a lucid conversation with her or him. No more throwing you guts up and hugging the porcelain telephone all night. You'll be yourself, really yourself."

In this extract, the reader is again addressed directly and is offered a series of positive consequences that arise if they drink "safely" and not to excess. The tone is casual, humorous and encouraging, almost in the style of one friend talking to another. The reader is therefore not lectured to but is instead positioned within a discourse of friendship whereby they are listening to someone "in the know", someone whom they can trust (and someone whose word carries weight as such advice is portrayed as being representative of a peer group norm). The discourse itself constructs, first, an altruistic notion of being able to care for, and look after, one's friends. This ability of being able to care for others also presumes an ability to care for oneself, as a characteristic that is highly valued in contemporary western society (Adkins, 2001). This is formulated as bringing its own rewards, in that the person is able to attain

social regard when interacting with others, primarily by virtue of being able to interact with them properly. Secondly, the benefits are portrayed in a humorous way and are multi-faceted; i.e., physical, social and possibly also romantic. This positively evaluated "safe" drinking self is then characterised as a representation of the "real you". The safe drinker, the rational decision-maker, is therefore formulated as not only a desirable state of being but also a "real" way of being. This apparent need to be authentic has been found to be of great concern to young people discursively (cf. Widdicombe and Woofitt, 1990, for an analysis of how members of the gothic sub-culture were concerned with establishing their style of expression as in some way a real reflection of their true selves). Following the advice in this extract would therefore be seen as providing the route to developing an authentic sense of self, and highlights in particular the essentially individualistic, and bounded, nature of this construction of the self.

This section has shown how characteristics of decision-making, autonomy and responsibility are constructed as aspects of the rational and responsible self, and how these constructions can be formulated into one all-encompassing whole as an example of a "safe" drinker (the archetypal Foucaldian self). This "safe" drinker is one who possesses all the characteristics associated with the liberal humanist identity and, as such, is constructed as both worthy and authentic. The following chapter will now go on to look at educational discourses as they are delivered in the classroom.

CHAPTER 6: WITHIN AND BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: AN ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION IN ACTION

6.1 Introduction and aims of the study

As with the previous study, the aim of this piece of research was to identify, and analyse, discourses presented to young people through the medium of alcohol education. However, the focus of this study was somewhat different. In this study, the material that was analysed was obtained from selected instances of education in action; i.e., from actual classroom interactions. As such, the data differed from those of the previous chapter in a number of important respects. Firstly, the source of the discourses (i.e., the speaker) was very much more "visible", which had important implications for the type of verbal positioning that occurred. Secondly, the constructions of discourse occurred in a much more spontaneous fashion, and within a much more localised context; i.e., in a specific time and place. Primarily, the speaker was the only one engaged in this process though there was some limited interaction with school pupils, thus facilitating some co-construction of the data. Finally, the target audience was much more clearly defined and much smaller, invariably consisting of a particular set of young people of a particular age in a particular locale. In essence, therefore, this study sought to analyse data obtained from more dynamic constructions of alcohol use obtained within a variety of classroom-based contexts.

The dominance of the adult in (nearly all) these contexts is worthy of comment in that they were often (visually as well as verbally) working within a pre-defined and specific role; e.g., as a nurse. Arising out of these subject positions (and created within these contexts) were subtle power relations that were therefore mediated through particular discourses of childhood, risk and the nature of alcohol use amongst the young. It is these that were of key interest to this researcher, particularly in light of the theoretical background to the thesis discussed in Chapter Two and elaborated on further in Chapter Five.

One of the key aims of the study therefore was to see whether the discourses evident in the classroom were commensurate with those evident in the educational material, and then to assess the implications of these constructions for resolving the "problem" of alcohol misuse amongst young people aged 16 and under.

6.2 Method

6.2.1 Decisions about recording

Experience with previous studies had highlighted the difficulty of obtaining material that was easy to transcribe, particularly when multiple respondents were involved. Therefore it was decided that, for this study, material would be collected using a video recorder rather than standard audio recording equipment. This would enable easy identification of speakers and, in addition, provide a better quality product in terms of sound reproduction. As it transpired, the use of such a recording technique also usefully enabled a more accurate grounding of the material in terms of its surrounding context.

It was initially envisaged that most of the session recorded would consist of straightforward lecture style teaching but this turned out not to be the case; many of the sessions made use of video clips and visual props. None of the video clips/visual props themselves has been analysed; however, they have been treated throughout the analysis as part of the discursive resources upon which speakers drew. This was because it was felt that an analysis that incorporated visual material would be unnecessarily unwieldy and inappropriate for the purposes of this analysis (following Potter's (1996) doctrine that the focus should be on the spoken/written word rather than treating visual data as forms of "texts" as perhaps Parker (1992) would do).

6.2.2 Ethical and practical concerns

The use of video recording, however, created a potential problem in terms of the ethics underlying the research. The data collected would inevitably facilitate more easy identification of those taking part, and many schools (and indeed parents) would have potentially felt uneasy about the prospect of their child being filmed by an outsider. Therefore, when contacting the schools and parents care was taken to emphasise the confidentiality and anonymity of the data used, and assurances given that, once transcription and analysis was complete, the data would be erased with only the researcher ever having had access to the original videotapes. Schools were also reassured that most of the data would consist of the relevant adult speaking, and pupils would only be included where their involvement was relevant; e.g., when asking a teacher a question for instance. Both parents and schools were also supplied with consent forms prior to the research, forms on which they elected to actually opt the young people in to the research as opposed to opting out. In addition, young

people themselves were given the chance to opt out or refuse to take part if they felt unhappy in any way about being filmed.

A more practical concern centred on the fact that the presence of a video recorder in the classroom was a lot more obvious, and obtrusive, than a normal tape recorder. This inevitably may have had an influence on what was said and done in the classroom although to what extent is impossible to verify. Despite this, the educators involved often pointed out that the content of the lesson was no different from that which had originally been planned, although the fact remains that how the session was delivered was, at least in part, likely to be structured in relation to the presence of a researcher and/or video recorder. To enable the recording to be as unobtrusive as possible, most of the sessions were discretely recorded from the back of the classroom.

6.2.3 Selecting the sample

Given the ethically sensitive nature of the proposed recording process, it was anticipated that response rates to the request for participation in this project would be low. A decision was therefore made to contact as many schools as possible, an initial starting point being schools close to where the researcher lives in order to ease the practicability of collecting data. The selection of schools within such a small catchment area (in national terms) was not considered to be a concern in terms of the validity of the project as the range of educational practices here could reasonably be expected to be as diverse as with any other part of the country. Furthermore, the focus of this project was on the idiosyncratic, localised and particularised nature of discourse, set, of course, within the general framework of educational practices and guidelines operating within the country as a whole.

A list of all secondary schools in the area was first obtained through a local contact after which a letter was drafted and sent out to the head teacher of every school, outlining the nature of the research and requesting participation in the project. In all, twenty six schools were contacted. Of these, six schools offered to take part and a further four expressed an interest but later declined to participate. All the other schools either responded negatively or failed to respond at all. Given the nature of the research, this was, overall, a pleasing response to the initial request. Of the six schools who offered to take part, two refused to allow the session to be recorded although they did permit the researcher to observe these sessions. One of these sessions consisted of

a visit to the school by an external theatre group who enacted a role-play based around three young people getting drunk whilst their parents were away, resulting in one of the young people becoming very ill. This was then followed by a class discussion on the issues raised, a discussion chaired by one of the actors visiting the school. It was a pity that this discussion was not recorded as the debate was very lively, and encompassed many challenges to the constructions of reality (in terms of drinking behaviour, its problems and its resolution) that were presented to young people in the form of the play.

The second school that refused permission to record did so on the grounds of confidentiality. This session involved a visit to the school by three members of Alcoholics Anonymous who gave a talk on their drinking experiences to a group of fourteen year olds. This would also have been very illuminating as all three speakers structured their talk in terms of a narrative or "life story" that frequently followed a theme of redemption after a lifetime of adversity (and extreme negative experiences) attributable to the bad behaviour of the individual under the influence of an external "disease". The combined use of both medical discourses, and those of confession and redemption (religious) to construct both drinking and drinkers would provide an interesting focus for future research if access to groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous can be arranged. It would also be interesting to have had some feedback from young people themselves, given that most of the experiences that were described offered a challenge to the discourses of pleasure and fun young people themselves put forward when talking about drinking (as was seen in the first study).

Nevertheless, the four schools that did allow recording provided some very interesting material for analysis that facilitated useful comparisons with the previous study. One point of interest here is that two of the schools were private ones, and two were state schools, with very different issues affecting each school (and different resources for tackling education). This highlights once again the importance of treating each session as a local and specific instance of discourse, but yet set within the wider structures and philosophy of the national education system at large.

In terms of the actual content of the session, these were as follows:

i) School One (Transcript One) - A lesson given by a teacher on alcohol use to Year 10 pupils (girls). This lesson was one of a series given to pupils on this topic.

ii) School Two (Transcript Two) - A presentation on the topic of alcohol (and drug use) given by the head of year to all Year 10 pupils (mixed).

iii) School Three (Transcript Three) - A presentation on the topic of alcohol use given by a police constable to all Year 11 pupils (girls).

iv) School Three (Transcript Four) - A presentation on the topic of alcohol use given by a nurse to all Year 9 pupils (girls).

v) School Three (Transcript Five) - A presentation on the topic of alcohol use given by a police constable to all Year 9 pupils (girls).

vi) School Four (Transcript Six) - A presentation on the topic of alcohol use given by a therapist and recovering alcoholic to all Year 11 pupils (boys).

Regrettably, there were no sessions held with Year 8 pupils; one had been arranged but the school in question withdrew permission to take part at a very late stage. This is taken into account later in the analysis when conclusions about the implications of the study are drawn; i.e., that such conclusions may therefore have limits. Nevertheless, the sessions were thought to represent a nice spread of the different types of approach (and different type of speakers employed) by schools when tackling alcohol education but they cannot, and are not meant to be, representative of practices at large. What they do, however, is give a flavour of the range and type of discourses present in alcohol education in Britain.

6.2.4 Procedure

Over a number of months each of the schools was visited at times mutually convenient to both the school and the researcher in order to observe and record the session. At the beginning of each session the speaker, or another appropriate adult, explained the nature of the visit (and the presence of the video-recorder) to the young people involved. During the course of each session the researcher was seated in a discrete spot and positioned the video-camera at an angle that was comfortable for sitting yet facilitated the collection of good quality audio-visual material. Care was taken throughout to focus on the centre of the session, whether this was the speaker, a video clip or a young person asking a question. At the conclusion of each session the researcher debriefed the speakers more fully as to the nature of the research (often inviting a great deal of interest) and answered any questions the speakers may have had. An informal arrangement was made with all the schools whereby a summary of

the findings of this research would be sent to the schools involved, and an acknowledgement of their assistance with providing the material for this research given in the acknowledgements section of the thesis.

6.2.5 Transcription

Once the material had been collected it was then transferred onto VHS tapes in order to ease the process of transcription. Transcription was then carried out as for audio tapes (directly from the television) although this took a little longer as attention to (and notice of) the context of the speech was constantly made throughout. As before, a modified version of the Jefferson system was used that noted important details such as laughter, amplitude and pauses, but was not concerned with the minutiae of the interactions such as slight changes in intonation, hesitation, etc. Again, this was because the focus was on the use of discursive resources rather than the actual discursive practices themselves. Copies of all the transcripts are available on request.

6.3 Theoretical background

This study draws on a similar theoretical background to that of the previous study, particularly with regard to Giddens' (1991) and Adkin's (2001) discussion of the 20th/21st century "risk" society, and Fraser's (2004) empirical research into how education materials seek to responsibilise the individual so that they become self-policing citizens (embodying notions of the Foucauldian self). Of particular analytical relevance however is Harré and Davies' (1991) concept of discursive positioning. Unlike the previous study, here the source of the discourses presented is very much in evidence, embodied as it is in the person of the speaker. There is therefore a lot more work done by the speaker to position themselves as a certain type of person, and to defend that position. Also very relevant here therefore is Parker's (1992) emphasis on the way discourses work to construct people's subjectivity; i.e., their ways of thinking, feeling and being. It will be argued in this analysis that the discourses young people are presented with are designed to present them with a way of being that is in accordance with the norms of wider society and non-threatening to the social order. Furthermore, young people are not only encouraged to adopt this conformist identity but also to police both themselves and others to ensure that such positions are maintained.

A key way by which this is achieved is through the construction of drinking (to excess) as problematic, problematic here being defined as threatening or risky to the physical integrity of the self. The alternative way of "being" offered to young people is, by and large, to adopt the identity of the liberal humanist (as outlined in the previous study); namely that of the rational (and ostensibly free) individual concerned with avoiding risk. Most intriguing of all, perhaps, is how such a rational individual is conceived as operating in the "real" world of drinking. The clearest position young people are offered is that of the rational statistician working out unit strengths and volumes in order to protect themselves from the "dangers" of drinking to excess. However, such identities are at odds with those constructed by young people themselves in relation to drinking (as was seen in the first study), the implications of which will be discussed later. Crucially, however, as the final study in this thesis will demonstrate, young people *do* appear to accept these positions when they are discussing them in a context that relates to alcohol education rather than drinking *per se*. First, however, the analysis for this chapter will be presented.

6.4 Analysis- an overview

The first part of this analysis will be concerned with the way in which the speakers position themselves within the classroom, and in relation to the young people they are addressing. This is not just a discursive achievement but also very much a physical one as the young people are often all sat down whilst the speaker is standing and addressing the group, effectively having control of the floor from the outset. In addition, at least two of the speakers wore an identifiable uniform (the nurse and the police constable) that symbolically placed them within that role and imbued them with the characteristics associated with that role, usually those of authority and regulation/rule enforcement in some sense or other. The first part of the analysis will look at how, in different ways, the speakers work to erode any notions of power and control over the young people by openly declaring such a possibility and then denying it, offering a range of alternative "motives" in its place. Having positioned themselves in this way, the analysis will then go on to look at how the speakers construct young people in certain specific ways, all of which centre around discourses that position the young person as essentially vulnerable and in need of protection from the various negatively constructed outcomes of alcohol use. Offered to young people are a range of different ways of "protection", and the analysis will then go on to look at how such

protection is enshrined in discourses that encourage them to adopt a particular type of subjectivity; specifically that of the rational individual monitoring and self-regulating their behaviour in ways that will produce outcomes preferable to the young people themselves (but, as in the previous chapter, it will be argued that such outcomes are also conducive to the construction of a model citizen, encompassing qualities of conformity, compliance, productivity and personal responsibility commensurate with 21st century capitalist society).

6.4.1 It's in your best interests- the construction of the "protective" speaker

Excerpt 1, Transcript 2

Year Head: "...to tell you what you should and shouldn't do. You will make your own choices in life (1.0) in fact if I stand here and wave the big stick (INAUDIBLE WORDS) 'shouldn't don't this shouldn't do that' probably the first thing you will go and do is go and try it because it sounds exciting. I'm simply going to try and show you some of the consequences (3.0) of what I'm trying I'm talking obviously about drugs and alcohol and what I put to you are the consequences so that when you are faced with the choice, and many of you already have been, when you make that choice you can at least have some information on which to base your choice".

Wood and Kroger (2000), in their review of discourse analytic research, suggest that one of the most common ways speakers fend off potential character attributions is to explicitly state such a potential attribution and then deny it. Such a disclaimer is apparent in the quote above and was present in one form or another in all the transcripts. Disclaimers work to prevent speakers' utterances being heard in a certain way, they provide a claim that they are "not that sort of person" and, most famously, the use of disclaimers has been explored in relation to the construction of racist discourse; i.e., speakers enabling themselves to state racist comments by virtue of having first denied that they are being racist (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Thus, they are preventing or forestalling any such suggestion from the outset. In the above quote, and many others in the transcripts, the speakers work hard to forestall any claims that they are dictating to the young people or attempting to control their behaviour in any real sense. In the above quote, the speaker positions himself as a neutral outsider, merely presenting the facts and leaving the responsibility for any subsequent actions at the door of the young people themselves. In making such disclaimers, a whole range of subject positions are often drawn upon, an example of which can be seen in the following extract.

