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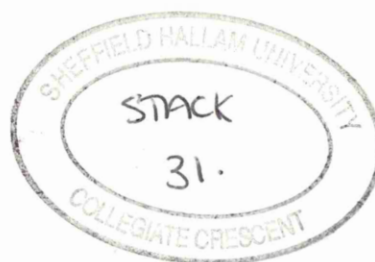
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WOMEN'S LEISURE - A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Mainstream leisure studies has largely failed to consider the importance of gender as a structuring variable upon leisure and consequently has neglected women's leisure as an area for study. This thesis aims to describe and analyse the experience and meaning of leisure for women, the constraints upon and opportunities for leisure which women have, and the ways in which these relate to the broader economic and social structures within society.

Informed by feminist critical research, the thesis takes a holistic approach, seeking to situate women's leisure in the context of their lives as a whole. It considers the interrelationships between leisure and other aspects of women's lives, including the family and employment. The role of ideology and its relationship with women's material inequalities is considered, and the impact of prevailing ideologies of masculinity and femininity upon leisure is discussed.

A selective review of theoretical writing upon leisure evaluates existing writing about leisure in the light of recent feminist contributions to the field. A discussion of some the available historical evidence provides the context for a discussion of women's leisure during the 1980s. The thesis draws upon a range of survey data and small scale social research findings to provide an overview of contemporary women's perceptions and experiences of leisure. This then forms the background to a discussion of five case studies, based upon qualitative data derived from interviews with 28 women. The case studies examine the experiences of women who share particular configurations of contraint and opportunity, and the analysis attempts to identify points of communality and points of divergence between the groups.

The thesis concludes with an evaluation of the present status of feminist research upon leisure, and offers some suggestions for possible future directions for research in the area of women and leisure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD

This thesis is based on empirical research I carried out whilst working as Research Associate on a a more substantial research project entitled Leisure and Gender, conducted in the Department of Applied Social Studies, Sheffield City Polytechnic, between 1984 and 1987. I joined the existing team of Eileen Green and Diana Woodward in July 1984, some six months into the project. Detailed descriptions of the project can be found in Chapters 1 and 4 of this document. My own contribution to the research was as follows:

- analysing and interpreting the findings of a survey of some 707 Sheffield women conducted by National Opinion Polls Ltd. under the direction of Eileen Green and Diana Woodward; conducting and supervising secondary statistical analysis of the findings; preparing a written report of the findings.

- devising and conducting a small scale qualitative study, including:
    i) identifying and contacting the research subjects
   ii) drafting and piloting the interview schedules
  iii) conducting in-depth interviews with 28 women; overseeing the interviewing of 16 male respondents
   iv) compiling research notes and interview summaries
    v) conducting the primary analysis of interview transcripts
   vi) organising post-interview discussion groups with the respondents

- contributing to joint papers and publications, including the end of grant report

The findings of the project were presented to the funding body in 1987 (Green, Hebron and Woodward: Leisure and Gender - A study of Sheffield Women's Leisure Experiences). Selected findings were incorporated into a number of other joint publications including Green, Hebron and Woodward (1990) Women's Leisure, What Leisure? (Macmillan). Where work from joint publications is incorporated into the text of this thesis, it is drawn from material originally written by myself.

WOMEN'S LEISURE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

CONTENTS   page

Chapter 1: <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

1.1 The Research Problem

This research project represents a development of earlier work I had carried out looking at popular cultural forms produced for women, notably women's magazines and romantic fiction. My work in this area had been predominantly text based, and involved producing critical readings of specific texts or groups of texts and relating these to women's broader social structural position. I had been interested in exploring the ways in which artefacts such as magazines operate as signifying systems, helping women to order and make sense of their lived experience. One of the frustrations of this kind of analysis was that it was largely speculative in terms of drawing any conclusions about women's actual use of these forms. What place did they occupy in women's lives; with what degree of engagement did women read them; how far were the particular versions of femininity purveyed by these texts aspired to or rejected by their readers?

This desire to know more about women's use of cultural commodities brought me into the study of women's leisure time, this being the time when reading, viewing and so on was most likely to take place. I had written and received funding for a proposal to interview women about their viewing of the American soap opera, Dallas. I envisaged an ethnographic project involving a small number of women, and my intention was to conduct semi-

structured interviews with them and to produce an analysis which placed women's viewing and use of soap opera within the context of their lives as a whole. However, I was then offered the opportunity to work as the researcher on a much larger-scale research project looking at the impact of gender upon leisure, and was happy to set to one side my original proposal. This thesis is therefore based on research I undertook as one part of a larger study, Leisure and Gender, funded by the Sports Council/ESRC Joint Panel on Leisure and Recreation Research and carried out in Sheffield by Eileen Green, Diana Woodward and myself between 1983 and 1986. The project was subsequently written up as Green, Hebron and Woodward (1987), and many of the findings incorporated into Green, Hebron and Woodward (1990). The precise relationship between this thesis and the Leisure and Gender Project is discussed in Chapter 4.

I have written about my previous research interests as an indication of the perspective that I brought to the study of women's leisure. My research training was neither in sociology nor recreation research, but rather in cultural studies. This undoubtably had a bearing on my approach. My concern to examine women's use of cultural forms during their leisure time had led me to recognise that commonsense definitions of leisure as time free from obligation, spent in ways which were individually and autonomously chosen, seemed largely inappropriate to women. What

2

I already knew about the fabric of women's everyday lives made me

suspicious of the extent to which most women ever experience this

kind of wholly uncircumscribed time.   When I began to research

the subject in some detail and it appeared that this commonsense

understanding was enshrined in much of the scholarly literature,

I knew that traditional leisure studies would provide little

assistance in developing an adequate understanding of women's

experiences. Much of the writing was of even more restricted use

than commonsense understandings of leisure. Many scholars had

been at pains to contruct theories which categorised leisure as

being the opposite of paid work, using the male worker as the

norm and ignoring the life experiences of women. Some of these

approaches are subject to a critique in the literature review.

At the time of embarking on this research, feminist approaches to

the study of leisure were just beginning to be published.

Writings such as Talbot (1979), Stanley (1980) and Deem (1982)

were extremely influential upon this research, as was the work of

McIntosh et al (1981). One of the problems within the field, as

within any emerging field, was a lack of empirical research. The

decision by Eileen Green and Diana Woodward to make the first

stage of the Leisure and Gender project a large scale survey of

women's leisure was one which yielded a great deal of useful

statistical data. This piece of research follows from and builds

upon that survey.   It had the following aims, some of which were

shared and overlap with the intentions of the Leisure and Gender project as a whole.

Firstly, to examine the extent to which gender, a socially constructed category, determines women's experiences and understanding of leisure, also a socially constructed category. By doing this, it would be possible to explore the way in which leisure exists as an area of life in which relations of power intervene. In its simplest sense, defined as opposite to the highly regulated (for most people) world of paid work, leisure is often depicted as free from the intervention of power or politics. This piece of research set out to build upon the embryonic work within feminism which suggested that this was not the case. Whilst most feminist social research had concerned itself with institutions such as paid employment, the family or education, there seemed little reason to believe that leisure alone should have completely escaped the impact of patriarchy. There was a need to look at the relationship between broad social definitions of leisure, and individual women's own experiences, and to look at how far gender is a mediating or determining force in relation to these.

Secondly, the research was intended to look at the relationship between women's material inequalities and prevailing ideologies of gender, and the impact of these upon access to and enjoyment of leisure. An important consideration would then be the extent

to which it is possible to identify dominant ideologies of femininity and 'a woman's place', and the ways in which any such taken for granted definitions come to structure leisure. Moving on from this, it was hoped that the research should make it possible to develop an understanding of the ways in which ideology works in tandem with material conditions to sustain a particular set of social relations.

The research was thus contructed as primarily exploratory, rather than hypothesis testing. The intention was to gather and analyse empirical data on women's experiences and understanding of leisure, linking it with a broader social structural and historical analysis of women's oppression. It is true that there was therefore a fundamental hypothesis, namely that gender has a structuring effect upon leisure. However, the extent of this effect and the specific processes through which this takes place in relation to leisure were not hypothesised at the outset of the research. Rather, the research was designed to draw out women's own perceptions and experiences of leisure, using their own frames of reference. One important feature of the research was that it should approach women's leisure in a holistic way, exploring women's lives as a whole as a way of situating leisure within them, rather than starting with a pre-conceived definition of leisure and attempting to fit women's lives into it.

1.2 Sheffield as the location for the study

Sheffield was chosen as the location for the study by the two original members of the research team, who had lived and worked there for several years and were familiar with its geography and social demographic profile. A number of characteristics made Sheffield an interesting location for a study of women's leisure, and these are set out in Green, Hebron and Woodward 1987. The city has a relatively stable and ageing population of over half a million people, with a comparatively small proportion of inhabitants from ethnic minority cultures. Compared with other cities in the region, it has a narrow and declining manufacturing base, and poorer road, rail and air links with other parts of the country. Located some five miles west of the M1 motorway, Sheffield does not lie on any major communication artery; on the whole people go there because it is the object of their journey, rather than passing through on their way to somewhere else.

Perhaps partly because of this relative isolation, Sheffield boasts a strong sense of community, many of its inhabitants having relatives and long-standing friends in the locality. This could be expected to influence how women use their free time. In addition the district offers a wide range of public and commercial leisure facilities and, at the time of the study, an unusually cheap, frequent and reliable public transport service. (In April 1986 the abolition of the Metropolitan authorities led

to a large increase in fares which, together with the deregulation of public transport later in 1986, resulted in a less frequent as well as more expensive service). At the time of the study it was part of the Metropolitan District Council's policy to make its recreation facilities available at off-peak times at low cost to low income or recreationally disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed, the elderly and mothers with young children. Thus, in theory at least, opportunities for leisure and cultural activities outside the home are comparatively widely available; Sheffield women had good access to public transport to take them there, and at least in theory, should be less likely than women elsewhere to lack local companions with whom to spend their free time. The extent to which these apparent advantages were reflected in the actuality of women's subjective experiences was a consideration within the study.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

Following this introduction is a selective review of that literature which has attempted to offer a theoretical perspective on leisure. Most of the literature is comparatively recent, reflecting both the relative youth of leisure studies as a discipline and the significance of feminist contributions to social science during the last twenty years. This review forms Chapter Two. In order to situate women's contemporary

experiences of leisure, Chapter Three takes the form of an historical analysis of the emergence of leisure as a category of experience, and reconstructs as far as possible a history of women's leisure. Whilst few leisure historians have been specifically concerned with women's experiences, it is possible to piece together existing sources to produce an interesting if partial history which can usefully illuminate present day definitions and experiences.

One characterising feature of this kind of critical social research is a questioning of the nature of prevailing knowledge and a directing of attention to the processes which legitimate knowledge (Harvey 1990). Chapter Four of this thesis sets out the research methodology, and includes a discussion of recent debates about feminist methodology and the use of qualitative research techniques. It also includes a description of the data collection and analysis, together with reflections on the methodological choices which were made.

Chapter Five looks at women's leisure in contemporary Britain, and draws upon available empirical evidence to give an overview of leisure in the nineteen eighties. It uses social surveys and small scale ethnographic studies of the family, employment, race and ageing, as well as findings from studies within leisure and cultural studies, to build up a picture of women's experiences of leisure in relation to the broader social and economic context.

It looks at some of the key factors which structure leisure, taking account of women's material conditions of existence and related ideological structures. The chapter provides an analysis of the differences between women with regard to leisure, and also indicates areas of commonality shared by all women.

Against this broad backdrop, Chapter Six presents the findings of the case studies which form the primary empirical evidence for this thesis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five groups of women, each of which occupied a different socio-structural position. These interviews were designed to provide detailed in-depth information on the subjective experience of leisure. They yielded data on areas such as women's definitions of leisure, their feelings of entitlement to leisure, their day to day experiences of leisure, the impact of their work - paid or unpaid - upon leisure, the impact of partners and/or children on leisure, and their experiences of social control in relation to leisure. The findings for each case study group are presented and summarised, and comparative conclusions are drawn.

Chapter Seven, the conclusion, draws together the material presented in Chapters Three to Six, and in the light of the findings of this study, presents some suggestions for future research in this area.

CHAPTER 2: <u>LITERATURE REVIEW</u>

2.1 Introduction

All the literature examined in this review makes at least some claim to offer a theoretical perspective on leisure. The review is also primarily concerned with work which has been written within a social science framework, rather than within other disciplines such as geography or philosophy. It therefore excludes a considerable body of writing on leisure which might be termed 'recreation research', on the grounds that such research is primarily concerned with the statistical analysis of leisure trends for the purpose of planning or forecasting changing patterns of demand. Such research has certainly not concerned itself with the concept of leisure as a social process, and in fact is often conducted within a framework which is resistant to any form of sociological theory.

It is not until the 1970s that anything resembling a sociology of leisure can be deemed to have existed within British sociology. As has been pointed out by Clarke and Critcher (1985) there had been attempts within the sub-discipline of community studies and within cultural criticism to analyse leisure as a social process, but these had tended to remain extremely marginal to mainstream sociology. In fact, many of the more sustained writings on leisure developed out of an entirely different sub-

discipline, that of industrial sociology. These form the starting

point for this loosely chronological review of the main

theoretical strands within leisure studies.

2.2 Traditional approaches

In Britain, following industrialisation, work has been

experienced by many people as an arena of regulation and control,

in which individual workers have little autonomy and from which

they derive little intrinsic satisfaction. Hours are largely

determined by forces beyond the individual, and traditionally the

place of work is usually geographically separate from the home.