Excerpt 2, Transcript 4

Nurse: "… and I'm not going to mince my words (0.5) because (0.5) we nearly lost two members of S. School two weeks ago because they nearly died. And I love my job but THAT is about the worst it gets (0.5) when you are looking after somebody that you think is going to DIE. And I HATE it when it's somebody who's as young as the girls in this school because what I see is (0.5) if this is what they're like now and they're being looked after in school how are they going to be when they leave here when they haven't got somebody looking out for them when they get HOME (POINTS WITH BOTH HANDS AT GIRLS). And I will I don't want you to get to that stage so I want you to learn from their experiences (2.0).because I don't want you to get into the same state".

In this extract, the speaker, already physically positioned in the role of nurse, draws on a number of sources related to that position that enable her to position herself in alternative ways to that of a "controller". Drawing on medical discourses, she is able to position herself as a "healer" whose focus and concern is on the well-being of the sick and draws also on the maternal discourses identified by Zannettino (2000), whereby her role and position as a woman is similarly defined in terms of caring for others, hence the expression of strong emotional investment regarding what happens to the girls in the class.

This is achieved, however, by positioning young people as in need of that care, more specifically as in need of protection from physically threatening outcomes. As in the previous study, a great deal of time is spent discursively constructing young people in this way and, as was noted before, such a discourse surrounding young people as a "protected species" (Scott, Jackson and Backett-Milburn, 1998) enables adults to step in and control the young people's behaviour through a justified form of guidance. Many of the speakers, as can be seen here, essentially position themselves as altruistic, thus constructing their motivations as those of care and nurturing, reflecting another view of young people as "innocents" to be guided (a discourse from the philosophy of Rousseau, perhaps). For instance, in the following extract, the speaker (a recovering alcoholic) constructs himself primarily as a person who wants to protect and help others avoid the hardship he has endured.

Excerpt 3, Transcript 6

Speaker: "Now part of my job at the top of the cliff is to chip away at that statistic to see if I could somehow or another be a part of being able to pull that statistic down (REFERRING TO THE FACT THAT ONE IN FIFTEEN YOUNG PEOPLE WILL BECOME ALCOHOL DEPENDENT IN ADULTHOOD) now can you see why I am so grateful for the opportunity any opportunity that I can

get to speak on this subject if just one of you hears what I have to say this morning then my job's all worthwhile (1.0) so let's stay with the bad news cos now it's gonna get worse".

To a greater or lesser degree, such claims of altruism occur in all the speakers' discourses and are used as a key way of countering alternative attributions of "controlling" behaviour. Indeed, claiming altruism is a difficult position for young people to challenge as such challenges would be emotionally troublesome and involve casting doubt on the very essence and nature of the person cast in that position.

Another way adults deny control is to construct young people as having autonomy (as was evident in the first extract), thus discursively empowering them, a position they are not likely to challenge. In essence, they position young people as having choices and being able to make their own decisions with regard to alcohol. However, as was seen in the previous study, such autonomy is not really on the table for young people as almost all the speakers provide people with a range of subject positions that they do not really have any choice in taking up. Alternative choices (to drink to excess, to drink for fun, etc.) are not offered as viable options and the rest of the analysis will now go some way to showing how this is achieved.

6.4.2 So who needs protecting? - the construction of the vulnerable young person

As was apparent in the previous study, many of the educational materials worked hard to construct young people as vulnerable and in need of protection, in order to discursively justify their intervention and guidance in young people's drinking practices. Such constructions draw on discourses of young people as a "protected species" and as innocent children, all of which have been suggested are key ways of intervening in, and controlling, behaviour that adults in wider society do not find acceptable. This fits in neatly with Gidden's discussion of the "risk" society, and the Foucauldian focus on how people are effectively governed via their concern with avoiding such risk. In the classroom, this construction of vulnerability to risk is even more apparent, strikingly so in fact, as can be seen in the following extract.

Excerpt 4, Transcript 5

Police Constable: "…..we're also having instances of putting a drug in your drink now that could be something like Rohypnol or GHB those kind of things and what happens is that the effect on you is that you haven't go a clue what's happening you look normal so you mates probably leave you (0.5) perhaps with a male (1.0) cos they think you're okay (1.0) what we have reports of are that people

who have something in their drink then forget then come to us maybe even two days later and say that they've been raped (1.0) now you think two days later and the reason it's two days later is because they've forgotten (0.5) they can't actually remember now that might sound odd but that is true that is what has happened".

In this extract, the young person is constructed as vulnerable to a threat that here comprises the malevolent intention of an unspecified other (usually male), drawing on discourses of female vulnerability in so doing. Such a discourse also constructs males as themselves "dangerous" and in this extract works to position females in a way that they cannot therefore afford to "let their guard down" and leave their drink unattended. The prevalence of these discourses may tie in to historical discourses around sex and morality which portray men as the instigators of sex and women the passive recipients (Hollway, 1989). However, as was seen in the first study reported in this thesis, drinking is often constructed by young women as a means to obtain pleasure, and one of the ways of doing this is through having sex. This recent autonomous view of women is denied in the discourses above which works to reposition women as the passive recipients of sex and men as predators. This is not to suggest that such threats have no basis in real life contexts, but their focus in discourses such as this (and the absence of discourses relating to women actively seeking sex) would appear to have the function of positioning women in this way. Men, on the other hand, are also positioned as vulnerable, but this is usually in terms of their own character attributes which are often couched in terms of risk-taking or competitive behaviour, as can be seen in the extract below.

Excerpt 5, Transcript 3

Police Constable: "There is another one with motorbikes (1.0) um motorbikes can be very dangerous just purely for the nature of the fact that the little protection and the speeds that can they do and this again is a male twenty about twenty years old and they had this thing which was who could get round time furthest fastest who can lap round in whatever time (1.0). They do this and there's one guy there that hasn't actually got a full driving license for a motorcycle he can ride a motorcycle but he hasn't got the full one which you need for bigger bikes and this particular bigger bike was a 600cc but it's his cousin's and his cousin says yea okay you can have a go on it (1.0) so his cousin knows he shouldn't be on it (1.0) and the guy knows he shouldn't be on it as well but on he gets and they start blasting round town (2.0). The guy without the license goes round yes very quick (1.0) but he hits a wall (2.0) he doesn't die there but he does die later on in hospital (2.0)".

Discourses like this have many roots, not least in bio-medical discourses focusing on hormonal influences, but here they would appear to construct a position for men of natural competitiveness and rivalry, arguably characteristics that are very commensurate with a (still predominately male dominated) economic system that is reliant on competitiveness to succeed. Alcohol use, in these instances, is constructed as disrupting men's normal cognitive judgements with regard to risk-taking, a construction that is developed more fully in the following extract.

Excerpt 6, Transcript 6

Speaker: ".....believe me alcohol is *dangerous* (2.0) but come on gentlemen you do not run away from dangerous things you've been doing dangerous things and using dangerous things it's part of your everyday life (1.0). You just have a look at this (summary) that's coming now you're going on hang gliding bungee jumping scuba diving mountaineering uh (CIRCLES ARMS) you're starting to use machinery now you'll be driving before long so much of life is dangerous you do not run away from dangerous things BUT I would like you to notice this if you would (0.5) if you choose to use dangerous things in your life which you do you do something else at the same time (0.5) you use them carefully and with common sense you do that already so if you with me could acknowledge that alcohol may be dangerous doesn't it sort of stack up that the way forward if we're going to use alcohol (0.5) should be carefully and with common SENSE (2.0) shall I just put a one liner underneath this for you and it goes like this (0.5) if you use alcohol rather than abuse it you reduce your chances of getting into difficulties so that is use rather than abuse (3.0)".

In this extract, the risk is presented in a way that normalises it (at least for men). Such risks are either avoided or managed, and if they are managed they are done so through the use of careful decisions and sound cognitive judgement. This discourse of rationality, commonly applied to men (Spelman, 1989) has its roots in enlightenment thinking and the emergence of science, not to mention being the favoured way of describing the nature of the person in modern psychological discourse (exemplified, for instance, in the Theory of Planned Behaviour outlined by Ajzen, 1988). This then is constructed as the way people (particularly men) are, and it is of course no coincidence that the qualities of rationality and the ability to reason are heavily favoured in 21st western society, linked as they are to economic theories and decision-making where subjective values and emotion have little role (Spelman, 1989). Alcohol use, at least to excess, is therefore a threat in that it affects cognitive judgements and means that risks are taken without due regard to any rational analysis

of the pros and cons. As such, the integrity of the individual, and presumably the ability to function as a productive member of the economy, is affected.

6.4.3 The "innocent" drinker- justifying the need for protection

Young people are not just constructed as vulnerable to the effects of alcohol, they are frequently also constructed as passive recipients of its effects, due mainly to their innocence and inexperience. Although young people are attributed as making choices, i.e., proscribed autonomy, this autonomy results in negative consequences as a result of this innocence and inexperience as the following extract shows; crucially, getting drunk is then constructed as removing any such autonomy as the person has become helpless and hopeless.

Excerpt Seven, Transcript Four.

Nurse: "There was alcohol allowed at a social event at school….. she got very drunk but not until she left the event she walked out of the event obviously still on her legs otherwise she wouldn't have been able to leave otherwise somebody would have taken her home BUT when she was found in a heap on the ground by somebody (1.0) in the dark (1.5) with somebody else with whom she has absolutely no recollection at all and it was a male (1.5) then what you have to say is she was in danger (1.0) if she hadn't been found (1.0) by somebody who was out walking their dog she probably would have died where she'd fallen because without a doubt she would have vomited and drowned on her own vomit (2.0) but she was found and she was bought to the health centre (1.0) and she vomited and vomited and vomited for so long that there is no doubt that she would have literally inhaled her own vomit and she would have died because you have to help people in that state because they can't help themselves (1.5)".

In this narrative, the young lady has got drunk but is constructed as having been unaware of the consequences. As a result she has been subjected to an attack by alcohol and has now experienced inevitable, and extreme, physical consequences. Such consequences are constructed as even more extreme in the following example.

Excerpt Eight, Transcript Six.

Speaker: "Seven years ago last June 12th my friend P and his wife C took their nineteen year old son J out for a little meal in a place called Camden Lock in London a lot of you will be familiar with that anyway they had a nice meal half past ten came round they came home and J their son went off to a party (2.0). The following morning at eight o clock the phone was ringing and it was the police on the phone from Camden can we come round (0.5) gentlemen you've guessed the rest (0.5) J had been found dead on the doorstep of his own apartment at six o clock that morning that was two hours

before the phone call what had happened was he had left his parents the night before and had gone to a PARTY that's what young people do. There was alcohol and drugs at the party and that's what you get at parties and he made a decision that evening and it killed him. Now the actual decision he made was to mix alcohol with methadone which is a heroin substitute and anyway it killed him".

In this narrative the young man is constructed as making a decision that ultimately proves fatal. Having imbibed alcohol, his powers of decision making are flawed and he takes a dangerous risk that has not been properly thought through and ultimately proves fatal. Such a discourse is couched in a narrative that normalises and therefore generalises this type of thinking. The narrative is entwined in that of a familial discourse encompassing parents, a night out and an all round pleasant evening. The shock therefore comes from the horrible consequences that befell this "ordinary" citizen, effectively working to position all young people as potentially subject to these mistakes.

6.4.4 Becoming "monsters"- justifying the need for self-control

Such effects do not always have to be fatal; another way in which alcohol use is constructed is similar to that found in educational materials whereby alcohol affects the parts of the brain that controls inhibitions. Drawing on a bio-medical discourse, alcohol is constructed as affecting the integrity of the nervous system as a result of which aggressive behaviour is seen to arise, behaviour that is threatening to the "law-abiding" citizen, as can be seen in the following extract.

Excerpt Nine, Transcript Two.

Year Head: "…..some of you will have seen that on TV whatever in the papers which I find incredibly scary uh on a personal level I I will not any longer go down to W town centre on a Saturday or Friday night I used to used to enjoy it but now as you see people *nice* people become monsters (2.0) and do things of which they'd be deeply ashamed".

In this extract, people are constructed as being nasty and violent as a result of the effects of alcohol. Once under possession of alcohol, they are therefore no longer responsible for their actions. However, when sober, such people are constructed as being essentially nice, a classic construction of the "good" citizen. Once alcohol has taken hold and attacked them, however, people revert to their base (Hobbesian) instincts of aggression and violence, creating a climate of fear and a threat to the

social order. Such an argument can of course be used to justify curbs and limitations on effectively socially challenging and disruptive behaviour, behaviour that is threatening to both governance and also perhaps represents a challenge to the prevailing economic order, or at least threatens to disrupt the efficiency of it. Indeed, one of the video clips shown in this session featured a commentary that described the tension between police and drunken youths in militaristic terms i.e., as representing a "war zone" with the police in this case being constructed as the good guys and the drunken youths as the bad ("...a combat zone for police dealing with a public who are drunk and dangerous", Transcript Two).

Central to all these notions therefore is the notion of loss of control, and it is this that is constructed as resulting in behaviour that transgresses both societal and personal moral norms in a way that is unacceptable. As such, the idea of drinking to lose control is constructed as irrational, in direct contrast to discourses evident in the first study. Furthermore, one of the speakers in another session, a recovering alcoholic, constructs a metaphor around the notion that heavy drinking will lead to the consequence of *permanent* loss of control (alcohol dependency) and this is constructed as an extremely negative (and, for some, inevitable) outcome of alcohol misuse. In fact, there are very few sections in the data where alcohol is constructed in positive terms, certainly not for pleasure and fun as young people themselves did in the first study. However, there *are* sections in the data where alcohol use is constructed as normal (as in the quote below) but this is always within certain parameters, care is often taken to draw a discursive distinction between use and abuse (constructed below as involving a loss of control).

Excerpt Ten, Transcript Two.

Nurse: "... she had something to drink at the social event which is very nice and that's what we'd all like to do go out have a drink with some food the trouble is people kept topping her glasses up and (1.0) she lost count (1.0) or she forgot to say no (1.0) and consequently by the time she'd had EIGHT glasses of wine she wasn't in a fit state to say no she probably couldn't remember how much she'd had and she'd lost all control".

6.4.5 Drinking "safely"- justifying the need to be rational

Thus far, much of the focus has been on the negative construction of alcohol use in relation to the construction of young people as vulnerable and innocent. Through this, speakers have been able to position themselves as benevolent, caring protectors of

young people. This position enables them to construct for young people a necessary type of subjectivity, very similar to the one evident in much of the educational materials, although done in a slightly different way. In essence, young people are enjoined to become rational decision-makers concerned with avoiding risk; in short to adopt the identity of the liberal humanist. This is an identity they were also encouraged to adopt in the educational materials. In so doing, young people move away from their position as vulnerable and innocent children and instead move into the world of adulthood where they can effectively police, and control, themselves. As such, they also become responsible for their decisions and accountable for their actions.

A key aspect of being such a person is the ability to make decisions about how to behave, and to be an effective decision-maker requires knowledge on which to base those decisions. For the drinker, what might that knowledge consist of? For the young person, this essentially is information such as how strong different drinks are, the size of measurements, what A.B.V. (alcohol by volume) means, etc. Therefore, there is a strong didactic focus on imparting such information which is often couched in a statistical terminology that requires rational analyses similar to that found in economics. The extract below is a good example of this.

Excerpt Eleven, Transcript Five.

Police Constable: "Now I want to just run through very quickly (2.0) um a way to work out those units because what you want to do is to stop yourself becoming in those situations you want to stop yourself getting in those situations and I've got a handout here (INDICATES HANDOUT) for later the general advice that was given was absolutely correct if you want a more specific um answer there's an equation and basically it's ever so simple and if you need a calculator fine go and get one all you have to do is times the amount of volume the liquid in here (PICKS UP AND INDICATES GREEN WINE BOTTLE) and it tells you so that's easy okay so how much is in here seventy seventy five cl that's 750 millilitres you times that number by the percentage alcohol that's easy as well cos that's written on here alright so you just look at the two figures (POINTS TO BOTTLE LABEL) 750 times 75 (1.0) and once you've got that figure all you do is divide it by a thousand and that will give you the answer which is was for this was 5.6 units (2.5) so you have no excuse you know how to visually work it out and you now how to mathematically get it absolutely correct that simple equation I suggest you commit to memory (0.5) cos that will help you out".

In presenting information in this way to young people, they are effectively encouraged to join in the process of rational analysis (often through group work) and

become rational decision makers themselves. Having absorbed such knowledge, young people are hereby also instructed as needing to use that knowledge in making decisions that help them plan and avoid risk (risk being associated with heavy drinking). Such decisions are constructed as sensible and form the basis of the philosophy described in the research literature as "safe" drinking.

6.4.6 The "good" citizen

The function of many of these sessions is therefore apparent; to encourage young people to make informed decisions that will enable them to avoid harm through maintaining control, harm that is essentially equated with the risk of heavy drinking and all of its negative outcomes. Such outcomes often have a moral overtone that is equated with abuse, thus re-establishing the status of the liberal humanist as a good, worthy citizen (Rose, 1989). Through being able to take responsibility for their own actions such an individual is able to be self-governing and self-monitoring and, indeed, has an added layer of moral worthiness in that they are also able to take care of, and monitor, the actions of others ("you must tell somebody if somebody's drunk and go and get some help", Transcript Four). Thus, effectively young people are not only encouraged to police themselves but also each other. In addition, they are also positioned as needing to be responsible for their own thoughts and feelings as well as their behaviour, as the following extract demonstrates.

Excerpt 12, Transcript Six

Speaker: "What will completely govern whether or not you get into difficulties with your drinking (0.5) will be what you think of yourself what you think of yourself (0.5). In America we have a wonderful expression and it goes like this "if you think of yourself as a garbage can you will treat yourself accordingly".

This level of subjectivity, of being responsible for their own feelings and thoughts as well as behaviour, fundamentally reflects how young people's subjectivities are increasingly being constructed and formulated in these extracts. Missing from the data are any references to, or discourses round, positive aspects of drinking or any discourses that construct or challenge social structures and practices. In fact, it is the argument of this chapter that legitimisation of current social structures occurs behind the scenes, primarily through the medium of responsibilisation and

individualisation of the young person whereby they are rendered good citizens who may have a drink but never drink to excess. In short, they stay "safe".

6.5 Discussion

6.5.1 Summary

This analysis and the one in the previous chapter focused on exploring the meanings surrounding alcohol use amongst young people in a variety of different educational contexts. These were seen to characterise and construct the interaction between young people and the practice of drinking in a number of different ways. At the heart of such interactions were several different, sometimes seemingly contradictory, constructions of the person, or "self". It was argued that these different constructions formed part of a wider rhetorical discourse that enjoined the young person to construct for themselves a "liberal humanist" identity (and to be someone who engages in the practice of drinking from that standpoint). This identity, the analysis argued, is in many respects the epitome of the Foucauldian self (Gastaldo, 1997). It is a self that is autonomous in that it is able to control the vulnerabilities of, and "problematic" nature surrounding, the passive self but only within the limits prescribed by "civilised" society. Thus, it is a self that is agentic in order to implement the requirements of society. Within this discursive framework, the "message" of the material, that of "safe" drinking, is constructed. Such a message therefore enables the government and other policy makers to attempt to effectively control the drinking behaviour of young people by encouraging them to be responsible and control, or police, themselves. This message is similar to that found in other educational materials, such as those relating to HIV prevention (Fraser, 2004, Adkins, 2001).

However, the construction of the message, as far as alcohol is concerned, is not quite as simple as it may sound. Throughout the analysis it was argued that the different forms of the self were often constructed separately within the materials so that the rhetorical argument they presented remained compatible with the practice of drinking (and each self with a different aspect of the liberal humanist identity). However, in so doing, the practice of drinking can sometimes appear dilemmatic. For instance, on the one hand, the young person is positioned as "at risk" from the effects of alcohol and in need of protection; i.e., they are childlike in nature. On the other hand, the young person is also constructed as choosing to drink for the purposes of social bonding and, through this construction, is positioned as "responsible" for their behaviour and thus, more like an "adult". The construction of the "safe" drinker offers

a reconciliation of the two positions whereby young people choose to drink but also to remain in control (thereby protecting themselves). Rhetorically, this also appears to "bridge the gap" between childhood and adulthood.

Nevertheless, the message of safe drinking itself can seem contradictory. For instance, on the one hand, the "safe" drinker, as someone who chooses to drink for the purposes of social bonding, welcomes the effects of alcohol for that purpose. However, on the other hand, the "safe" drinker is someone who drinks with restraint and does not allow him or herself to get drunk. In short, they remain sober! Such a dilemmatic view is commonly seen in discourses circulating within wider society. For instance, early morning radio shows are often filled with talk around how drunk everyone was the night before (and what fun this was) whilst at the same time news reports and documentaries (e.g., *Couldn't give a xxxx for last orders,* Panorama, June 13th 2004) are filled with accounts of alcohol-fuelled violence and discourses around the "problem" of binge drinking and what should be done about it. Educational resources and teaching resources may therefore be seen as alternative forms of cultural text through which such contradictory discourses are perpetuated and reconstituted (and perhaps formalised under the guise of education) within wider society.

6.5.2 Maintaining the coherence of the liberal humanist identity- the importance of drinking

There are, therefore, some difficulties in maintaining the coherence of the liberal humanist identity given the ambivalent nature of the safe drinker (both discursively and in practice). Given the tensions and contradictions inherent in being a safe drinker (in terms of the kind of selves one can be) it would perhaps intuitively make more sense if drinking were to be avoided as a practice. Yet, throughout these discourses, particularly in the educational materials, there are clear attempts to construct drinking as a normative practice and render it compatible with building a liberal humanist identity. Drinking is held in high regard as a practice, at least in part because of the potential benefits it is perceived as serving within UK society. Many of these benefits have been outlined in the literature reviewed previously, benefits such as aiding people to form relationships and helping release stress (Pavis *et.al.*, 1997), and these are rooted in a culture that places alcohol at the heart of practices of celebration, not to mention the leisure industry (Dean, 1990). Such positive evaluations are used throughout the data as part of the construction of autonomy and used to establish the

importance of choice as a fundamental human attribute. In fact, throughout the data as a whole, other than where indicated, there was little in the way of non-drinking discourses. Young people are constructed, by and large, as drinkers throughout. As a consequence there is little construction of practices that could be engaged in as alternatives to drinking that fulfil the important needs of social bonding, celebration and stress release portrayed as so important, not just to young people, but also to adults.

However, one conclusion that may be drawn is that young people, at a practical level, may use alcohol to fulfil these functions simply because it is the only way "to be" that has been made available to them, an example of how discourse, according to Willig (2001) may work to construct young people's social realities and, in essence, their subjective experience. The dominant pro-drinking discourse, however, does not construct this as a "problem"; instead the problem is clearly seen as constructed in terms of the phenomenon of drinking to lose control (and the consequences this has in terms of the smooth functioning of wider society). Using the discourse of vulnerability (rooted in the "risk" society outlined by Giddens, 1991) this problem has been defined clearly as a characteristic of young people only i.e., as being caused by a lack of maturity/experience and from this follows a justification for the need for self-control and the encouragement of young people to adopt a more adult-like identity. In Foucauldian terms, the educational resources exert power over young people in an attempt to render them obedient and to adhere to the normative practices of wider society.

An important consequence of this is that young people, having been educated and offered the liberal humanist identity, are then rendered responsible for any subsequent failure to self-police if they continue to drink to excess and cause themselves harm (similar to Fraser's findings in her analysis of HIV educational material, 2004). Education therefore works to place the blame for problem drinking at the feet of young people, and further legitimates the need for young people's behaviour to be controlled. Furthermore, by blaming young people for their behaviour, responsibility for both the causes of, and the solutions to, harmful drinking is deflected away from any wider sources. For instance, it excuses the government from having to intervene at a political/structural or even economic level and, perhaps even more importantly, it absolves the drinks industry (who produced some of the educational material) from having to take responsibility for advertising practices,

alcohol promotions, etc. Also, at a familial level, it may absolve parents from having to look at the influence of their own behaviour. Another consequence is that schools that run education programmes, and those who produce the educational material, are also excused if they fail, as their material may work to inoculate themselves from blame. In this very real sense, it is therefore up to the individual (in this case the young person) to internalise and implement the norms and requirements of society. If there are societal problems as a result, then the individual is to blame.

6.5.3 Does education work?

At this point it therefore seems pertinent to consider to what extent educational resources such as these could therefore be said to be successful. As stated previously, there has, to date, been little in the way of evaluation of whether educational resources work, although it would be difficult to ascertain what criteria should actually be used in such an evaluation. Limited evaluation of classroom-based education programmes (such as that carried out by OFSTED, 1997) have shown that such programmes have had little success in achieving their stated aims of reducing consumption and alcohol-related harm. In so far as educational resources are considered to be part of such education, it may be reasonable to suggest they have had equally limited success. However, unlike classroom-based programmes, educational resources do not, as was pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, state their aims so unequivocally. It may therefore be possible for them to have, other, less ambitious aims. For instance, as a prompt for classroom discussion, and as a way of getting young people themselves to start engaging with and discussing the issues involved, they may have some value. Indeed, challenging the moral basis of drinking in this way may be an essential foundation on which to build any future structural/cultural changes in society (Crossley 2001). However, as part of an attempt to incite major changes in practice (as has been argued in this study) they are unlikely to be successful, and not just because of the mixed nature of the messages offered regarding drinking.

For instance, it is worth considering exactly what might occur if the discourse of safe drinking *is* translated into practice. Safe drinking assumes a certain type of rationale; i.e., that the young person will choose to drink but not get drunk, that they will want to keep in control and will stop before they have too much. The question then arises as to where this line might be? Even if young people were to behave in this way (as liberal humanists), how would they know where to draw the line? Given that,

as pointed out by Alcohol Concern (2001a), the effects of alcohol vary enormously depending on gender, body weight, recent food intake, etc., and that the contexts of drinking such as parties often involve imbibing amounts of alcohol that cannot be measured with any certainty, it appears unlikely that young people will be able to know where this line is. All the evidence reviewed in Chapter One would suggest that young people, given current rates of drinking, do not, or are not able to, draw such a line when they drink. In fact, on the contrary, the current increase in binge drinking would suggest that more and more young people, at a younger age, are failing to drink in this safe manner. Therefore, as practical advice, the message of the resources appears to have limited value. Those who design educational programmes may suggest this is because young people have simply not been educated enough. However, the upward trend suggests other factors are coming into play, and these represent a challenge to the discourses evident in the data presented here.

At the heart of this challenge lie some of the discursive constructions evident in young people's own discourses around drinking, discourses that were discussed in the first study. Foremost amongst these are the discourses of pleasure and hedonism which construct alcohol as a means of achieving personal euphoria and excitement, and of transforming everyday life into an existence with more "magical" or outlandish properties (including obtaining certain ends such as sexual gratification). Remaining sober may mean that young people's participation in this experience somehow feels less complete, a point often endorsed by the young people themselves (Dean, 1990). Allied to these are discourses of rebellion which, as Foucault may argue, occur as a point of resistance to the power of more dominant discourses such as those exercised in the educational resources. Through these discourses, distinct group identities and practices are constructed (such as binge drinking, and deliberately dangerous behaviour), identities and practices which diverge from both those of wider society and more adult practices, and which transgress societal norms.

Within such discourses, young people construct themselves as deliberately losing control (and as having the freedom of choice to do so); thus, notions of "safe" are rendered largely invisible, notions of "risk" displaced to the "other" and notions of rationality reworked to encompass a new rationality of having fun and escaping/transgressing the bounds of civilised society. It was argued in this analysis that the purpose of the educational materials is to anticipate and counter this challenge by encouraging young people to adopt a liberal humanist identity founded on notions

of their apparent vulnerability (a covert form of controlling potentially challenging behaviour). To date, however, educational resources have not been successful in encouraging young people to change their drinking practices. The final study in this thesis will therefore explore whether there are any grounds for arguing that young people do accept and adopt these discourses, even if this acceptance is not reflected in practice. In other words, to what degree do they assimilate the identity of the safe drinker and use the discursive tools provided for them to build the identity of the liberal humanist. This will be explored by looking at young people's own constructions of a specific classroom-based educational intervention.

CHAPTER 7: DISCOURSES SURROUNDING THE CONTENT OF ALCOHOL EDUCATION: A RESPONSE FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the discourses young people themselves use surrounding alcohol education. Thus far, it has been established that a number of specific constructions of the self are worked up in alcohol education and these constructions are strongly related to the political, social and economic contexts in which they are situated. The nature of alcohol education is, as a result, ambiguous. One the one hand, it tends to reflect alcohol's role as a source of leisure and an important medium of celebration within society. However, on the other hand, it is also constructed as a substance that represents a source of "risk" and potential threat to the young person. In these terms, alcohol is a substance that needs to be managed in order to be drunk safely, requiring the person to be rational, responsible and to exercise control in its use. It was argued that this latter type of self comprises characteristics considered typical of, and desirable within, liberal western, capitalist societies. Such a self is responsibilised, self-governing and, with regard to young people, is constructed as "adult" in nature. In Foucauldian terms, the aim of education would therefore appear to be to engage young people in a form of self-surveillance as a way of maintaining social control and order (thus maintaining a disciplined society). However, such a function sits uncomfortably with more liberal constructions of freedom of choice, and the work hard-play hard discourse of capitalism (in which the use of alcohol plays a central part), and this was reflected within these resources.

The key concern of this final study was therefore to look at ways in which young people construct alcohol education (and, by implication, their own identities and selfhood in relation to this). The key question was: do they construct their use of alcohol in similar terms, or do they subvert these sets of constructions (and, if so, in what ways). If the latter, what might the implications be for alcohol education?

7.2 Rationale

The literature review in Chapter One highlighted the fact that, to date, there has been little in the way of evaluation of alcohol education (Lynagh, Schofield and Swanson-Fisher, 1997). Furthermore, it was pointed out that, when evaluations have been carried out, they rarely involve asking young people themselves about the education they have received. A valuable component of this research would therefore be to ask

young people themselves what they thought about alcohol education, and then carry out a discursive analysis of the data gathered. However, whilst such a study may have value, the questions it would ask (and thus the type of responses produced) may be different from those that would be asked in an evaluation commissioned by an education authority and/or government agency. As such, it may be hard to argue for the *practical* relevance of such a study. It was therefore decided that it would be far more useful, in terms of such practical relevance, to collect data as part of a commissioned evaluation and base the analysis around this. In other words, the discursive analysis offered in this section is based around data that have actually been collected for analysis, assessment and dissemination in the public domain.

However, there are costs to be incurred when making such a decision. For instance, as the data will not have been collected for the purposes of a Foucauldian style discourse analysis it may lack the richness and detail of the data collected in earlier studies. For example, questions may contain assumptions about the nature of the intervention referred to and, as such, may limit or constrain the responses given; i.e., prohibiting any responses that may present a challenge to these assumptions. However, the major strength of this study, and its key validating factor, is that it is precisely these types of data that are considered appropriate in the public domain. That is to say, it is on the basis of an analysis of this type of data that conclusions as to the effectiveness of alcohol education may be drawn, governmental decisions made and policies implemented. The questions that arise for this study are, therefore, what insights could a Foucaldian style discourse analysis bring to these data, in what ways may this differ from the conclusions drawn from a more standard evaluation, and what might the implications of this be.

7.3. Finding an appropriate study

The paucity of appropriate evaluations, however, made finding a suitable study difficult. However, after a range of initial and exploratory contacts, agreement was reached with an organisation carrying out an evaluation of an educational intervention that aimed to help young people explore and understand the links between alcohol use and unsafe sex. This evaluation was carried out as part of the SADLE (Sex and Drugs- the Links Explored) project (2002) commissioned by the National Children's Bureau.

7.4 Background to the SADLE project

The specific remit of this project was to look at how the links between alcohol/drug use and sexual risk-taking are taught within the classroom. The National Children's Bureau (NCB),which commissioned the project, is an established and nationally renowned organisation set up to promote and foster the interests and well being of young people nationwide. The NCB aims to promote and encourage the participation of young people in all matters relevant to them within society, and strives to champion young peoples' rights in areas where they are disadvantaged. Founded on a strong research base, it uses its knowledge to advise the government and related organisations on a range of relevant matters. Evaluation and training form a key part of this process. At the heart of the NCB's work lie a range of strategic "work themes". The most relevant in terms of this thesis is the NCB's declared aim to enhance the health and well being of young people. More information about the NCB can be found on their website at www.ncb.org.uk.