By contrast, leisure has commonly come to be understood as the

arena in which individuals recover and escape from the demands of

paid work. During the 1960s industrial psychologists, often

employed by private sector firms keen to develop better employer-

employee relations, found a good deal of evidence of the adverse

effects of paid employment (McGregor 1960, Herzberg 1966). It was

within this context that leisure became an area of investigation,

and this essentially functionalist view of leisure as

compensatory for the alienation, lack of autonomy and other

privations endured in paid employment retains a strong foothold

within the study of leisure. It is also firmly established within

collective common sense understandings of leisure. The tendency

to subscribe fairly uncritically to such a conception of leisure,

as free from the contraints of paid employment and marked by high
levels of individual choice, has been one of the most fundamental
criticisms levelled at some of the best known and widely read
studies of leisure.

The early 1970s saw the publication of major works by two writers
who are generally acknowledged to be the founding fathers of
conventional leisure sociology in England, Stanley Parker and
Kenneth Roberts. Parker's The Future Of Work And Leisure, (1971,
revised as Leisure And Work in 1983) was, as its title suggests,
explicitly concerned with the impact of work upon life outside
the workplace. Parker posited three possible models for the
relationship between work and leisure: extension, opposition and
neutrality. Extension is that pattern whereby work and leisure
are experienced as being very similar, in the sense that work is
the dominant life interest and offers its own fulfillments. The
preoccupations and often the people from work time spill over
into leisure. In fact leisure and work may be difficult to
distinguish as separate. Opposition is used to characterise the
experience of leisure as completely contradistinct from work.
Work is experienced as restrictive and constraining, whilst
leisure is its opposite, offering freedom and an element of
compensation. Usually work colleagues are not seen outside of
work. Finally, the neutrality model is one in which leisure is
neither an extension of work nor its opposite: it is simply

separate. Again, the social relations of the workplace do not impinge on leisure time.

For Parker, whilst he acknowledges that considerations such as level of education may have an impact upon leisure, and although he does not posit a straightforward correlation between types of occupation and leisure experiences, leisure is primarily determined by work. What Parker means by work is paid employment, and this occupies one end of a continuum in which Parker sets out to classify human activity. Other categories on the continuum are work obligations, existence time, non-work

obligations and leisure.

Clarke and Critcher (1985) have a number of criticisms of Parker's work, including its essentially functionalist perspective which enables leisure to be explained purely in terms of the functions it performs in maintaining the equilibrium of the individual and/or society. From a feminist perspective there are considerable concerns with Parker's approach, many of which were articulated by a group of researchers based at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (McIntosh 1981, Griffin et. al. 1982). Parker's model, based as it was upon white male workers, their class positions, occupational cultures and associated leisure activities was nonetheless presented as having widespread applicability. Women, in so far as they

featured at all, appeared as the partners of the men studied. Parker writes:

> 'in considering the various categories we have had in mind men in full time employment. Certain modifications to the scheme are necessary if it is to fit the cases of other groups.'
>
> (Parker 1971, p. 29, quoted in McIntosh 1981)

These 'other groups' not only include esoteric groups such as prisoners, but effectively anyone - whether female, retired, unemployed - who is not a male in full time employment. The assumption that minor modifications to the model would enable it to account for women's situation has been heavily criticised:

> 'It is precisely this assumption (that women form a specific offshoot from the male category which is synonymous with the neutral, general category) that constitutes what has been described as masculine hegemony.'
>
> (Griffin et al 1982, page 94)

Parker's 1983 revision of his earlier work acknowleges feminist criticism of his male dominated approach and his concentration on the leisure of full time workers (for example McIntosh 1981). McIntosh pointed out that Parker's earlier model was inappropriate to the majority of women, and argued that any adequate theorisation of leisure would need to take account of two factors which are of absolutely central significance for women. The first of these is the sexual division of labour; the second is the regulation of women's sexuality.

Parker's response was to agree with some of McIntosh's specific criticisms of the model, without taking on board the broader and

more substantive issues. He also felt moved to remark that he felt McIntosh was being in some respects unduly sexist, an accusation which few male sociologists have felt inclined to level at their male colleagues. In his revision of his earlier text, he suggests that women's leisure patterns are only different from men's if women are not involved in paid work outside the home. In this case they can be dealt with in a general section on 'the unwaged'. Parker notes:

> 'Unmarried women (except most of those over pension age)
> normally have out-of-home jobs and although their leisure
> behaviour does differ in some ways from those of men, the
> nature of their work-leisure relationships is not markedly
> affected by their gender.'
> (Parker 1983, p. 62)

This most recent position indicates a refusal to accept the evidence which clearly shows that both women's position as paid workers and their access to leisure are crucially affected by gender (Deem 1982, West 1982). He goes on to state:

> 'Married women who have full- or part-time jobs may have
> husbands who share in varying degrees the household and
> childrearing tasks: if the husband's share is minimal, then
> work and leisure lives may approximate to those of an
> unmarried working woman.'
> (ibid., p.6)

This staggering misrecognition of the domestic division of labour and its impact upon women's lives leads Parker to attempt to rebut his feminist critics. His approach remains firmly committed to a model in which male waged labour is the norm and other patterns are deviations which can be fitted in by means of some

slight juggling of categories.

Kenneth Roberts' attempt to theorise leisure had a rather different starting point, although he shares with Parker an emphasis on leisure as relative freedom. Roberts' position is pluralist, and he has used this position to provide a sustained critique of a range of other approaches; namely recreation research, mass society theory and Marxist theories (or as Roberts refers to them, class domination theories) of leisure. Recreation research and mass society theory are relatively convincingly discredited. However, Roberts' critique of Marxist theories is less convincing. The problems with this lie firstly in the basing of the critique upon a rather reductive form of Marxism, and secondly with Roberts' contention that although leisure in any given society will inevitably be linked to the social system, it remains only marginally affected by society's economic and political organisation.

Roberts argues that we live in a pluralist society, in which leisure lifestyles and tastes are so diverse that they cannot be explained by recourse to a model which takes the economic and ideological domination of one class over another as its basis. Most leisure needs are met through the marketplace, where consumer sovereignty reigns. Leisure is a matter of individual choice, albeit within certain conditions. It is not seen as being completely free and autonomous, but is affected by a number

of social networks, most particularly the family.

As Deem (1988) has pointed out, it is obviously possible to examine women's leisure without doing so from a feminist perspective. Roberts uses his analysis of the family to argue that gender (rather than class, for example) is the most significant inequality in leisure. In his analysis of the impact of the family on leisure, he states:

> 'In general leisure time is not evenly distributed between
> husbands and wives. Women are very much the second class
> citizens.'
> (Roberts 1978, p.96)

In a subsequent publication, he summarises various feminist contributions to the study of leisure, including Talbot (1979) and Hunt (1980), but has a rather limited interpretation of these, arguing that given women's apparent lack of leisure when compared with men, perhaps the problem is less one of gender inequality and more one of definition. Whilst Roberts' desire to see a definition of leisure which is of relevance to women should be welcomed, it is unfortunate that this is motivated by what seems like a reluctance to believe that women simply do not have the same access to and opportunities for leisure as men do. Roberts also has a rather revealing conceptualisation of the feminist project within leisure, which few feminists would recognise:

> 'If leisure is becoming a quality of life in general, is it
> an implication that men's lives will become more like

women's, and that feminists who seek to emulate male patterns are fighting the battles of a closing era?'
(Roberts 1981, p.83)

Within Roberts' pluralist framework gender becomes simply another variable influencing leisure choices, and any engagement with questions of power is avoided. Indeed, Roberts is at great pains to point out that the impact of the variables, such as they are, should not be overstated:

> 'The arguments surrounding occupational and family determinants of leisure behaviour concern the strength of these restrictions...My own view is that, as in the case of work, the patterning effects of gender, and age, can be grossly overstated.'
> (ibid. p.84-85)

For feminist analysis, a major drawback to Roberts' pluralist approach is that the positing of leisure as an area of life shaped by a multiplicity of variables offers little explanatory power. His resistance to any analysis linking leisure to the broader economic and political forces within society shares certain characteristics with a number of other attempts to theorise leisure. Work by the Rapoports (1975) and Young and Wilmott (1973) for example emphasises the importance of the family in determining leisure experiences, yet presents the family as if it were an institution isolated from other social structures. Unlike Roberts' work, both texts also share an interpretation of history as the onward march of progress. When applied to leisure, this produces the elitist analysis that, given time, the tastes and leisure preferences of the middle

18

classes will filter down to the rest of society. Such a model not only offers an inadequate understanding of the relationships between class and culture by assuming a straightforward correlation between the two, but also largely disregards other social inequalities, notably gender and race.

Chris Rojek's (1985) examination of the major theoretical strands of leisure studies includes a discussion of women's leisure. His reworking of theories uses a case study of women's leisure as a means of demonstrating the limitations inherent in using the concept of free time as the basis for leisure theories and research. He recognises the need to consider women's leisure within 'the basic structural characteristics of leisure relations in capitalist society', yet fails to develop this into an analysis of gender. In a more recent contribution to the field of leisure studies he is editor of a collection of ten essays which:

> 'reject the assumptions that leisure relations are simply relations of freedom, self-determination, life-satisfaction and growth.'
> (Rojek, 1989, cover)

The failure to take account of the importance of power relationships between men and women seems all the more baffling in this context. Several of the nine male contributors are apparently sympathetic with the notion of gender as a division within leisure experience, but it is left to the one female contributor, Jennifer Hargreaves (see below), to develop any

sustained gender analysis.

2.3 Marxist Approches

One of the key characterisitics of Marxist theorists' approaches to leisure is their insistence upon the need to offer an historically informed analysis. However, writing from a perspective which privileges class analysis to the exclusion of other structuring divisons, Marxists' preoccupation with the social control dimension of leisure has inevitably led to a concentration upon male workers. As Chapter 3 will illustrate, historically it is working class men rather than women whose behaviour has been deemed by the ruling classes to be in need of regulation during leisure time. Women's leisure is typically less visible and certainly has rarely raised questions of public order in the way that some aspects of masculine culture still continue to do.

At their most simplistic, Marxist analyses argue that within capitalist societies the wage relationship is the major determinant of leisure. The form and nature of leisure is predicated upon the hours and type of paid work (Stedman-Jones cited in Tomlinson 1981). In adopting this perspective on leisure, women's experiences are rendered irrelevant or peripheral. Whilst men are generally seen to 'earn' leisure time through their paid work, the fragmented and amorphous nature of women's domestic work as carers (whether or not they also have

paid employment) makes it more difficult to identify time which is unambiguously free for leisure. Whilst women's role in reproducing the labour force so essential to capitalism may be referred to, this does not typically result in any sustained analysis of the differential experience of women.

However, Marxist analyses do have a great deal to offer to feminist approaches, not least because of their insistence upon regarding leisure as a social process. Their strengths lie in their concern to 'problematise' leisure, and to make explicit at least some of the power relationships which impinge upon 'free time'. Leisure is seen not as an area of individual autonomy untouched by politics, but rather as a highly political arena. Clarke and Critcher (1985) stress the importance of looking beyond the surface appearances of leisure to explore the economic, political and ideological processes which shape it, arguing:

> 'A Marxist theory must understand its (i.e. leisure's) relationship with other elements in society. We do not accept that leisure can be abstracted from these relationships for the purposes of study.'
> (Clarke and Critcher op. cit., p.41-2)

More sophisticated versions of Marxist analyses such as this do incorporate discussion of structuring determinants other than class, notably gender and race. Clarke and Critcher (1985) not only incorporate gender analysis into their useful critique of the conventional wisdom of leisure theory; they are also at pains

21

to incorporate it in their discussion of leisure in contemporary capitalist Britain. Gender is presented as a crucial determinant of leisure, and one which intersects with other social divisions. It is not simply a case of men having greater access to and resources for leisure. Clarke and Critcher are fundamentally concerned with the social meanings of leisure, and with the ways in which leisure experiences accord with dominant social definitions of appropriate female roles. Thus leisure not only reflects social divisions, it also expresses and validates them, and this expression is particularly obvious in relation to gender.

Some feminist sociological writing on sport and leisure is explicitly informed by a Marxist perspective (Hargreaves 1982), as is the very useful work carried out within the field of Cultural Studies which is discussed in greater detail below and which forms an important influence upon this research.

2.4 Feminist approaches

From the late 1970s, feminist accounts of women's leisure began to emerge as a significant, if still marginal, contribution to the theoretical writing and empirical data available on leisure. Such accounts have their roots in the broader development of feminist research within the social sciences. Whilst there is certainly no single or unified feminist approach, it is possible

to distinguish certain perspectives, purposes and aims which characterise feminist work in this area. Firstly, all share the position that women are oppressed by gender and patriarchy, and:

> 'are fully committed to a theoretical and political analysis which will point to ways of overcoming the subordinating effects of gender relations and patriarchy.'
> (Deem 1988, p. 10)

Within this context, importance is placed on enabling women to represent their experiences in their own terms (Oakley 1974, Pollert 1981). This has involved a critique of male dominated mainstream academia, arguing that the dominant approaches within the social sciences have not only largely failed to take account of gender and women's experiences, but also that their singularly masculinist perspective has resulted in a tendency to study social life as if it were constituted of separate and mutually exclusive categories of experience such as work, the family and so on. Whilst work such as that of Parker (op. cit.) seeks to examine the relationship between the two categories of work and leisure, they are still seen as distinct, if related, areas of experience, and the relationship of leisure to life experiences other than paid work is hardly considered. Even the most cursory analysis of women's lives indicates that a more useful and relevant approach involves looking at aspects of women's lives in relation to the nature of their lives as a whole. Such an holistic approach has immediately discernible advantages for the study of leisure, given that the structure of most women's lives

make it pointless for researchers to adhere to a theoretical approach which cannot take account of overlapping activities or time which is not unambiguously either work or leisure.

Feminist interest in leisure studies, and in the related area of the sociology of sport, has opened up new areas of analysis associated with those issues and preoccupations with which the women's movement has concerned itself. From this perspective, leisure and sport are identified as politica issues, and gender inequalities are seen as at least as significant an area of study as class divisions, in some analyses more so. A useful summary of the pioneering and subsequent work in this field can be found in Deem (1988).