Within the NCB are a number of forums associated with health that relate to areas of specific interest. The SADLE project was designed and implemented by two of these, the Sex Education Forum and the Drug Education Forum. Their aim was to explore how links between alcohol use and sexual behaviour could be addressed in the classroom, and to identify best practice in terms of the way such links were taught. This was done by implementing a number of different interventions within the classroom. An increase in awareness of, and knowledge about, such links was an immediate goal of the project with regard to policy-makers and practitioners, and a long-term goal with regard to young people. It was fundamentally important to those designing this project that young people's views were both valued and listened to, a philosophy that makes the project very attractive in terms of the purposes of this study.

7.5 The SADLE project- an overview

7.5.1 Aims

The most relevant aims of the intervention that were carried out in this project were, with regard to alcohol use, to increase young people's knowledge of alcohol in terms of its physiological and psychological impact, to improve young people's awareness of risky situations and their understanding of how to manage them, and to increase young people's awareness of the ways in which alcohol use links to sexual behaviour.

7.5.2 Structure of the Intervention

Three schools were selected by the project managers to take part in the intervention. These were located in Derby, Sheffield and Southampton. A fourth school, located in London, was also scheduled to take part but had to withdraw for logistical reasons. A slightly different intervention was implemented in each school, and a different year group targeted in each. For instance, the intervention in Sheffield was carried out with 14-15 year olds, in Derby with 15-16 year olds and in Southampton with 13-14 year olds.

Interventions consisted of a series of four weekly sessions focusing on the links between alcohol and drug use, and sexual risk-taking. Prior to each intervention pupils completed a pre-intervention questionnaire designed to establish their baseline knowledge. The interventions themselves made use of a variety of different teaching methods and styles and included quizzes, games, posters, role-plays, case studies and group discussions. The content and topics covered were equally diverse, covering relationships and intimacy, trusting friends and "what constitutes a good night out". The educators carrying out the sessions were not traditional teachers but were external experts coming from a background of youth work. Upon completion of each intervention a post-intervention questionnaire was administered to establish any change in knowledge, behaviour and attitudes.

Following this the intervention itself was then evaluated as a whole. The raw data for this study were collected as part of this evaluation (albeit focusing primarily on alcohol use) but the analysis carried out for this thesis was very different to that carried out by the NCB, who work within a more traditional empiricist framework. However, once this thesis is completed it is expected that the findings will be shared with the NCB (and *vice versa*) and this may strengthen any insights both parties have into young people and alcohol use.

7.6 Method

7.6.1 Procedure and rationale

Together with a researcher from the SADLE project a series of questions were developed for use in focus groups with young people aged 11-16. These questions were designed with two purposes in mind. On the one hand, they were designed to allow the SADLE project to glean enough useful information to enable them to evaluate the success of the interventions. On the other hand, they were also designed

to enable this researcher to collect enough relevant data to be able to establish the meanings underlying young people's interpretations of the interventions, particularly with regard to those aspects relating to alcohol education. Specifically, this meant incorporating a number of informal questions designed to stimulate discussion and elicit more "personal" discourses, rather than formal questions aimed at obtaining specific information in a direct manner. The format of these questions was considered adequate enough to facilitate the application of *different* analytical approaches. A copy of the questions used can be found in Appendix C.

Working separately, the two researchers then conducted focus groups in three different locations, with the SADLE researcher conducting focus groups in Sheffield and Derby, and the researcher in this study conducting focus groups in Southampton. Consent to take part in the study had already been given as part of the wider consent obtained for participation in the SADLE project obtained earlier by the NCB. Such consent was obtained from teachers, parents and from young people themselves. In total, five focus groups were carried out. Two of these were carried out in Sheffield (one an all female group, the other all male) with participants aged 14-15 years. Two focus groups were also carried out in Southampton (one an all female group, the other all male) with participants aged 13-14 years. In Derby, one focus group was carried out and comprised both males and females. The participants in this group were 15-16 years old. The transcripts referred to in this study therefore correspond to the following groups:

Transcript One: Southampton; Boys aged 13-14 (Male interviewer)
Transcript Two: Southampton; Girls aged 13-14 (Male interviewer)
Transcript Three: Derby; Mixed aged 15-16 (Female interviewer)
Transcript Four: Sheffield; Boys aged 14-15 (Female interviewer)
Transcript Five: Sheffield; Girls aged 14-15 (Female interviewer)

Focus groups were held in schools (where the interventions had taken place), and arranged at times that were convenient to the PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) teachers in charge. Often this was in normal PSHE time, and sessions were therefore limited by the amount of time made available in the timetable. At Derby, this amounted to one hour whereas at the other venues the time allotted was 40 minutes. However, it was only possible to run one session at Derby (hence why a mixed sex group was used) whereas at the other venues two sessions were available. The participants in each group were selected randomly by the teacher from a group of

volunteers. The composition of the groups was satisfactory, however, in that they were diverse enough, in terms of sex composition, location, etc. to enable as wide a range of discourses as possible to be produced. Nevertheless, the selection of volunteers can result in the discourses of those pupils who are quieter remaining unheard, a problem that, short of coercion, remained difficult to resolve.

Once selected, each group withdrew to a quiet location whereupon the teacher then departed. The researcher then introduced himself/herself and outlined the broad purpose of the focus group, and the format, to the participants, whilst at the same time making clear to them that they were free to withdraw from the group at any time. Principles of confidentiality and anonymity were explained to, and agreed by, the group and any preliminary questions they had answered. Once participants were happy the focus group commenced. Topic-based questions around the interventions were then asked and opened up for discussion, facilitated throughout by the researcher. The aim throughout was to maintain an informal air, in order to encourage disclosure and interpersonal interaction. Although the purpose, and hence the styles, of the two researchers collecting the data will inevitably be different this was seen as advantageous rather than as a drawback. The reflexive approach adopted in this thesis treats the language of the researchers as part of the actual data rather than as standardised, neutral questioning.

Upon completion of the focus group (usually dictated by time constraints) a small debriefing statement was given. This involved reiterating the purpose(s) of the study, thanking participants for their time and reassuring them that the data would be treated confidentially. It also enabled the young people to ask any questions they may have had. At this stage, the initial collaboration between those working on the SADLE project and this researcher ended. The raw data, though available to both, was transcribed and analysed differently in both cases.

7.6.2 Transcription

Data were transcribed in accordance with the general principles outlined by Jefferson (1984). Given the nature of the analysis undertaken it was again felt unnecessary to include intricate details of intonation, hesitation and intakes of breath, etc. in the transcripts. However, long pauses, emphases and laughter were included as these were thought to have significance in terms of the meanings of the discourses produced. Copies of all the transcripts are available on request.

7. 7 Analysis

7.7.1 Overview

In line with the general theoretical underpinnings of this thesis this study will once again be guided by the principles of discourse analysis, as outlined by Parker (1992) and Willig (2001); i.e., adopting a Foucaldian style analysis focusing on discursive resources and their use in relation to wider social structures and practices. However, in addition, analytical techniques used by Potter and Wetherell (1987) focusing on discursive practices will also be drawn on and used where they are thought to illustrate and illuminate the analytical insights offered. Theoretical insights drawn from other discursive work, such as that of Harré and van Langenhove's (1991) work on positioning, will also be drawn on and used where relevant.

The analysis will begin by looking at the most salient and striking conception of the self used by young people when talking about alcohol education. Very recognisable from previous studies, this is a construction of the (young) self as passive and vulnerable to the effects of the alcohol; in other words, a discourse of innocence and vulnerability. Bound up within such conceptions are predominantly negative evaluations of alcohol. Positive evaluations of alcohol use, when framed within the context of education, are rarely offered or, when they are, are resisted.

The analysis will then go on to look at how this discourse of innocence provides the discursive space into which alcohol education can be constructed as having a purpose, most commonly one of protection (and, by implication, control). Most commonly, this is framed in terms of "changing" the individual. In essence, the young person is encouraged to adopt and assume the identity most commonly offered within education resources; i.e., the liberal humanist identity. This notion of change appears to have two aspects. Firstly, through encouraging the adoption of the identity of the rational, responsible and safe drinker young people are constructed as developing a (limited and proscribed) autonomy whereby they make "sensible" decisions in relation to the choices they make regarding drinking. Secondly, a function of such discourses appears to be construct adulthood as in some way equating to the adoption of this identity. The transition from childhood to adulthood therefore becomes one of moving from a position of vulnerability to one of an autonomous, rational and responsible being.

The analysis will then move on to look at how this is achieved within the context of alcohol education in action. There are two related aspects to this: firstly,

through the construction of the alcohol education lesson as an arena of equality rather than an arena of power and control and, secondly, through the construction of the educator as an "equal" to the pupils.

Through such constructions, the enjoinment of the liberal humanist identity, and its deportment in relation to drinking, are made to seem natural and justified. Thus, control of both drinking and young people is legitimated and established. However, such discourses do not come without resistance, and the analysis will therefore end with a discussion of the various forms of resistance identified in the data. Through such resistance, alternative constructions of alcohol use, and of young people themselves, arise (constructions recognisable from the first study, but with very different implications for alcohol education).

7.8 Constructing the young self- the discourse of vulnerability revisited

Previous research and theory has characterised late 20th and early 21st century society as a "risk" society, whereby the organising principle of social life is that of ongoing threat or risk to the self (Adkins, 2001; Giddens 1991). Amongst the most salient of these are threats in the form of illness or deteriorating health. Health education is therefore often concerned with encouraging individuals to adopt an identity concerned with avoiding such risk; e.g., in terms of HIV prevention (Fraser, 2004). In Foucauldian terms, as previous analyses showed, this results in the production of individuals who are supposedly effectively able to police and control themselves (by avoiding risk). As was seen in previous studies, young people are also encouraged to engage in this project but their nature is often assumed to be different from that of adults. These differences are often used in the wider research literature to "explain" the behaviour of young people that may be considered unacceptable in terms of wider social norms, differences such as a belief in one's invulnerability (Greene, Krcmar, Walter, Rubin and Hale, 2000). A second function of health education therefore tends to be to encourage young people to adopt a more acceptable set of adult practices and behaviour. One way of doing this is to characterise young people as essentially immature; i.e. as not yet fully responsible for their behaviour. In so doing, it enables a notion of risk, and thus a need for protection (and self-policing), to be worked up.

The question for this analysis was therefore whether or not young people would themselves construct such discourses. Analysis of the data suggested that did indeed happen. Throughout the data young people constructed themselves as

"vulnerable" and in need of protection, adopting a "victim" identity that draws throughout on a discourse of the child as a "protected species" (Scott, Jackson and Backett-Milburn, 1998). Alcohol use, in these terms, is described as potentially dangerous, with the young drinker left open to the influence of many malign forces including those of other young people. Within the data, young people therefore effectively engage in the project of constructing for themselves a need for protection. A consequence of this discourse may be that it effectively disempowers young people, handing over control of their behaviour to the architects of alcohol education. Thus, adult regulation of their behaviour is legitimated which may work to effectively deny young people their rights (Burman, 1996). An extract that illustrates how this discourse of "vulnerability" is worked up is given below.

Excerpt 1, Transcript 1 (M, 13-14)

Line 1 M2: Yeah yea like um (0.5) if you've been drinking and (0.5) you have sex or something

Line 2 M4: You don't know [INAUDIBLE]

Line 3 M2: [You don't know] what you're doing and that so you might not use um

Line 4 M4: Regret it afterwards.

Line 5 M2: I've forgotten what that word is now but uh huhu you could get (0.5) um diseases because [you wouldn't know]

Line 6 M4: [Probably Aids]

Line 7 M2: Yea (1.0) because you're drunk.

Line 8 R: So regret it afterwards.

Line 9 M2: Yeah.

Line 10 M1: Hm

Line 11 M2: And like if you did drink a lot and you went out out onto the streets you may (0.5) like start a fight or something without even knowing and the next morning you know like

Line 12 M4: You could be waking up [in hospital]

Line 13 M2: [You could have] yea you could have you might even have murdered someone and…

Line 14 M4: Yea

Line 15 M2 …the police come round to take you away.

Line 16 M1: Got hit by a car or something huhu

Line 17 M2: Yea

Line 18 R: Yea, accidents (1.00) (inaudible) so overall you think they're a good thing

Line 19 All Yeah.

Line 20 M2: Yea it was a good thing.

Throughout this extract, the participants construct an account that contains increasingly elevated levels of risk in relation to drinking behaviour. For instance, M2 constructs an account of one of the possible consequences of drinking as being that of having sex (not surprising, given that this outcome is "supplied" to young people through the medium of the intervention). M2 then constructs the effects of alcohol as being to erode one's thought processes and reasoning capacity ("you don't know what you're doing", Line 3). This kind of formulation was also seen in the educational leaflets, where alcohol was seen as a malignant force that attacks the very characteristics of humans that distinguish them from other animals, drawing on a rationalist discourse in so doing (Spelman, 1989). Two possible, and negatively evaluated, outcomes are presented in this discourse with both negative emotional effects (e.g., regret) and the physical dangers of drinking (e.g. catching AIDS through unprotected sex) referred to. Thus, a discourse of vulnerability is constructed that operates on many different levels; i.e. it is every aspect of the person that is under attack. Through this discourse, alcohol is negatively evaluated in terms of both its physical and its emotional impact.

Later in the extract a narrative is invoked whereby inebriation may also involve aggression and violence. Responsibility for such behaviour, however, does not lie with the inebriated person as once again it is argued that they "don't know what they're doing" (Line 3). Hence, the argument is made that drinking unleashes brutish instincts as a result of cognitive impairment. This, again, draws on rationalist discourses to argue that these are instincts which we, as civilised people, normally keep (and should keep) under control. The consequences of this loss of control are seen as inevitable and also highly undesirable. It is alcohol's ability to remove our sense of control, a characteristic so highly valued in western societies, that is depicted as the real problem here. Once they have started drinking young people are therefore constructed as powerless to resist, and thus unable to prevent these consequences. The passive, vulnerable victim in need of protection (and a sense of control) has therefore been set up.

It is also interesting to note in the data how participants increasingly raise the stakes with regard to the degree of risk involved. M4, for instance, uses the category of "hospital" to indicate the extreme damage that could be caused and M2, in turn, uses the category of "murder" to signify the most extreme act of violence that could be committed whilst under the influence. Such extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) are used as a powerful rhetorical tool to help to construct drunkenness as potentially lethal state of being, involving cataclysmic consequences both to the individual and to those around. Such constructions make it impossible for young people to deny that alcohol education lessons are a good thing. Thus, a consensus has been developed whereby alcohol education is made to seem both reasonable and necessary.

There are, however, two other points worth making in relation to this extract. Firstly, the events constructed were always portrayed as occurring to "others"; i.e., the extreme dangers involved were never formulated as involving an immediate "personal" risk. The use of the "other" as a discursive category has been found in other research (e.g., in terms of the spread of AIDS as found by Joffe, 1997) to be a way of diminishing potential threats to an "in-group". Alcohol education, in this context, may therefore be formulated as necessary but perhaps only to other (more wild) drinkers, and even then only as a precaution against more extreme actions. This leaves the discursive space open for young people to perhaps later deny, or resist, any individual need for such education.

A second point to make is that young men, through the formulation of increasingly extreme risks, may also be involved in co-constructing their own masculinity. Such a phenomenon may be commonplace in single sex focus groups (or at least in male ones) where identity construction is a key concern. For instance, Gough and Edwards (1998) found that older males (aged 18-21) engaged in just such a project when talking about drinking, often drawing on tales of increasingly macho activities and practices to construct the nature of masculinity and themselves as masculine (although their focus group took place whilst the young men were actually drinking). This does bring up the possibility that talk of "risk", particularly in relation to drinking, may sometimes be gendered and there were one or two examples in the data that suggested may be the case, as can be seen in the extract below.

7.8.1 Gendered vulnerability?

Excerpt 2, Transcript 5 (F, 14-15).