Feminist theorists have been able to develop their analyses by drawing upon a range of empirical evidence which indicates that men and women do engage in different kinds of leisure activities, such as the the General Household Surveys of 1973 and 1983 (used in Green, Hebron and Woodward 1987 and 1990). Men report themselves to be involved in more leisure activities and to participate more frequently than women, especially in activities which take place outside of the home. Official explanations of women's low participation rates have been couched in terms of women being recreationally disadvantaged or socially and geographically deprived. This perspective was subject to a critique by Talbot (1979) in a paper comissioned by the Sports

Council/SSRC Joint Panel on Sport and Leisure Research (who would later fund the Sheffield Leisure and Gender Project). Talbot collated existing research findings which indicated the significance of gender as a structuring variable in leisure, and made a number of pertinent suggestions for future research. Feminist analyses of leisure reject the perspective which sees women as a neglected group whose 'problems' are open to resolution through piecemeal changes in social policy, a point which was made forcefully by Stanley in her important and influential paper on the 'problem' of women and leisure (1980). What has begun to emerge is a political analysis of leisure and gender linking individual women's experiences to wider social processes (Wimbush 1986, Deem 1986, Wimbush and Talbot 1988, Green, Hebron and Woodward 1990). Leisure in these approaches is not just a question of facilities or institutions; rather it is an integral part of social relations, which are characterised by inequality between men and women.

One specific area within the study of women's leisure has been the analysis of women's experiences of and participation in sport. Whilst this is not a major part of this study, the work of one author should be briefly considered here. Jennifer Hargreaves, writing from a Marxist-feminist position, has produced work which situates her investigation of women and sport within the context of women's broader leisure - and life -

experiences (1982, 1989). Important to her analysis is the social construction of gender identities, and she insists upon the usefulness of the concept of hegemony in understanding gender divisions within sport and leisure. Her work has many points of contact with the cultural studies approaches outlined below, and indeed with this study.

A small but significant strand in feminist analysis, and one which perhaps indicates a willingness to break down some traditional barriers between academic disciplines, has been work which aims to bring a historical understanding to women's contemporary position and experience (Stanley 1988, Green, Hebron and Woodward 1990). Stanley notes:

> 'Feminist leisure studies research which looks at women's lives much more 'in the round' in a contemporary setting is to be welcomed. However, this needs to be matched by an historical examination of women's lives and experiences. Neither 'leisure' nor 'work' are static features of women's lives...we cannot adequately understand now, if we do not know something about its relationship with then and about how the one became the other.'
> (Stanley 1988, p.18)

Feminist accounts share a perspective which challenges the view that social class is the major division affecting access to and participation in leisure, identifying gender and race as equally significant - and interrelated - divisions (Griffin et al. 1982). Such accounts are concerned to identify and analyse areas of common ground and areas of divergence between women. They recognise that whilst women from different class positions may be

26

unequally constrained by income levels and resources, for example, they are likely to share common constraints resulting from their position as women.

The critique of male bias in empirical work within the social sciences has had implications for the development of appropriate research methodologies (Graham 1983, Oakley 1981, Roberts 1981). With regard to the study of women's leisure, the desire to understand the social meanings which women attach to leisure has led feminist researchers to select qualitative methods such as semi-structured or unstructured interviews and participant observation (Deem 1986, Mason 1988, Wimbush 1986). Such methodological tools encourage research subjects to 'tell their own stories' in their own terms (Graham op. cit.), as will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4. A number of ethnographic studies using this approach have provided rich evidence on the leisure experiences of schoolgirls, young working class women and elderly women (McRobbie 1978, Hobson 1978, McCabe 1981, Griffiths 1988, Mason 1988), whilst simultaneously highlighting the white male bias inherent in much existing subcultural analysis.

These developments have not only made visible women's experiences of leisure; they have also indicated the need for leisure studies as a discipline to take account of gender. Bringing women's leisure into the academic field of vision had made theorising on the basis of a straightforward work-leisure dichotomy untenable.

Instead, what is beginning to emerge are more sophisticated analyses which see both work and leisure as social processes involving degrees of freedom and constraint (see 2.2). Feminist research has highlighted the fact that women's lack of time for and access to leisure cannot be adequately explained by recourse to the notion of individual choice, nor can such inequalities in relation to leisure be resolved by piecemeal initiatives. Rather it is coming to be recognised that the structuring of leisure by gender is one fundamental aspect of the social relations of patriarchal capitalism.

2.5 Cultural Studies

The preceding discussion has categorised existing theories of leisure within the framework of a sociology of leisure. However, a number of the texts referred to situate themselves within the framework of cultural studies (Clarke and Critcher 1985, Hobson 1981, McCabe 1981, McIntosh 1981, McRobbie 1978) rather than within sociology per se. Although the boundaries between these academic disciplines are becoming increasingly blurred, it is worth noting that cultural studies does have a distinct history and identifiable theoretical and empirical traditions which differ from mainstream sociology. Tomlinson (1987) summarises three major analytical concerns within cultural studies:

'The formal analysis of popular texts (films, television, magazines, comics for instance); the

> contextualising of these texts and explorations of how they are variously read; and observation and analysis of lived cultures, in an attempt to develop ethnographies of everyday practices.'
>
> (Tomlinson 1987, page 28)

Whilst theoretical debates about leisure as a conceptual category have remained marginal in the tradition of British cultural stdies (which developed principally through the work of the Centre For Cultural Studies at Birmingham University), a good deal of the work has concentrated on the analysis of specific leisure forms. Examples of this include Dorothy Hobson's work on soap opera (Hobson op.cit.) and Janice Winship and Angela McRobbie's work on women's and girls' magazines and their relationship with a 'culture of femininity' (Winship 1987, McRobbie op.cit.). Rather than being simple readings of the texts, these projects have sought to relate women's use of particular cultural forms to their broader life experiences. Furthermore, debates within the discipline about the nature of culture certainly offer insights into ways of conceptualising leisure, assuming that there is some relationship between the two. Work which seeks to develop the relationship between the analysis of culture and the study of leisure has provided some of the more exciting and thought provoking interventions into the field of leisure studies (Griffin et al op.cit., Clarke and Critcher op.cit.). This body of work analyses leisure as a social process, divided by structural inequalities, and as an

arena where those divisions are lived out, negotiated, challenged or reproduced in practice. Such an approach has many points of contact with feminist approaches to leisure which seek to understand the meaning of leisure within women's everyday lives.

2.7 Conclusion

This review has outlined some of the key developments in British leisure studies of the last twenty years. It has illustrated the ways in which traditional leisure studies, with its androcentrism and its insistence on the separation of work and leisure into discrete categories of experience, has failed to take account of the way in which gender structures leisure. Whether pluralist or Marxist in approach, research which posits paid work as the major structuring variable or determinant of leisure has rendered women's experience peripheral or invisible. Women's lower levels of participation in leisure activities and their participation in different kinds of activities from men has been regarded as a 'problem' because of its lack of fit with the male norm. Developments within feminist social sciences have led to a series of challenges being made to this prevailing male orthodoxy. Feminists have rejected the compartmentalisation of life inherent in the work-leisure dichotomy, preferring to examine the structure of women's lives as a whole, as a series of overlapping and interconnected experiences. Leisure is not viewed as a

series of activities, but as a process which is both determined by and contributes to the existing social structure. The concept of partriarchy is central to feminist theory and analysis. Gender is a fundamental division in society and hence in leisure, and it intersects with other social divisions, notably social class and race. Feminist approaches share with cultural studies a conviction that leisure needs to be examined as a historical process in order to understand contemporary definitions, understandings and experiences of leisure.