Line 1	F4:	Well like she told us that like if you're going out with some friends (0.5) and you're gonna like have a drink (0.5) then take someone who's not going to drink so then you can get a taxi with them
Line 2	R:	Hmhm so talking about like sticking together as friends and
Line 3	F4:	Hm yea yea
Line 4	F2:	She said something else about that she said that make sure you're all like going together (0.5) and don't let anyone else go off with a stranger (0.5) and get split up and everything

The first point of note in this extract is that it constructs alcohol use amongst young people as essentially a social activity that involves "going out" (in line with most discourses circulating surrounding alcohol use amongst the young, and with much of the empirical research on drinking behaviour; e.g. Pavis and Cunningham-Burley, 1997). However, for these young women, there is a particular type of risk involved in this practice, namely that of the "stranger" (Line 4). As with males, risks arise as a result of drink rendering the young person vulnerable. However, unlike males, it is the girl "alone" and drunk who is constructed being most vulnerable thus rendering the social nature of drinking i.e., being with friends a "protective" factor rather than a medium for fun as the literature (and young people themselves in the first study) suggest. The risk therefore lies more in being drunk in these circumstances. The protective factor, essentially, is of having friends who are not rendered incapable of reason by drink to look after you. This is based on a particular discourse of women as natural "caretakers", closely related to "maternal" discourses that may construct the female as nurturing and caring (Zannettino, 2000). Through this, a need for cooperation is constructed in that females are portrayed as needing to protect each other. However, it is worth mentioning that the young females attribute the source of these discourses to the educator and do not take personal responsibility for them. On the one hand, this provides corroboration for the type of discourses produced by educators in the third study, particularly those educators speaking to all girl groups and positioning themselves in authoritative (and protective) roles such as nurse and policewoman. On the other hand, it may also allow young females to challenge such discourses at a later stage (and thus their victim status) although, within the scope of the data collected, this did not happen.

Nevertheless, from the data, it would appear that females are constructed as vulnerable in a very different sense to the way men are. Males, for instance, are constructed as susceptible to alcohol's effect on their centre of reason which, if control is lost, can lead to an unleashing of base natural instincts. This is therefore not just a rationalist discourse, in that reason is assumed to be an essential part of being human, but also a patriarchal discourse in that it applies to men only and is closely linked to the privileging of such attributes as reason and rationality in a world dominated by men.

7.8.2 The implications of gendered vulnerability

One of the implications of a discourse of vulnerability, as seen in the above extracts, is that it absolves males from any responsibility for their actions, a construction that may still be seen in evidence in court cases where a plea of drunkenness may be used by men to excuse their behaviour in that they did not know what they were doing, therefore constituting another way of avoiding agency for the assault (Coates, Bavelas and Gibson, 1994). Such constructions are of course open to challenge, at least among adults where adult males are (if they have adopted the liberal humanist identity) assumed to have enough foresight beforehand to avoid losing control in such a manner. For young males, however, it may be the case that they are not yet expected to have such foresight, and hence why the danger of losing control in such manner is flagged up.

For women, these discourses do not appear to apply. Females are not attributed with the characteristics of aggression and violence in the way that men are (even though there may be real life examples to the contrary). Instead, they are seen as vulnerable to the effect drinking may have on males, whereby they may be the target of these base instincts and, if they are drunk, they will be less aware of and susceptible to these dangers. An interesting implication of such a construction, and one that will be explored in more detail in the next section, is that if females adopt the liberal humanist identity they are then seen as able to plan and avoid such consequences (for instance through social protection). They may therefore be seen as responsible as men are for anything that happens to them. On the one hand, this may work to disempower women as it positions them as victims, but, perhaps worse, it could also blame women for this victim status in that they could then be seen as having failed to take adequate precautions. As such, it could work to absolve men (in

particular young men) from blame to a degree. It also absolves females from any blame or responsibility for any violent or aggressive behaviour they themselves may participate in (and such behaviour was clearly in evidence as part of young women's own discourses in study one).There is a caveat to add to this analysis, however. This is that, due to the nature of the SADLE project, it was not possible to explore such gendered constructions further in terms of additional questions, etc. This may be a useful avenue for future research as there is clearly an indication that such constructions do exist, and are worthy of further exploration.

In summary, young people's discourses around alcohol education appear to be full of constructions of harm and risk, drawn on and reformulated not only from the classes they have received but also from wider society (reflecting the type of "risk" society identified by Giddens, 1991) and these are sometimes gendered in nature. It would therefore appear that young people readily accept and assimilate the negative evaluations of drinking offered to them. In contrast to the first study, there are therefore very few discourses that emphasise the positive aspects of drinking. On the rare occasions these are offered, they are resisted indirectly by drawing on an anti-drugs discourse. Such resistance is achieved easily by drawing on the illegality and social unacceptability of drugs (and avoids addressing the legality and popularity of alcohol). An example of this type of resistance can be seen below.

Excerpt 3, Transcript 3 (Mixed, 15-16).

Line 1	F1:	I think doing drugs and alcohol but not in the way that we've been taught it
Line 2	M2:	The good effects that can happen from it
Line 3	R:	Yea
Line 4	M2:	Not just the bad effects
Line 5	F1:	(INAUDIBLE) the good effects hehe you can't expect a teacher to say the good effects of drugs they can't

7.9 Discourses of Change: Responsibilising the (young) self

Discourses of vulnerability have the effect of constructing a need for young people to be protected and their drinking behaviour to be controlled. One answer to this is to promote abstinence. However, the acceptability and popularity of alcohol makes this an unrealistic proposition. Alcohol use is defended for many reasons, and this is perhaps why, to a large degree, the "problems" it causes are framed as attributable to characteristics of childishness (such as innocent vulnerability), rather than the effects

of alcohol *per se*. As has been argued in the previous two chapters, this is why alcohol education works to encourage young people to adopt the identity of the adult, couched in terms of a liberal humanist model. In this way, drinking becomes an activity of choice that is under the (rational) control of the self rather than an activity controlled by adults (which may facilitate, and engender, points of resistance).

Promoted throughout the alcohol education literature, it is therefore perhaps no surprise to see constructions of the liberal humanist identity in evidence throughout the transcripts. A clear example of this can be seen in the first extract in the following sections

Excerpt 4, Transcript 3 (Mixed, 15-16).

Line 1 F1: Cos um she explained that when we're like under the influence of drugs or alcohol that we see things differently a lot differently and might be (0.5) attracted to someone when we're drunk that we wouldn't be when we were sober.

Line 2 R: Yea yep yep (3.00) so how exactly what things do you think you might do that would be different (1.5) now that you've done the classes (0.5) can you think of actual things you might do that would be different (0.5) or people might do it doesn't have to be you individually.

Line 3 F3: (1.0) I think that I'll probably think before I go out think about all these situations because we know them now and we know things that we didn't know before (INAUDIBLE PHRASE) so we'll probably think more about what we're doing.

Line 4 R: Yep yep

Line 5 F2: Not to put your drink down anywhere not to leave and walk away and then come back to it.

Line 6 R: Hmhmm how come

Line 7 F2: Because people drug your drinks and then you wake up in a state that you don't even know about and you could end up getting into that state (0.5) because someone else has drugged your drink or they could take advantage of us

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Line 8 R: Yep okay so it sounds like you're saying you'd be a bit more prepared (0.5) and at least think about things before you're drunk or before you're stoned (0.5) and work out like a plan of action

Contained within this extract are two very different discourses of "change". The first of these constructs the omniscient effects of alcohol in terms of the changes that occur both in terms of thoughts and behaviour. Seeing things "a lot differently" (Line 1) works to construct such changes as being beyond the control of the person, and the subsequent example used of sexual attraction plays this in a way that suggests this may not be a welcome or desirable circumstance, as it recalls the dangers to

females evident elsewhere in the transcripts. This discourse of change is a familiar one, having been in evidence throughout the alcohol education literature and in the classroom. However, this is a very different discourse to those used by young people in the first study (and in the research literature) where such changes are seen as magical and transformative (Dean, 1990) and as deliberately engaged in for the purposes of making new sexual relationships, and the buzz and excitement of so doing. Essentially this difference centres on whether maintaining control whilst drinking is seen as a positive or a negative phenomenon. For the young people in these groups it is formulated as the latter. Thus, these young people provide support for the "vulnerability" discourse rather than the "drinking for pleasure" discourse that predominated in the first study.

A clear delineation in this discourse of change, therefore, is made between the world of the drunk (or the drinker) and the world of the sober individual. Such a distinction opens up a discursive space for alcohol education to step into. It can offer young people a way to bypass their vulnerability, and allow them some autonomy in choosing to drink but in a way that is done so safely. A different discourse of change is therefore bought to the fore in so doing, a discourse that works to responsibilise the young person, allowing them some (limited) autonomy whilst simultaneously rendering them adult. A form of rationality is therefore proscribed to not getting drunk, a rationality that works to present drunkenness as irrational (as does much of the research literature). This ability to change is essentially what the education material is constructed as offering.

For instance, in Excerpt 4, the interviewer constructs the assumption of change by asking F1 how she could be different as a result of the education classes (couching these largely in behavioural terms). F1, however, constructs such changes as both behavioural and cognitive, changes that are as omniscient as those induced by alcohol. A key formulation of this change occurs in the repeated elaboration by F3 that she will "think" before taking any action, implying both a reasoned approach and a broad one ("all these situations", Line 3). F3 is therefore constructing the liberal humanist version of the self, namely the self that is rational, reasoned, in control and able to make decisions. Crucially, this self is now able to take responsibility for its decisions, and correspondingly is also now more adult in nature. This responsibilisation of the self therefore occurs in much the same way as in other health promotion materials, such as those relating to the prevention of HIV (Fraser, 2004, Adkins, 2001).

Effectively, a true Foucauldian self has been created whereby the young person is now able to police themselves and take control over their own behaviour; i.e., engage in a form of self-surveillance.

The construction of this apparent new self hinges around a transformation that has occurred as a result of receiving new knowledge about "things", very much evoking the metaphor of the self as an information processor, fed with knowledge and then able to come up with reasoned answers (very reminiscent once again of the type of self assumed in the Theory of Reasoned Action). In addition, a further discourse has been drawn on here, and is one that relates strongly to the vulnerability discourse. This is that of the child as a "blank slate", innocent about the ways of the world, and requiring knowledge in order to act upon the world (without harm). Such a discourse has, perhaps, derivations in the political theories of Rousseau.

In addition to knowledge, two other related components of the person that need changing (according to alcohol education literature) are i) attitudes and ii) the skills to apply these changes in attitudes and knowledge to real life situations. Like knowledge, changes in attitudes can also be seen as a discursive construction, in this case forming a part of the discourse of change comprising an acceptance of the vulnerable self and the dangers of uncontrolled drinking (as opposed to the positive transformative approach outlined earlier).

Similarly, skills can also be seen as being discursively constructed. For example, in Excerpt 4, F2 constructs a scenario whereby a decision is made not to leave a drink unattended and then return to it, implying this is an act normally done without thought when the person has been drinking. The need for control, an important part of the liberal humanist identity, is at the forefront of this construction. Lack of control, and failure to make such a decision, are framed in terms of consequences such as "taking advantage of us"(Line 7) implying unwanted sexual relations, maybe even sexual assault or rape, and is a fear strengthened by generalising it to all members of the female group (an example once again of gendered vulnerability).

Crucially, this negative consequence, having been constructed as arising out of a lack of planning and knowledge, allows the female interviewer to explicitly make an unchallengeable claim for the adoption of the liberal humanist identity; i.e., by stating that preparation and pre-planning are essential. By minimising this necessity ("a bit more prepared", Line 8) the interviewer may be strengthening the claim still further.

No grand claims are made nor is there a request for a radical change involving a great deal of effort, just a small input for a large outcome, and thus the suggestion is now made to appear perfectly reasonable. The interviewer goes so far as to state the point explicitly, suggesting that a "plan of action" may therefore be needed prior to getting drunk. This phrase neatly encapsulates the idea of the rational, controlled self, responsible for its own decisions. An implication of this is that blame cannot be laid at the door of young people as the failure to act in a rational manner has been already been attributed to a lack of knowledge (or, as may be argued, misplaced attitudes or poor skills) on which they can base rational decisions. Only when they have such knowledge can they be held responsible for these decisions. Alcohol education, by implication, provides the knowledge on which to base such decisions and acquire such skills.

Crucially, what appears to be missing from the above extract are some of the discourses that were evident in the first study. For example, there is the assumption in Excerpt 4 that the rational self is the self that remains in control; i.e., sober. However, young people in the first study constructed an alternative rationality whereby "losing" control was portrayed as a desirable outcome and a perhaps more rational response if one wishes to form romantic attachments and engage in sexual encounters (in terms of losing inhibitions, etc.). Such discourses offer more positive evaluations of sexual encounters whilst drunk, evaluations in terms of pleasure and fun rather than threat and risk. These discourses of pleasure are, O'Malley and Valverde (2004) argue, often silenced the more that alcohol consumption presents a problem for liberal government. Posing a threat to the adoption of the liberal humanist identity therefore, these constructions are rarely seen in the data for this study. In part, this may be because the type of questions presented to the young people did not allow any space for challenge; i.e., they pre-assumed the validity of the liberal humanist model. However, it may also be a product of the context in which the data were collected. Young people, in their role as less powerful "schoolchildren", may have engaged in constructing discourses commensurate with those presented to them by more "powerful" interviewers and educators. There are exceptions to this, as will be seen later, and these points will be returned to again in the concluding chapter of this thesis. The next section, however, will look more closely at how the adoption of the liberal humanist identity is achieved in terms of the actual educational structure that surrounds and supports it.

7.10 Constructing the lesson- a context for responsibilisation

Many of the questions young people were asked referred to their thoughts around the type of alcohol/sex education received. It is through these responses that young people construct the lesson as a medium through which the responsible, rational and therefore adult self is adopted and assimilated. A fairly typical example of the way in which the "alcohol education" lesson is constructed can be seen below.

Excerpt 5, Transcript 5 (F, 14-15).

Line 1 R: How did you find the lessons (3.0) who wants to start?

Line 2 F1: They were good because we got to do all like different things and work with different people that like we wouldn't have before...

Line 3 R: Okay yep (1.0) with different people like

Line 4 F1: ... within these classes...

Line 5 R: Yea

Line 6 F1: ... and do different things like play games and then find things out from them games

Line 7 R: Yep okay

Line 8 F1: ... but they were like fun as well.

Line 9 R: So it was kind of like (CLEARS THROAT) you had a good time (0.5) as well as other stuff in the group

Line 10 F1: Yea

Line 11 R: What do other people think about that (2.5)

Line 12 F2: There were like there were games like where you had to (0.5) do our views on which side of the room were like a good point and which side of the room were like bad points and people had to get up and make their decisions...

Line 13 R: Hmhmm

Line 14 F2: ...and people had to speak out for [their reasons]

Line 15 R: [Okay] so a bit like a debate sort of thing you mean

Line 16 F5: Yea (0.5) uh everyone uh uh made their own decisions about (INAUDIBLE) we didn't get like told off or anything like that (INAUDIBLE) everyone got a fair chance so...

Line 17 R: Okay yea so like the atmosphere in the group was good and people weren't like (1.0) criticised...

Line 18 F5: Yea

Line 19 R: ...or made fun of and that sort of thing

Line 20 F5: Yea

In this extract, the participants and the female interviewer work together to create a version of the lesson that is full of highly positive aspects. Within such a discourse is a construction of the lesson that is, in many senses, different from standard education; i.e., involving "games" and "fun" rather than the more formal learning associated with traditional education. In one sense, this breaks down the traditional power relationships evident in normal teaching, whereby the teacher is the adult imparting information in a more serious and staid manner. Overall, the function of this discourse appears to be to weave an impression of an experience that is both enjoyable and worthwhile. There are a number of related components to this discourse that help create this impression. For example, F1 describes the lesson in terms of its novelty and variation ("different things...different people....wouldn't have before", Line 2), its active nature and the opportunity it provides for knowing things. Education is therefore related to knowledge acquisition, but in a sense that, as noted earlier, demarcates it from traditional didactic teaching and learning; i.e., young people are actively and willingly engaged in "soaking" up the knowledge they need to become informed, rational, decision-making individuals. As such, they are constructed less as passive children, and more as autonomous (and therefore adult) information seekers. In this sense, they are already imbued with some of the characteristics the lesson is designed to impart.

Within the context of this discourse participants describe the messages of the lesson and, by implication, of alcohol use *per se*, as dichotomised in nature (bad and good). Several elements have therefore now been introduced into the construction of the lesson. First, there is a moral element in that there are good and bad points to be considered and these morals are clear-cut in that they are either right or wrong; i.e. clear decisions can be made about them. There is little room for the complexities and ambiguities surrounding alcohol use that are endemic in the research literature, and in wider society more generally (Wright, 1999). Secondly, taking the right path involves the individual making a choice about their decision which they should then be able to justify in public (characterised in the interviewer's formulation of the lesson as a "debate", Line 15). In constructing the lesson, participants are therefore constructing

models of themselves as self-contained individuals capable of making rational and justifiable decisions. In other words, the lesson has been constructed as a successful and enjoyable medium through which the liberal, humanist identity can be adopted. Such a "self" is now capable of avoiding mistakes when it comes to alcohol use. Crucially, if mistakes are made, it is therefore the individual's responsibility as they have made the wrong decision.

A second component of the "lesson" discourse is apparent when F2 issues a denial to a claim that was never made ("we didn't get told off or anything like that", Line 16). The effect of this is to position the young people as suppressed and stifled in their usual lessons in that they will get "told off" if they stand up and debate issues; i.e., they are normally treated like "children". In such a way the ordinary lesson as portrayed as one where the class behaves in a subordinate way under the auspices of a teacher who wields authority and controls or suppresses public speeches. In contrast, the alcohol lesson is therefore presented as allowing free speech and is thus somewhat libertarian in nature, as well as egalitarian ("everyone got a fair chance", Line 16); in other words, a highly democratic and free arena (commensurate with a liberal society). Within such an arena, young people are treated as equals rather than children under the power of adults. Therefore, this reinforces the sense in which adopting the responsibilised identity also involves becoming an adult.

This construction is developed further when the interviewer incorporates into the discourse a charge that the lesson also prevents students being made fun of (i.e., the exertion of power by young people over each other, rather than of adults over young people). Invoking this point perhaps acts not only to construct the cordial atmosphere involved in becoming a responsibilised individual, but also the idea that such education is a great leveller in that everyone is "in the same boat" and all young people are potentially affected by the issues in the same way. Generalising the issues in this way may help to strengthen the assumed importance of adopting the liberal humanist identity. This discourse therefore shows, overall, how the positively evaluated lesson acts as a framework for the adoption and assimilation of the liberal humanist identity. However, perhaps the most important element of such lessons concerns the role, and positioning, of the educator themselves, discourses around which will now be explored.

7.11 An equal and a friend- constructing the educator

A lot of discursive work in the data occurs around constructing the identity of the educator; i.e., the person who oversees and coordinates the running of the "harmonious" lessons described above. The extract below gives an example of the most common way in which such people are constructed which, as can be seen here, is often in highly positive terms.

Excerpt 6, Transcript 5 (F, 14-15)

Line 1	R:	Yep okay what did you think about the person who took the lessons (4.0)
Line 2	F1:	She were friendly ha
Line 3	R:	Friendly yea (1.0)
Line 4	F3:	She listened to everyone's views not just one person so it were like a conversation with her
Line 5	F2:	And if you got things wrong she wouldn't like (0.5) get get at you she'd just tell you which bits (inaudible) which bits were the wrong things
Line 6	R:	Yep
Line 7	F6:	She was kind.
Line 8	R:	Kind yea how what do you mean by that she was kind what sort of things made you think she was kind
Line 9	F6:	If you needed any help she'd like talk about it and that

In this extract, participants construct the educator through reference to the category "friend". Such categorisation can be used to make available a range of different inferences (Wood and Kroger, 2000). It is useful, therefore, to draw more heavily on the analytical techniques of Potter and Wetherell (1987) for this section of the analysis. For instance, there are many potential aspects to the category of "friend" and those drawn on and used here are of a very particular type. For example, in constructing this friendly nature as indicative of someone who listens, F3 is constructing the friend who has "time" for people. The use of the extreme case formulation "everyone's views" (Line 4) develops this discourse further, allowing the young people to construct the educator as non-discriminatory and selfless. The reference to the informal nature of the relationship ("like a conversation", Line 4) also works to eliminate any potential imbalance of power between the educator and the young person; i.e., the relationship is less one of an adult-child and more one of

equals (as friends would be). Further characteristics are then added to this construction e.g. F2 formulating the educator as a "guide" and F6 using the descriptor "kind", which define the educator as someone who would assist via talk as well as through listening.

In many respects, this discourse of friendship appears exaggerated in that it works to define the educator as someone who is perhaps "too good to be true". Rhetorically, such an exaggerated discourse appears to have several functions. Firstly, it presents the educator as someone of sound motive, i.e. they are not just teaching because it is part of their job (and cannot be challenged on such grounds), but instead they genuinely care about the young people and have their welfare at heart. This helps strengthen the integrity of the claims and ideas the educators make, and thus validates their encouragement of young people to adopt a liberal humanist identity. Secondly (as mentioned previously), it negates some of the inbuilt power relationships in that the educator, as a person of integrity, is portrayed as encouraging young people to make their own decisions (a key aspect of the liberal humanist philosophy) rather than seeking to control or exert power over them. A slightly different, but nevertheless equally positive, construction of the educator is provided in the extract below.

Excerpt 7, Transcript 3 (Mixed, 15-16)

Line 1 M2: Mr H understands us understands what he's saying and that he's he's done a lot of the things that we've done (0.5) like when he was a kid.

Line 2 F2: But he he admitted it.

Line 3 F1: He did yea

Line 4 M2: But he admitted it and he like talked to us about it.

Line 5 F2: He don't care about (INAUDIBLE)

Line 6 M3: He treats us as adults whereas [other teachers don't]

Line 7 F2: [Yea]

Line 8 F1: Doesn't treat us as schoolchildren either

Line 9 R: Okay okay that's a really good point A (1.0) that he um yea that he treats you like adults so it's kind of a bit of uh having wanting a bit of respect (1.0) yourselves as well

Line 10 F1: Yea.

In this extract participants draw less on a discourse of friendship and more on one of "equals". This is first achieved by constructing the educator as empathic ("Mr

H understands us…, Line 1), an understanding that has been derived from similar experiences. In this sense, the educator is constructed on the same level, in terms of power, as the young people, thus eroding once more the inequality of the adult-child relationship.

However, a slightly different discourse is brought into play when several participants refer to the educator Mr H, as "admitting" things (Lines 2-4). This construction has the feel of a religious confessional to it, an owning up to wrongs committed previously. Thus, Mr H is constructed as an individual who, in Foucauldian terms, is himself in need of guidance and control. One function of this may be to imbue Mr H. with humility, and deny him any opportunity to take the higher moral ground; thus, this is another way of eroding any inbuilt power relationships. In addition, this type of construction invokes positive characteristics such as honesty and a degree of openness that hint at trust (often considered the fundamental tenet of any strong friendship/relationship). Therefore, the relationship is now constructed as being one of like-minded adults (hence M3 now constructs the young people in his group as "grown-up"). Therefore, the messages Mr H imparts are seen not so much as didactic but more as advice from a more experienced friend ("other teachers don't", Line 6).

Rendering young people adult (or at least non-childlike) therefore occurs as much in how the context of the lesson is constructed as it does in the constructions of the messages embedded within it. In constructing young people as a group who want "a bit of respect" (Line 9), the female interviewer implies that this is deserved but not frequently received; i.e., young people are essentially adults but not always treated as such. The interviewer is, in this way, constructing herself as an ally of the young people and this may work to elicit further positive constructions of the educator and the intervention under discussion.

In sum, all of the previous sections have shown how certain constructions of young people as vulnerable and passive are worked up in order to make discursive space for the acceptance of a liberal, humanist identity. The analysis then went on to look at how this discursive space was filled in terms of the characteristics of the liberal humanist identity, and how this was further strengthened through various specific constructions of both the lesson and the educator as a particularly positioned subject.

However, there was by no means uniform acceptance of these discourses. As Foucault has suggested, where power is exerted points of resistance also arise (Peterson, 1997) and the data in this study were no exception. The power exerted by the liberal humanist discourse can be open to challenge and indeed is resisted, in different ways, throughout the data. Such points of resistance offer further insight into the ways in which this powerful liberal humanist discourse may operate, and into how some of the constructed changes in young people's ways of thinking, feeling and being may (or may not) actually occur in everyday scenarios and why this might be (i.e., the implications such resistance has for young people's identities and their subsequent drinking behaviour).

7.12 Resisting the need for knowledge (and reclaiming rebellion)

The most common point of resistance in the data involves a rejection of the construction of the child as a "blank slate" requiring knowledge (and thus of the young person as passive and vulnerable). The implications and consequences of such a construction will be considered following an analysis of the way in which such resistance is constructed (using the extract below, which is a typical example).

Excerpt 8, Transcript 5 (F, 14-15).

Line 1	R:	All right (0.5) what did you um (0.5) do you think that being part of the programme (1.0) has changed how you might think about drugs and alcohol and sex and the links between them
Line 2	All	(No)
Line 3	M2:	(No) not really cos it was the same information given to us that was already there
Line 4	F1:	We knew it all before anyway didn't we
Line 5	R:	You you knew it before
Line 6	M4:	Yea
Line 7	R:	L?
Line 8	M4:	Um
Line 9	R:	Do you think it would change anything
Line 10	M4:	Not really it would just stay the same (0.5) cos nothing new was like given to you to like...
Line 11	R:	Yep
Line 12	M4:	...(1.0) think about.

Line 13	R:	Is there anything about the way you might think about (0.5) like sex when you're drunk or stoned that might change do you think
Line 14	M4:	Yea carry a condom.
Line 15	F2:	[Yea that's]
Line 16	M2:	[Yea that's] hehe
Line 17	F2:	I think that the lessons were all right you did learn quite a few things that we didn't know
Line 18	M2:	I didn't really I knew quite a lot of the stuff that they were telling us

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Line 19	M2:	I mean like you get the people that probably don't know the first thing about drugs or alcohol or something in the class...
Line 20	R:	Yea
Line 21	M2:	... and like they might find it dead interesting (0.5) but people like everyone here probably already know most about drugs and alcohol and that.

In this extract, the interviewer invites young people to discursively adopt the liberal humanist identity through a statement that encourages them to say they will think in more measured thought processes before engaging in "risky" behaviours. In this case, however, this does not happen as all the young people deny that their thought patterns will change. The basis of this is a contention by young people that they already have this new knowledge; i.e., they have merely received what they already possessed. Subsequently, their thoughts and actions will not change. This therefore amounts to a denial of the "blank slate" construction and, as such, renders problematic the need for the liberal humanist identity (as it invokes the possibility that young people know they will lose control, yet have chosen to do so). Thus, young people are also offering a denial of the apparent innocence and vulnerability associated with the "risk" discourse (and the notion of risk itself). That such a denial is problematic can be seen in the interviewer's repeated attempts to obtain a different answer (Line 9, Line 13).

A consequence of constructing knowledge in this way is that young peoples' actions (i.e., excess drinking with adverse consequences) are constructed as occurring with full awareness of what might happen. For young people, this may be a way of reclaiming a rebellious element to their behaviour, as expressed in many of the discourses elaborated in the first study. That is to say, they drink in ways that are not

deemed safe, or even socially acceptable, in order to deliberately transgress and break wider societal norms. This would tally with many observations in the research literature (Dean, 1990; Giles, 1999; Mathrani, 1998). In other words the loss of control that occurs when drunk is a deliberate end in itself. A second related function may be to reconstruct the nature of childhood. Rather than appearing childlike and innocent (and needing protection), young people are instead cast as autonomous, potentially subversive, hedonistic and able to set apart and challenge the norms of adults and the wider community.

This latter construction constitutes a very serious problem for the liberal humanist identity in that most of the assumptions on which it is premised then break down; e.g. conceptions of the self as in control, etc. Yet, this is also a construction recognised and challenged by other young people, perhaps in an attempt to defend the liberal humanist identity (e.g. ...they think they're all hard...cos they drink", Transcript 2, Page 27). In terms of the liberal humanist model, young people's behaviour (drinking to get drunk) would be considered irrational. However, as argued in Chapter 4, young people are perhaps constructing an alternative rationality; that of subverting adult norms in order to perhaps establish their own, separate, group identities as adolescents. Of course, in so doing, young people are rendering themselves responsible for such behaviour. According to the dictates of liberal humanism, such behaviour would be considered irresponsible within the context of the "risk" discourse (and this is certainly how Problem Behaviour theorists portray such behaviour; e.g., Ferguson, Lynskey and Horwood, 1996)). For young people, however, the reconstruction of harm and risk, and the invocation of discourses of pleasure, render the need to be "responsible" redundant. The consequences of such resistance are that the Foucauldian self may not be realised and self-policing will not occur, which has strong implications for the nature of power and control within society, points that will be returned to more generally in Chapter 8.

It is interesting to note, however, that at the end of the extract M2 does attempt to defend alcohol education by positing imaginary "others" as the people who are devoid of knowledge and may learn something. Within the context of this focus group, this may be a way of avoiding a direct challenge to the strong discourse of harm and risk (which would be tricky) through the reintroduction of the vulnerable child discourse, but instead recasting it as residing in other people who are not "like everyone here" (Line 21). Thus, the integrity of the humanist identity has been

maintained but dissociated from this particular group of young people. Of interest also is that no claims are made for the efficacy of alcohol education. Instead, the claim is that people will find it interesting, the formulation here being one of intellectual curiosity rather than practical utility. Whereas the need for knowledge has been accepted, a resultant change in behaviour has not. This leads neatly into a somewhat different, and less common, way of resisting the power of the liberal humanist identity, as can be seen in the following extract.

7.13 Resisting the "reality" of behaviour change

Excerpt 9, Transcript 4 (M, 14-15).

Line 1: R: Did you learn about (1.0) like how it's easy I guess to say that when you're sober that you know oh I must remember to put a condom on if I'm going to have sex, but do you think that you might have thought about other issues like well when I get drunk, maybe I'm less likely to do that (0.5) or not

Line 2: M2: What about when I'm sober I might not use a condom but when I'm drunk I might I could be one of them people (1.0) I'm not though

Line 3: LAUGHTER

Line 4: R: So so you don't think that it would change [you]...

Line 5: M2: [No]

Line 6: ...don't think that doing this will change

Line 7: M2: How can you remember to put a condom on if you were bladdered?

The female interviewer's complex question at the beginning of this extract constructs the act of putting on a condom as normally involving straightforward cognitive processes of planning; i.e., it is an unproblematic act when sober ("it's easy I guess", Line 1). Thus, the act of remembering to put a condom on when drunk is rendered problematic. This appears to invite a response from young people along the lines that it is therefore not normally a good idea to get drunk *and* have sex, a key behaviour change occurring as the result of the adoption of the liberal humanist identity. However, in this case, this does not happen. What happens instead is that M2 deconstructs and reverse the researcher's argument, effectively problematising the assumed link between alcohol and failure to wear a condom. Although M2 alleviates any tension arising as a result of this challenge by disclaiming the point to a degree, the interviewer hears this as a direct challenge to the rational self (borne out by the fact she has now queried it as such).

M2's response, rather than to use his initial argument, is to challenge the notion of the rational self on the grounds that there is a disjuncture between learning, thinking and planning beforehand, and actual lived experience on the other; i.e., how can one be rational when one has been drinking. In so doing, he has highlighted one of the paradoxes of the liberal humanist self. This is that, to avoid risk, one must effectively remain sober if one is to be able to plan, think and make rational decisions. However, the risk only occurs when one has been drunk, when the ability to think rationally has been compromised. If one remains sober there is no risk to avoid and thus no need for rational planning! The challenge raised in this extract towards the notion of behaviour change thus calls into question the utility of any educative messages.

These extract demonstrates a way in which the discursive assumptions of the liberal humanist model are resisted and challenged by young people, and illustrates the various ways in which the purposes and aims of alcohol education are constructed and reconstructed in the process. Alternative ways of resisting this discourse are to challenge the social structures and practices that surround it. Here, two examples will be given; the first is a challenge to the positive status of the educator whilst the second is a challenge to the very notion of alcohol as a topic of education in its own right.