CHAPTER 3: <u>THE HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN'S LEISURE</u>

3.1 Introduction

As has been indicated in the literature review, any attempt to study leisure adequately recognises that it is a social process, and as such is shaped by the broader social context. Leisure is situated within social, economic and political relations which have a historical dynamic. Whilst this research is essentially concerned with women's experiences of leisure within a very specific period and locale, it is important to acknowlege the extent to which current understandings and experiences are historically prefigured. The social and historical changes that have taken place in Britain since the industrial revolution have structured the way in which leisure is now shaped and perceived. This applies not only to provision for leisure and the material resources available to particular social groups, but also to our broader definitions of leisure and our understanding of what leisure is, or ought to be.

One of the most fascinating feminist projects in recent years has been the uncovering of hitherto denied or obscured women's histories. Whilst there is a growing body of work which examines women's paid employment, or domestic labour, or position in the family, there is comparatively little which addresses itself to

women's leisure. Additionally, whilst there is a good deal of historical material on leisure now available, much of it from a Marxist perspective, this rarely tells us much about women's experiences. As Clarke and Critcher (1985) comment, the specific focus of much of this work on the institutionalised forms of leisure means that 'the history of leisure is predominantly a history of male leisure.' It is reasonable to assume that in the past, as now, relatively few women were engaging in organised and visible leisure activities, and that for most women leisure did not consist of discrete periods of time spent in public places. Radical historians have concentrated on the relationship between social class and the regulation of leisure, and have largely omitted women from their analyses. The history of leisure has tended to treat male experience as the norm, and much work on this particular area of women's leisure remains to be done. However, it is possible to piece together something of women's historical experience of leisure by turning to a broad range of source material. Studies such as Diana Gittin's Fair Sex (1982) and Elizabeth Robert's A Woman's Place (1984) which focus on one aspect of women's lives in the context of the broader social framework offer interesting and significant insights into the leisure experiences of earlier generations of women. Similarly, Coalter and Parry (1982) have noted the relevance of community studies such as Coal Is Our Life (Dennis, Henriques and

Slaughter, 1969) and Middletown (Lynd and Lynd, 1929). Valerie
Hey utilises the social anthropological data of the Mass
Observation 'Worktown' study in her examination of drinking
(1986) and Liz Stanley has identified the rich data to be found
in primary sources such as letters and diaries (1988).

Even drawing on such a range of sources, the material is
fragmentary and highly selective, with some obvious omissions.
Not the least of these is the lack of material available on black
women's leisure experiences. Just as women's history has only
comparatively recently started to be written, similarly the
history of black people in Britain has been largely suppressed or
ignored. A further omission, by and large, is the recent history
of women's leisure.

3.2 The Nineteenth Century: Industrialisation and Leisure

Amongst leisure historians there is an apparent consensus about
the key historical periods. Whilst the precise dates may vary,
the majority take as their starting point the Industrial
Revolution. (Rojek, 1985, is one notable exception, arguing that
in fact we need to go back and study the medieval period). Much
interesting work on leisure has been concerned with the impact of
industrialisation. Leisure is not ususally the primary focus of
such work but is examined in terms qf its relationship with paid
work (Thompson, 1968; Hobsbawm, 1960). The changing nature of

employment is fundamental to the development of our understanding of leisure. However, the preoccupation with social class, important in itself, does mean that relatively little attention has been paid to the different experiences of leisure for men and women. In fact it seems either to be implicitly assumed that all workers were male, or else little concession is made to the fact that the experiences of women workers were not (and are not) identical to those of men.

Certainly, 'The Industrial Revolution marks the most fundamental transformation of human life in the history of the world recorded in written documents'. (Hobsbawm, 1960, p.13). This fundamental transformation involved for many the radical restructuring of time, together with the separation of home and the workplace. Numerous commentators have contrasted the nature of people's lives in pre-industrial society, where boundaries between work and leisure were blurred, with the more highly organised and regulated division in time and space brought by industrialisation. This does not mean the changes were always straightforward or smoothly effected. There is evidence of resistance to these changes: for example, workers' persistence in taking Monday as a holiday (Saint Monday) was a source of irritation to many of the new industrialists (Reid, 1986), who finally sought to combat this by introducing the Saturday half-day. By and large, however, the late eighteenth and early

nineteenth centuries saw continuing change, in particular the consolidation of the division between work and leisure. Attempts were made to 'tame' the workforce, attempts which spread beyond working hours and into leisure time (Clarke and Critcher, 1985). These centered on the need to encourage (or inculcate) good timekeeping and sobriety.

Clearly, not everyone experienced these changes in the same way. Rowbotham (1973) has pointed to the differences between the lives of working class and middle class women. By the early eighteenth century the middle class were for the first time beginning to see themselves as a class. Whilst middle class men gained status from their own industry, this was not true of their wives, whose leisure was seen as further proof of their husbands' status. Women in the emergent middle class withdrew first from labour outside the home, then from work within it. Their daughters began to be educated for leisure: 'The girls learned accomplishments, the boys received an academic education' (Rowbotham, 1973, p.23). By the late 1800s:

> 'Although the circumstances of middle class women improved with the growing power in society of their men, their relationship was one of increasing economic dependence. In this sense patriarchy was strengthened. The women were part of the men's belongings, their leisure, the sign of his conspicuous consumption'
> (ibid., p.47)

In their discussion of the 1840s, Clarke and Critcher develop the argument that it was in this period that leisure emerged as a

discrete area separate from work:

> 'This antithesis of work and leisure (from which so many
> contemporary accounts begin) is not a given social fact, but
> an historical creation.'
> (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, p.58).

Given that at this time factory workers were working a six-day,
seventy hour week, it should be pointed out that workers'
opportunities for leisure were limited. By the mid nineteenth
century the majority of the British population lived in towns and
cities. Increasing urbanisation contributed to the shape of
leisure. For most people 'life was now dominated by the place
and pace of work' (Walvin 1978). Workers not only lacked time
for recreation, they also lacked facilities, including open
spaces. We can speculate that the lack of time was likely to be
particularly acute for women working both inside and outside the
home. Similarly, what Walvin identifies as the major leisure
pursuits during this period, namely organised drinking and
prostitution, offered little scope for women:

> 'Both drink and commercial sex catered primarily for the
> pleasures of men...Women had in general to create a
> recreational world from within the limitations of family
> life.
> (Walvin op. cit. p.46)

In practice both these recreations were often strongly associated
with and centered upon that bastion of masculine culture, the
public house. As Valerie Hey (1986) points out, the link between
prostitution and drinking is a legacy which still affects women's
access to pubs today. The nature of public houses, the reality

of women's responsibilities for home and childcare, and the dominant ideologies of feminine respectability and morality combined to ensure that when women did drink alcohol this was more likely to be done in the relative privacy of their homes or stair-head drinking clubs than in pubs.

It is also important to take account of the difference in the role of the home for working and middle class families. For middle-class men, the home was increasingly portrayed as the site of much of their leisure. Working-class men in the main sought leisure outside the home, which was likely to be cramped and overcrowded. For both working-class and middle-class women, escape from the home in search of leisure was not a realistic proposition. Rather, the Victorian era saw the development of the home represented as a haven, the place to which men returned tired at the end of the day's toil. The role of the wife was that of the angel of the house: virtuous, respectable and ready to provide comfort and succour to her husband. It is difficult to gauge how accurately this sums up middle-class life by the mid 1800s. Whatever the reality, it was and arguably continues to be, a pervasive ideology. However, for working-class women, this rosy if restricted vision bore little resemblance to their own experience of almost relentless work, paid and unpaid.

Industrialists were often initially keen to employ women (and children), seeing them as easier to discipline than men. But one

employer commented: 'We can get the lads on Monday, but not the women and girls who are more "giddy"' (quoted in Reid, 1986, p109). As the author points out:

> 'For wives such "giddyness" was in fact very sensible if their wage only supplemented the family income and they needed the Monday to perform domestic tasks.'
> (ibid.)

This provides a telling insight into the way in which many working-class women spent their so-called 'free time' outside paid employment.

Apart from the considerable changes wrought by industrialisation in terms of the amount and organisation of time available for leisure, there were obviously changes in the ways in which such time was spent. For the working-class in particular, a tightened control over their working hours spilled over to some extent into their non-working hours. The possibilities for pre-industrial pastimes were eroded and the drive for 'rational recreation' began.

An illuminating discussion of the process of rational recreation can be found in Cunningham (1980). However, Cunningham concentrates almost exclusively on class relations to the exclusion of gender relations. Whilst he fairly contends that rational recreation was a 'crude attempt at social control' by imposing middle-class values on the working-class, he questions whether it can be reduced to just this. It was also motivated by

a paternalistic drive:

> 'to open up to the working class cultural and aesthetic
> experiences from which they had been previously excluded.
> Books, museums, exhibitions, all these cultural goods were
> in a sense to be laid at the feet of a presumably grateful
> working class.'
>
> (Cunningham op. cit., p.91)

Working-class leisure was seen by some members of the middle-

class as a problem, which they perceived could be solved by

expanding their own recreation ideals. Of course, this

essentially patronising and reformist approach was not always

welcomed by the recipients of initiatives developed through the

Church, mechanics' institutes or temperance leagues. As a model,

this paternalistic mode of provision was taken up by local

authorities when they began to levy a rate for some leisure

provision, notably parks, libraries, baths and museums.

It is difficult to assess the impact of these early developments

upon women. The 'problem' of working-class leisure was seen

mainly in terms of public disorder. Therefore it seems that the

implicit concern of middle-class reformers was less the working

class, rather working class men. Women were less likely to

engage in rowdy or drunken behaviour in public spaces and

therefore were presumably seen as less of a problem. As Clarke

and Critcher (1985) have pointed out, whilst working-class men

were encouraged towards rational recreation, working-class women

were inculcated in the ways of 'rational domesticity'. Thus some

middle-class women, denied the opportunity of engaging in the public sphere of paid employment, took it upon themselves to do the 'good work' of visiting the homes of the poor, to educate the women in the ways of good housekeeping. This was largely done through philanthropic societies, usually organised and run by men. Lewis (1984) notes that this kind of philanthropic work:

> 'involved a fundamental contradiction whereby middle-class women left their own homes in order to tell working-class women to stay in theirs.'
> (p.92)

If the latter part of the nineteenth century saw the development of leisure provision 'on the rates' by the local state, it was also marked by new forms of commercial leisure provision. Music hall, circus, fairs, horse racing and the production of literature for a mass market all became highly capitalised (Cunningham op. cit.). One area of expansion which was of particular importance for leisure was the rail network. The availability of affordable rail travel enabled a massive increase in family excursions to the seaside or countryside, an important development for women. This trend towards family oriented activity did in part fit with the middle-class ideology of rational or morally improving pastimes. However,

> 'The railway gave an enormous boost to unrespectable as well as respectable leisure. There were excursions to public hangings and fairs.'
> (Cunningham op. cit., p.159)

Another feature of this period was the growth in organised sport.

Sport grew in popularity, but increased participation was clearly structured along class and gender lines. The historical development of organised (male) sport has been a favourite subject of leisure historians (Clarke and Critcher op. cit., Cunningham op. cit., Dunning and Sheard, 1979). Women's sport has received substantially less attention. On the whole, opportunities and provision lagged far behind those for men. Two partial exceptions were tennis and cycling:

> 'In one major regard, tennis was unlike other games: it soon became a game for women as well as men (though female clothing severely restricted their mobility).'
> (Walvin, 1978 p.93)

Cycling became the focus for wider political debate:

> 'Cycling was thought to be unladylike (originally of course only ladies tended to ride); it was claimed to be unhealthy, producing various unspecified gynaecological effects, and undecorous, resulting in changes in female clothes.'
> (ibid.)

Despite this, women's cycling flourished among upper- and middle-class women, and tennis and croquet were also available to those women who could afford to play. One sport, swimming, was potentially available to women (at least in financial terms) through the provision of municipal swimming baths. As Walvin (op. cit.) points out, the number of women who were actually able to make use of these facilities was probably low:

> 'It seems unlikely that such pleasures came the way of poorer women whose time and efforts were often totally consumed by family life and whose recreations, as

contemporary photographs show, took place in the crowded streets and alleys where they lived.'
(p.94)

The changes in leisure outlined above do point to the nineteenth century as a period of expansion in leisure provision, both commercial and state subsidised, and as a period during which leisure increasingly came to be defined in opposition to paid work and the work place. Yet for most women, and for wives and mothers in particular, the latter was simply not the case. Middle-class women were by and large excluded from paid work, while working-class women who worked outside the home were ususally responsible for the work of running the home and looking after the family. Indeed, the Victorian ideal of hearth and home promoted this as women's primary role, with paid work coming a poor second. Added to this was the fact that working women were viewed as competitors by their male counterparts, and demarcation between 'men's work' and 'women's work' gained a foothold. This was followed by a downgrading of much of women's work, which did nothing to alleviate the existing inequalities in wages.

Social changes were encouraging the compartmentalisation of life into discrete areas, but this separation must have meant little to many women. Furthermore, the new kinds of leisure on offer were of limited relevance. They assumed time being available to engage in activities away from home, and many were organised by the fundamental need to make profit. Working-class women simply

did not have this kind of free time, and were unlikely to have money to spare for spending on their own leisure. Whilst middle-class women might have had easier access to spending money, there is little doubt that many of them lived in households characterised by a maldistribution of family resources and in which they were financially dependent upon their husbands (Lewis op. cit.).