7.14 Resisting the educator- just another teacher?

In the following extract, the young people involved do not offer positive evaluations of the educator, but instead offer negative ones. The extract is a good example of what happens when the group offer discourses that "resist" the more agreeable discourses that have been presented thus far.

Excerpt 10, Transcript 4 (M, 14-15)

Line 1 R: What did you think about the person who took the lessons (3.0)

Line 2 M2: D?

Line 3 R: Yep

Line 4 M1: Bossy

Line 5 R: What did you think about [her]

Line 6 M1: [A bit snappy] when you said something wrong she was like on you all the time.

Line 7 R: Yep yep yep what about you (TO M3) (2.0)

Line 8 M3: I didn't really take no notice.

Line 9 LAUGHTER

Line 10 R: Do you have any comments about the person who ran it?

Line 11 M4: She weren't very lively.

Line 12 R: She weren't very lively

Line 13 M1: I thought she was

Line 14 LAUGHTER

Line 15 R: So you would have preferred someone sort of like a bit more energetic

Line 16 M1: He were all right, that man who came.

Line 17 M4: G.

Line 18 M1: Yea he were [all right]

Line 19 R: [Yea] what was so good about him?

Line 20 M4: He like he kept eye contact with us when he was talking to us he didn't treat us like we were (INAUDIBLE) he were just like like us.

Line 21 M3: He were just like us

Line 22 M2: He listened to what we said and that

Line 23 R: So you would have preferred someone else who you think might have been better to run the groups?

Line 24 M4: Don't know really.

In this extract, the conversational form is striking in that, in comparison to other extracts, there are longer pauses between questions and answers (which are themselves quite short). Drawing on insights from conversation analysis, this is perhaps a feature of answers that display dispreferred responses to the interviewer's questions (Heritage, 1984). For instance, at the start of the extract, the interviewer's question is responded to with silence and a low, one word answer ("bossy", Line 4), an immediate negative evaluation that positions the educator as domineering. That this is a dispreferred response is illustrated by the fact the interviewer then repeats the question (signifying an alternative, or fuller, response is desired). Negative responses are again given ("snappy", Line 6) that again position the educator as both overbearing and bullying ("on you all the time", Line 6).

In this way, the unequal teacher-child relationship is re-invoked, supported by references to saying "something wrong" (Line 6) whereby the notion of providing answers that are given as correct or incorrect strongly invokes the didactic nature of the classroom. A function of this construction may be to allow the young people to create, and then occupy, the role of children. In such a way they may then be able to rebel against, and resist, the exertion of adult power, embodied in the educational intervention and the discourses it enshrouds. A later response ("I didn't really take no notice", Line 6) is even more powerful as it constructs disinterest in the educator, the question, and is dismissive of the educative process. Such a response is heard as humorous by the group, binding them together in a rebellious alliance against the female interviewer (and the interviewer's later comments after the session suggest she interpreted this as such). Later in the extract there is a comment (Line 16) about there having being a better teacher earlier in the school year. This constructs the educator in this intervention as inferior, a construction that is presented as a challenge to the interviewer in that it simultaneously undermines the intervention of which both the educator and the interviewer are a part. The construction of the other teacher in positive terms i.e., he maintained eye contact (indicating trust) and was "just like us" (Line 20), is similar to those given earlier by other young people as endorsements of the intervention. Such a construction is perhaps relational (Wetherell and Maybin, 1996) as it defines the educator in this intervention in opposite terms; i.e. as untrustworthy, difficult to relate to and guided primarily by professional concerns. Although it is unclear as to what type of education the positively evaluated teacher is involved in, the young people are nevertheless opening up the possibility of being able to accept alcohol education.

The key element of the discourse in this extract appears to be that is designed as a form of rebellion against a specific attempt at control from outside. By positioning and casting the educator as a teacher with greater power, exercising a didactic role, the young people are able to position themselves as school pupils and rebel against this authority and, in effect, the intervention in question (the interviewer's discomfort in the session indicates that this is heard as such). In this way, the role of alcohol education, at least in this case, is challenged as coercive and reduced to an exercise of power over young people by adults. In the next extract a challenge is offered to the very role of alcohol itself as a topic for education.

7.15 Resisting alcohol education- more fun than fear

Excerpt 11, Transcript 3 (Mixed, 15-16)

Line 1 M2: Your GCSEs are more important than learning about sex drugs and alcohol.

Line 2 R: ...um more important than doing alcohol, drugs and sex ed.

Line 3 M1: Yea but your GCSEs are just for your work and your whole life's not just gonna revo...revolve around [INAUDIBLE]...

Line 4 M2: [It is]

Line 5 M1: ...like that and stuff like that

Line 6 M2: With your GCSEs that's what gives you your um time when you're older that gives you your money and that and with no money you can't go out.

Line 7 M2: But you need GCSEs to get work and then (0.5) try to get your money but if you have no GCSEs you'll just be a flipping dustbin man or something.

Line 8 F2: Yea

Line 9 R: Yea

Line 10 F2: And then what you gonna say I'm lucky man I know everything about alcohol

In this extract, an educational discourse is constructed that privileges the attainment of qualifications over learning about alcohol. The effect of this is to position alcohol as a topic or issue that has no place in the classroom; i.e., it is not something that needs to be formally taught. There are two possible functions of such a discourse. Firstly, it may act as a point of resistance against the intervention, seen as perhaps another node of interference or control by adults. M2 could have been setting the scene for constructing alcohol as risky, but constructs these risks as best learnt about through experience, not through the control or direction of others. This is a discourse that draws on developmental discourses and "nature vs. nurture" arguments, and is very recognisable as part of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1997). Given the strength of this discourse, it is perhaps surprising not to see more evidence of it elsewhere. However, this may be, as mentioned earlier, a product of the questions asked which worked to close down any challenges to the liberal humanist discourse. Secondly, it may also be a way of re-constructing alcohol, not as a substance that is risky to use, but as a substance of leisure (as noted in the discourses of pleasure evident in the first

study). This also draws on wider discourses pertaining to alcohol's role in the night-time economy, a market that is very youth-oriented and geared towards recreation (Brain, Parker and Carnwath, 2000).

This point is developed further in the extract where the centrality of work to young people's future lives is established by M2 (drawing on the capitalist work ethic) and in so doing constructs alcohol use as a consumer-based leisure activity (requiring as it does "money"). The logic of this discourse is that without education there will be no qualifications, no work, no money and therefore no alcohol. Work is constructed as the means by which leisure activities such as drinking can be indulged ("gives you your um time", Line 6) and the freedom to do so obtained. This discourse is often used as an underlying argument and justification for the "positive" choice many people make to drink; i.e. as relaxation, unwinding, stress relief (Pavis and Cunningham-Burley, 1999). Such discourses of leisure are largely absent from the data, focusing as it does on risk, harm and the "problematic" nature of young people's drinking and providing the *raison d'etre* for the adoption of the responsibilised, rational self. The discourse of leisure, however, formulates this process of change as unnecessary. It does not necessarily construct alcohol use as lacking risk, but does imply that alcohol use is not as important as work (no matter how risky it is). As such, its function may be to defend current alcohol practices amongst young people, preventing and resisting adult interference in an activity young people undertake but wish adults to have no part in. The discourse of leisure therefore challenges the need for alcohol education.

Later in the extract this is achieved further through the construction of the "other", an unqualified person whose position in life is constructed as lowly via the use of the category "dustbin man" (Line 7). Such a categorisation enables inferences of rubbish, dirt, lack of skill and low pay, and is delivered as an undesirable career choice, exemplified by the intensifier "flipping". Sarcasm is used to portray as laughable the suggestion that such a person would be "lucky" in life if they have been taught about alcohol use but yet have no qualifications and no occupation of any real worth. This reinforces the construction of leisure as less important to that of work and, by implication, the role of alcohol education as subsidiary to that of more qualification- oriented education. Taken together, all of the previous extracts offer, in Foucauldian terms, points of "resistance" to the liberal humanist identity, and the

power educational interventions have to enforce the need to be this type of person.

7.16 Conclusions

Many of the issues raised in this study will be taken up in the following chapter which will examine the implications of all the studies reported in this thesis as a whole. However, there is an important issue pertinent to this study which is worth raising now. This concerns the type of conclusions that may be drawn from this data after a more formal analysis has been carried out (in this case by SADLE). Although an official report has not yet been made available it is likely that it will conclude that the intervention has been (generally) popular and well-received by young people. In addition, it may consider that young people exhibit a good understanding of the dangers involved in alcohol use (particularly in relation to sexual risk-taking), and are aware of the precautions they can now take to avoid falling foul of those dangers such as planning beforehand, etc. However, whilst not wishing to diminish the nature and extent of the potential harms that can (and do) occur when young people drink to excess, this thesis argues that such conclusions only tell part of the story. The discourses in evidence in the first study suggest there are other, alternative, discourses available to young people (e.g., discourses of pleasure, rebellion), and that these are tied to social and cultural practices operating both at a macro and at a micro level. Much of the education they are offered (including this intervention and its evaluation) effectively hide these discourses from view as they present a threat to the adoption of the Foucauldian self and thus a means of policing and controlling young people (although this is not, of course, an overt aim). The appearance of compliance may therefore not be translated into practice.

Apparent compliance and acceptance of the liberal humanist identity therefore emerges out of the context in which the data were produced. That is to say, the young people involved were being asked to talk about a lesson they had received, and the person they were talking to was, at least in some cases, a colleague or acquaintance of those who had taught the lessons. One of the functions of young people's discourses may therefore have been to ally themselves with the interviewer by constructing such lessons as generally positive; i.e. aligning their discourses with those of a more powerful adult. Throughout, young people may therefore draw on educational discourses that emphasis harm as a way of constructing an unproblematic and

consensual focus group context. The implications of this will now be discussed further in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this concluding chapter is fourfold. Firstly, it provides a brief overview of the thesis as a whole that will outline its generic structure, reiterate its original aims, and provide a brief summary of the main empirical findings. Secondly, the chapter then goes on to draw some conclusions in the light of these findings. Such conclusions will focus in particular on the implications the research may have with regard to the future development and implementation of alcohol education programmes in the UK. Consideration will also be given to the subsequent value this type of discourse analytic research may have, not just in terms of its potential practical application, but also within the academic community at large. A third aim of this chapter is to offer some reflection on the methods used and pinpoint areas that proved problematic, offering suggestions for modifications that may improve such research in the future as well as providing a synopsis of the lessons that have been learnt during the course of this study. Finally, the chapter considers where future avenues of research could most usefully lie, and offers some personal reflections on the thesis as a whole.

8.2 Overview

This thesis began by reflecting on the ambiguous role alcohol plays in British society. It is, on the one hand, one of, if not the, most important leisure pastime for the majority of people in this country. Over 96 per cent of the population regularly drink alcohol, i.e., once a week or more (O.N.S, 2004), and its use is often at the heart of many social events whether this be on the basis of pure enjoyment or as a more potent means of celebration and revelry (consider, for instance, newspaper reports focusing on the celebrations of the England cricket team after winning the Ashes in 2005). However, for some, there is a "dark side" to alcohol. It is estimated that up to a million people in the UK are now dependent on alcohol use, with alcohol misuse accounting for a significant number of admissions to A and E departments and a high degree of absenteeism from work (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). All in all, there is a high price to pay, both in human and in economic terms, of placing alcohol at the centre of our social lives. Most recently, attention has been paid (particularly in the media) to the phenomenon of binge drinking, particularly its occurrence amongst the young where, for many older generations, this would appear to reflect a new style of

drinking where the purpose is to get drunk for its own sake rather than on the use of alcohol as a social lubricant or "prop". In many ways, such concerns appear to represent a moral panic as this style of drinking can lead to behaviour that may be considered morally undesirable and gratuitously hedonistic. Nonetheless, the increase in long-tem medical problems, particularly amongst women, and the high rate of alcohol related accidents and violent crime suggest such concerns have some justification.

Of concern also has been the increase in the number of young people drinking underage, particularly with regard to the style of drinking in this age group which, like their elder peers, appears to be following the same pattern of drinking to deliberately get drunk. The first task of this thesis was therefore to examine the demographics of this phenomenon and establish the prevalence of such drinking, focusing particularly on the question of whether such concerns are justified or whether, to some degree, these concerns have been over exaggerated. The statistics reviewed in Chapter One would indeed seem to suggest a significant growth in the prevalence of such drinking. The thesis then went on to look at why this should be seen as a problem, and reviewed literature on the potential harms such drinking can cause to young people in this age group. Having established the potential damage such drinking can cause the focus then switched to common ways of tackling the problem. The most common method, as far as young people are concerned, is through educational programmes designed to decrease levels of consumption or change drinking behaviour. Few evaluations have been carried out of such programmes but those that have suggest these programmes have largely failed. The question this then posed was why should this be, and the first port of call was to look at the philosophy underlying such programmes, a philosophy often based on mainstream psychological research and theories.

In the second chapter, the thesis critically evaluated such theories and pinpointed some key areas of concern. Drawing on critical psychological theory, this thesis argued that such research often rested on assumptions and ideas that failed to take into account, or neglected, key aspects of alcohol use amongst the young, often as a result of the sometimes limited epistemological scope of such theories. Placing these theories in the social and historical context in which they were developed, the thesis then went on to argue for a broader, more socially and historically orientated stance both towards the nature of drinking, and to how young people are seen and viewed within western society. Drawing on sociological as well as psychological

theory, especially the work of Michel Foucault, this thesis argued that approaches to controlling drinking are often related to systems of governance and regulation. These are systems that work to reproduce aspects of society conducive to profit making and productivity in a capitalist economy, and they are systems that therefore work to produce individuals for that end. Key to this is the process of individualisation, whereby the social is made invisible in order to render people responsible for their behaviour through the illusion of free choice (and thus to discipline them accordingly) as a way of shaping them into "model" citizens.

This process is believed to occur in education because drinking amongst young people potentially poses a threat to the social order. Such an approach normally incorporates a philosophy of harm minimisation rather than abstinence as the practice of drinking *per se* is often seen as conducive to the social good, and thus to be encouraged and maintained. However, young people appear to resist such control and this may be for complex reasons relating to the society in which they live, and the alternative and necessary functions alcohol use serves. As most psychological theories tend to be based on individualist assumptions similar to those produced by the society in which they operate, it was proposed that an alternative methodology may be useful as a way of generating new, theoretically informed insights into the nature of drinking amongst young people. Particularly suited to this task was the methodology of discourse analysis which focuses on the dynamic nature of meaning construction and offers a more socially grounded approach to research with people than do most other methods. Traditional methods, particularly ubiquitous questionnaires, were then critiqued and an argument advanced for the use of Foucauldian discourse analysis. Such an analysis offers a broad approach focusing as it does on historical and social practices and the discursive resources these make available, resources drawn on and used by people to shape social and psychological realities and, simultaneously, human subjectivity.

Four studies were carried out utilising this methodology, none of which had been attempted before. The aim of the first of these was to collect data on young people's own experiences of drinking, and analyse the key discourses used by young people to construct themselves in relation to their drinking lives. The second was to focus on the discourses present in education, which often takes two forms. The first of these was educational resources and leaflets, a nationally distributed, commonly favoured means of disseminating information regarding drinking. The second was that

of alcohol education as it occurs in specific localised contexts; i.e., within the classroom. Hugely diverse, this study aimed to provide a flavour of the type and range of discourses on offer in the classroom. Comparisons between educational discourses and young people's own discourses around drinking were then possible. Finally, young people's discourses around education itself were then obtained. The key question here concerned the degree to which young people adopted or assimilated the discourses presented to them in the form of education.

8.3 Key findings

In the first study, young people's talk around alcohol consisted of two key discourses. The first of these was a discourse of pleasure. Within this discourse, young people constructed alcohol use as a source of great fun and amusement. Frequently, such discourses were couched in narratives that elicited laughter from the focus group as a whole. Within such discourses young people constructed themselves as deliberately drinking to lose control, often in order to achieve certain hedonistic ends and almost always to break and transgress societal norms regarding how to behave. Thus, behaviour that has been framed as irrational in the research literature has, for young people, acquired its own rationality; that of drinking to transform the experience of one's life into something pleasurable and, in some sense, magical. The second key discourse was that of risk. Within this discourse, young people constructed their drinking behaviour in terms of harm and danger, relating stories of perilous escapades that are potentially threatening to the physical integrity of those involved. However, this was usually couched in surprisingly positive terms, whereby risk and danger were seen as part of the fun and excitement of no longer being in control. There were some discourses in evidence that challenged this positive view, but yet still constructed this behaviour overall as normative and potentially justifiable.

In the second study, a very different set of discourses were on offer to young people. These appeared to have three key elements. Firstly, they constructed the young people as essentially vulnerable and in need of protection. Secondly, they attributed young people as having a choice in the decisions they make although closer analysis revealed this choice to be rather illusory, with true autonomy not really being "on the table" for young people. This is perhaps not too surprising given that young people construct their autonomy as involving the right to choose to drink in order to get drunk. Finally, young people were encouraged to adopt the identity of the "safe"

drinker, the safe drinker being one who essentially remains in control of their behaviour, feelings and thoughts and therefore, through a process of self-monitoring, drinks but never drinks so much they lose control.

In the third study, such discourses were again in evidence only this time there was a greater emphasis on both vulnerability and the need to be a rational, safe drinker. Weight was added to these claims by the fact they were voiced by authoritative speakers who disclaimed any notions of control and instead positioned themselves as benevolent guardians of young peoples' best interests.

Finally, in the fourth study, young people were found to generally adopt and assimilate the educational discourses they were presented with, at least within the context of the research interview. Nevertheless, despite this, there were attempts to reassert the discourses present in the first study but this was on a limited scale. The overall impression gained from this study was that young people have taken the lessons on board and that education had been a success. However, in a different environment (as in the first study) there appears to be little discursive space for such educational discourses.

8.4 Main conclusions

Looking at the research as a whole, the most striking aspect of it appears to be the divergence between what young people say about their alcohol use and the way it is constructed in educational materials. For instance, in the first study young people often made the claim that drinking, or more specifically drinking to excess, was a fundamental and important aspect of their daily lives. However, it could be the case that such claims are made for rhetorical effect as survey research (reviewed in Chapter One) often told a different story. For instance, although 90 per cent of young people do claim to have had some experience of alcohol by the time they reach 16 (Goddard and Higgins, 2000), only a small proportion of 11-15 year olds (21 per cent) claimed they drank regularly; i.e., at least once a week (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). Moreover, the average amount claimed to be drunk by this age group per week was just 1.8 units (Alcohol Concern, 2001a). Of course, as Chapter Three went on to argue, it may be that there is a social desirability bias operating here in that young people are reluctant to admit how much they really drink (at least when they are alone). It seems, therefore, that the true extent of under-age drinking may be unverifiable as young people may be overstating their drinking in focus groups or,

conversely, understating their drinking when filling in surveys. What is less disputable, however, is that by the time they reach 18 the majority of young people *are* drinking regularly and at levels above the Government's recommended safety limits. For instance, 37 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women aged between 16 and 24 drank more than the recommended weekly limits of 21 and 14 units respectively in 2002 (O.N.S, 2004). This is commensurate with many of the claims about excessive drinking made by young people aged 18 and over in qualitative research carried out by Giles (1999). Therefore, even if young people are not drinking regularly and heavily between the ages of 11 and 15, they probably soon will be. The key question to ask therefore is why might this be so?

On the one hand, this may be a reflection of the increasing power of the night-time economy and the shrewdness of marketing practices as Brain, Parker and Carnwath (2000) suggest. However, there may also be more fundamental reasons such as, for example, an increasing need for young people to break free of the everyday constraints and restrictions which are endemic in high-powered capitalist economies. Alternatively, it may be to do with the changing nature of social relationships within such an economy. Young people may have less time for social interaction and therefore less time to get to know people and, in particular, form friendships or develop romantic relationships. Getting drunk may speed up the process of intimate bonding and provide "wild" experiences that can be shared and regurgitated later in stories that act as social currency bonding groups of young people together. Of course, a product of this style of drinking is that the behaviour that results is seen by some as anti-social and, by and large, can be disruptive to the economy and to daily (and nightly) social living. The role of education, under the rubric of harm prevention, therefore appears to be to "police" people and control their behaviour, but this does not happen in an overt sense. Rather, it is more subtle, instead involving enjoining people to adopt certain types of persona that lead to them being able to police both themselves and others. This is not to deny that such materials have harm prevention as a goal (nor that this is a worthy aim) but the point is that there are alternative outcomes associated with harm prevention that have as much to do with policing young people as they do with benignly looking after them. Indeed, the whole notion of harm prevention, in light of the discourses seen in the first study, is itself open to challenge. Taking risks with their physical safety is, for young people (and maybe adults too), an important aspect of what it means to escape and be free, so the

question perhaps arises as to whether the benefits of harm prevention really do outweigh the social and human costs. Once they get older, what will these young people do if they are not able to go out and drink to excess, to break free for a few hours? What are the alternatives? These are questions that need addressing by those designing educational materials, as often there appears to be an emphasis on maintaining control without a recognition of the nature, and importance, of leisure. There seem to be few alternatives to having such extreme fun that are available to young people as they get older.

The importance of drinking to young people, and its increasing dominance amongst this age group as they get older, suggests that the discourses present in education will be fiercely resisted. Indeed, the relative lack of success of such education would appear to bear this out. Much of the educational material is premised on psychological research that rests on individualistic assumptions and assumes a model of the person as an information processor; in other words, the very model of the person they are encouraging young people to adopt! It is as if they are saying "this is what people are like therefore you should be like this". This is not too surprising given that both educational materials and psychological models have developed in the context of 20th century western capitalist philosophy with its economic rationale and focus on the responsibilisation of the individual. It is therefore difficult to see how educational materials can be changed in order to be more successful if success is defined primarily in terms of harm minimisation. To change would mean reworking or even abandoning notions of harm prevention which may be morally questionable. Nevertheless, there certainly needs to be more awareness of the fact that young people may not find education credible, given that most of their experiences of drinking are of fun and enjoyment. To acknowledge this experience more fully would be a major step, but there may be social pressures operating against this, pressures that emanate from institutions and structures (particularly in the media) that have a moral objection to the hedonistic and sometimes gratuitous nature of excess drinking. At the very least, the research in this thesis may help open up a debate on these moral issues which, if nothing else, would be a useful starting point from which to confront some of the key social issues it raises.

8.5 Reflections on methodology and suggestions for future research.

Having completed the research, there are several points that are worthy of further comment regarding the way it has been conducted. Firstly, in regard to the first study, it was probably the case that too much data were collected and this may not have helped when it came to focusing the analysis. In hindsight, it may have been better to work with just six transcripts rather than twelve. What could not have been foreseen was how much data would emanate from the final two groups undertaken as this far outweighed the data collected from some of the earlier groups. It would have been difficult to turn the offer of participation down, however, as schools had often gone to great lengths to arrange these groups. A future modification would therefore be to work with a smaller number of groups, which is what happened with subsequent studies in this thesis.

A second point of note is that it would also have been beneficial if those young people taking part in the final study had been giving their reactions to the material collected for the third study, rather than an intervention that the researcher had not seen. The practicalities of school timetabling militated against this approach, but this would be a useful future modification as it would enable comparisons to be made between the researcher's analysis of the educational material, and the reactions of young people themselves.

A further point worth mentioning is that the analyses in this thesis are not the final word on the matter. There are numerous ways in which all the data could be analysed further and one particularly useful focus would be to look at how gender was constructed, particularly given the changing nature of women's drinking and current health concerns around this. For instance, is there more to this than just health concerns? Are there discourses at play that work to suppress the emergence of women as an economic force, and militate against what may be seen as an intrusion into a patriarchal world? Also worthy of note, and not touched on in this thesis, is the issue of ethnicity. Why has there been such little research on the drinking habits and practices of those in minority ethnic communities, who now make up approximately one-twentieth of the population. Such omissions seem strange and are worth remedying.

Another issue concerns the status of qualitative research. Such research is still not held in high regard especially in some academic circles, and remains unfamiliar to the public at large. One possible suggestion may therefore be to carry out and develop

a brand new quantitative study that is informed by insights from research such as this (rather than the other way round which is usually the case). This may help to integrate different research disciplines and render the contents of qualitative research such as this intelligible to the general public (whilst retaining the original conclusions and insights).

Finally, the research on this thesis could also usefully be extended by looking at alternative sources of discourse such as those found in advertising or the media, or perhaps those disseminated by young people's parents. All of these could provide further rich insights into the topic of alcohol use amongst those young people aged 16 and under.

8.7 Final reflections

At the beginning of this thesis I outlined my own personal views on the topic of under-age drinking, enabling the reader to see how my experiences and interests form an integral part of this research (in terms of its design and conduct) and to provide my rationale for tackling a complex and, at times, controversial topic. With the research completed, and a significant amount of time now having lapsed, it seems appropriate to end this thesis with a personal comment or two on the journey my thoughts have taken over the past few years.

I began this thesis from the standpoint of someone who was concerned about the possible effects alcohol misuse may have on young people, particularly in the long term. These concerns arose out of my experiences talking to people for whom drinking to excess when young had indeed had negative consequences. Of particular concern to me was the reported increase in the media of "binge drinking" amongst the young, as many of the older adults I met who had alcohol problems often related starting their drinking "careers" in just such a way. I was also interested in the role education may play in preventing alcohol misuse, and the type of messages and corresponding stance it took on the issue (which clearly were not having much effect). I also felt that, as I knew many people who drank (including those who engaged in binge drinking), there seemed to be many positive benefits to be gleaned from drinking and, moreover, I wondered to what degree the media had over exaggerated the extent of the "problem". Having completed the research some of my views on these issues, although not all, have changed.

For instance, I now feel that the extent of under-age drinking, particularly that of binge drinking, has indeed been over-exaggerated although it certainly appears to be widespread among older young people (i.e., 18 onwards). Nevertheless, even though they may not engage in regular alcohol use, it is still clearly important to young people under 16 and, as stated earlier, it is quite likely they will partake in it once they reach the age of 18. The real question for me was, therefore, whether this was as big a problem as the media (and indeed other researchers) point out. Certainly, the information disseminated through research, and from agencies such as Alcohol Concern and the police, suggests there is some cause for concern in terms of the potential harm that can arise as a result of alcohol misuse. But this does not tell the whole story. One of the most revelatory aspects of this research for me concerned the discourses young people themselves used around alcohol, and the fundamental importance its use clearly had for them in terms of their social lives and perhaps even their psychological well-being. This is a point often missed by educationalists, researchers and policy-makers who, it appears from the research carried out in this thesis, often have a different agenda to young people. Much of the research in this project, for instance, demonstrated how education appears to be as much about issues of social control as it does about protection from harm, and invokes discourses that run counter to those used by the young people themselves. The incompatibility of the two sets of discourses is sometimes striking and has given me a tremendous insight into why education has been relatively unsuccessful, the unfortunate outcome of which is that there is little done to prevent the minority who genuinely suffer from harm from so doing. Hence, to me, this justifies the original philosophy of this thesis which called for more open debate on the issues involved, a debate, of course, that has many wider social and cultural ramifications.

Through this research, therefore, I now have a greater understanding of the importance of drinking to young people at both a cultural and at an individual level. I also have a far greater understanding of the wider social, economic and cultural forces that are at play, forces with a vested interest in either encouraging or discouraging people in maintaining their current patterns of drinking. As a result, I also have a very different perspective on the role of education and why it appears to be failing. This research, and the insights it has provided, have, I hope, provided a strong justification for the greater use of discourse analytic methods, particularly those of Foucauldian discourse analysis, in psychological research. Perhaps most of all, however, I have a

greater appreciation of the complexity of the issues involved, and the difficulty one may have, in moral terms, of finding a comfortable "position" to take up on this issue. For instance, accepting there are benefits to be had in drinking to excess means accepting some of the risks, in terms of potential harm, that go with it. Conversely, the prevention of harm becomes bound up with issues of control, regulation and the potential infringement of liberties. There are no easy solutions and none is offered here. The reader is essentially left to make up their own mind as to where they stand. I hope to some degree, however, that this thesis has served its purpose of provoking debate and discussion around this increasingly important issue. Researching it has certainly been both a rewarding, and personally enriching, experience.

APPENDIX A

Young People and Alcohol Use- Focus Group Questions

Questions for each group will be rephrased/adjusted according to the age of the participants involved, and the particular balance of drinkers/non-drinkers. Appropriate contact information will be made available (discreetly) for those who wish to talk to an appropriately qualified person, in confidence, about their drinking.

TOPIC AREAS

Contexts: Do any of you drink alcohol?

(IF ANSWER IS NO: Do you know others who do?)

At what times do you usually have a drink? (OR, ALTERNATIVELY, IN WHAT SITUATIONS)

Where do you usually go to drink alcohol?
Why?

Who do you normally go and drink with?
Why?

Reasons: Do you like drinking?

What is it you like about drinking? OR What is it you dislike about drinking?

(FOLLOW UP EACH REASON GIVEN ACCORDINGLY)

Do you think you miss out at all if you don't drink?

Effects: How does it make you feel?

Do you think you act differently when you've been drinking?
In what way?

Do you friends act differently when they've been drinking?
What sort of things do they do?

Consequences: Do you know people who've done stupid or daft things when they've been drinking?
What sort of things have they done?

Have you ever done anything like this?

Do you know people who've done dangerous things when they've been drinking?

Like what?

Have you ever done anything like this?

Excess: Do you know people who drink too much?

Why do you think they drink too much?

Have you ever drunk too much?

How do you know when you've had too much?

Gender: Who do you think drinks the most, boys or girls?

Why do you think that?

Do boys behave differently to girls (OR VICE VERSA) when they've been drinking?

In what way?

Morality: Do you think it's good or bad for young people to drink?

Why do you think that?

Is it different for adults?

What do you think adults think about young people's drinking

Are they right?

Do you think it's worse or better for you to do than, say, smoking?

In what way?

Does it matter how old you are?

APPENDIX B

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Document 1

Tacade (2001) *Respect it! Alcohol materials for 11-16 year olds.* Tacade

Document 2

The Portman Group (1998) *Discussing drinking with your children.* The Portman Group

Document 3

Alcohol Focus Scotland (2002) *Alcohol and young people.* Alcohol Focus Scotland

Document 4

Redbridge Drug and Health Education Service (1999) *Maggot's Really Useful Guide To Alcohol.* Redbridge and Waltham Forest.

Document 5

Brighton and Hove Health Promotion (1994) *Thinking of getting p...d tonight?* East Sussex.

Document 6

Alcohol Concern (1997) *Enough bottle: Can you handle booze?* Alcohol Concern

Document 7

Health Promotion England (1998) *Your drink and you.* London.

Document 8

Health Education Authority (1998) *A parent's guide to drugs and alcohol.* London.

Document 9

Health Education Authority (2000) *Advice for young people about alcohol.* London.

Document 10

Institute of Alcohol Studies (1997) "Bottle" Cards. Institute of Alcohol Studies

Document 11

Rutherford, D. (1997) *A lot of bottle*. Institute of Alcohol Studies

Document 12

The Portman Group (2001) *Finding out about drinking alcohol: A resource book for science and PSE.* The Portman Group.

Document 13

The Portman Group (2000) *"Respect Alcohol: Respect Yourself" postcard series.* Portman Group.

Document 14

Health Promotion Division, National Assembly of Wales (1995). *C2H5OH?* Health Promotion Wales

Document 15

Fast Forward Positive (1997) *Blush.* Fast Forward Positive.

Document 16

Alcohol Advice Centre (1999) *Teacher's Resource Pack: A comprehensive pack for teaching about alcohol, its use and misuse.* Herts.

APPENDIX C

Young People's Focus Group

1. Did you enjoy the programme. Why?
2. Is there anything you think was missing? (that would make the programme better)
3. Was the person leading the programme *approachable*? Did you feel comfortable with them? Were you able to ask questions?
4. What *new* things do you think you have learned about the links between alcohol, drugs and sex?
5. Do you think that being part of this programme changed how you might think or act when it comes to alcohol, drugs and sex? How do you think you might think or act differently?
6. How would you compare these sessions with your existing SRE/ PSHE classes?
7. Of all the things you did in the programme, which exercises do you think worked best?
8. What do you think should happen to follow on from these groups? If anything…

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