3.3 The Twentieth Century: continuity and change

Essentially, the twentieth century saw the continuation of the patterns established following industrialisation. Work and leisure were maintained as discrete categories. In terms of leisure provision, the expansion of newer forms in both the commercial and public sector was matched by the persistence of some elements of traditional working-class culture. So, for example, Roberts (1984) highlights the continuing importance of female friendships and family and social networks. She also comments on how these were often a source of male disapproval.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the newer forms such as dancing co-existed with walking and church-going as the most popular pastimes. Women's access to each of these varied, and for young single women was sometimes dependent upon the availability of a male relative to act as chaperon. Women had to be careful to appear respectable at all times and leisure was an

area in which women's reputations were closely guarded. Dancing
in particular was rather risque, given the opportunities it
provided for meeting members of the opposite sex. However,
dances were often organised by churches, in which cases conduct
was fairly closely supervised. Many young single women would go
to at least two dances each week, and despite parental efforts
'managed to find ways of walking home with their men
unsupervised' (Roberts op. cit., p.71). Although drinking had
few rivals as a form of entertainment, the pub remained a largely
male domain. Roberts comments on this, noting that pubs were
'mostly for men or a small number of older, bolder women' (ibid).
The one area of public and social life where women outnumbered
men was religion and the importance of the church, particularly
in rural area, as a legitimate social centre for women should not
be underestimated.

The early twentieth century saw the development of an active
feminist movement, most visibly the Suffragettes. Although the
most obvious outcome was the granting of the vote to women over
the age of thirty five in 1918, the campaigns were not solely
about the vote, but encompassed such things as the need to reform
the marriage laws, and early wages for housework campaigns. There
was discontent among some middle-class women with the fact that
social conventions more or less barred them from paid employment.
The status of middle-class men was confirmed by their ability to

support a wife and family, and the role of the middle class wife was to devote herself to ensuring that the house was well kept and the needs of other family members attended to. As Cicely Hamilton wrote in 1909, 'Boys are to be happy in themselves, the girls are to make others happy' (cited in Thompson 1975, p.41). Working-class women's campaigns were more likely to concern their own paid employment an in some instances were linked with trade unionism, despite the prevalent opinion among many male workers that women should be excluded from the union movement.

The 1914-18 war brought considerable social changes, not the least of which concerned women's paid employment. Women who had never before been employed were encouraged into war work, and women had the opportunity to work in a wide range of jobs:

> 'One quarter of the 1,600,000 domestic servants took their chnce to switch to the new openings for women in munitions factories, in transport and on the land. There was also an influx of women into the civil service and commercial occupations.'
> (Thompson op. cit., p.267)

Not all aspects of doing 'men's work' were positive. Rowbotham notes how protective legislation was set aside, and how women's health suffered through their participation in heavy or dangerous trades. Where women were employed in jobs that had been hitherto mostly or exclusively male, they were generally paid less than men. But,

> 'there were significant changes in all women's attitudes to work. The war broke down many of the assumptions which had

46

persisted throughout the industrial revolution.'
(Rowbotham 1973, p.111)

Thompson (op. cit.) also comments on the impact of the war on sexual morality, a kind of throwing caution to the wind, with a high illegitimacy rate as one indication of this. However, on the whole, the wartime changes in both employment patterns and sexual behaviour were relatively short lived. Men returning from the services quickly regained their industrial work. The illegitimacy rate fell, and sexual behaviour returned more or less to the pre-war pattern. Rowbotham (op. cit.) argues persuasively that the sexual liberation of the post-war period was extremely superficial. There was still a widespread ignorance of contraception, for example, and censorious attitudes about women's pre-marital and extra-marital sexual activity were still very much the norm. In effect, the 'new freedom' really only applied to a small number of women, who were predominantly young and middle-class.

During the inter-war years, traditional leisure pursuits faced continuing competition from newer commercialised forms. This period saw a reduction in employment hours, so at least some sections of society had more time free for leisure. The average worker was employed for just over 50 hours per week in 1910, compared with a typical 60 to 70 hours during the nineteenth century. Many workers had at least a half-day free on Saturdays.

Of course, the gender differences in time available for leisure were entrenched, with the vast majority of women being responsible for domestic labour on top of any paid work.

The newer forms of leisure provision in the commercial sector were geared towards consumption on a mass scale. Perhaps the most significant development in provision was the cinema. The cinema was qualitatively different from any other public leisure venues, in so far as it did not share the rather dubious reputations of public houses and music halls. (In fact, soem music hall owners encouraged a certain number of female customers in order to render their venues more respectable. This was acceptable only if it did not impinge upon the male clientele's enjoyment). This was an important consideration for women, who could go there without bringing their virtue into question. Another important fact was that the cinema was comparatively cheap, and so it was possible for whole families to attend:

> 'By the 1920s a new working-class habit was developing, that
> of going together to the cinema on a Saturday night.'
> (Roberts 1984, p.123)

The cinema served an important function in so far as it could sometimes be used to keep men out of the pub. Gittins (1982) links a decline in pub attendance and drinking with an increase in cinema going and the establishment of the cinema as a couple or family based leisure institution.

The inter-war years did see a growth of more family oriented

leisure pursuits, alongside an increased emphasis on the home as a site for leisure. This included the wider availability of radios, gramophones and records, books and magazines. In the early days of radio, receivers were prohibitively expensive, but by the 1930s, 75 percent of all families owned a radio. This was the first time in history that the majority of the population were literate, and there was continued expansion in the press, in the use of public libraries and the sale of books.

The first real growth in publishing for women, at least in terms of periodical publishing, was during the late Victorian years, with forty eight new titles being launched between 1880 and 1900 (White 1970). However, during the inter-war years, it was not just the amount but also the nature of such publishing which changed. Social and economic changes produced a shift away from the predominantly upper-class 'quality' periodicals toward publications aimed at the middle and lower middle-classes. These included many titles which we still see today, such as Good Housekeeping, Woman's Journal, Woman and Woman's Own. The majority of these publications were primarily concerned with domestic matters, with home and family, providing practical suggestions on how to be a successful home-maker, wife and mother. Domestic labour was glorified, and a romantic version of home and family life prevailed. The magazines were a mixture of features, recipes, knitting, sewing, fashion and beauty, short

stories and problem solving. In essence, the first mass circulation weeklies, such as Woman and Woman's Own, have changed little since their inception (Ballaster et. al. 1991).

Documentation of the increased emphasis on family based leisure tends to underemphasise the way in which leisure still tended to be strictly gender segregated, and the extent to which it was made possible by women's work in the home. There continued to be a significant imbalance between men and women in the amount of time available for their leisure. For most women, their limited free time was much more likely to be fragmented, odd bits of time here and there, rather than being neatly compartmentalised as substantial interludes of time free from paid work. However, the move towards smaller families did mean that at least some women were likely to spend a smaller proportion of their lives having and bringing up children.

It is difficult to assess how widespread, in terms of class and region, these changes were. In her study of working-class wives, carried out during the 1930s, Margery Spring Rice found many of her 1,250 research subjects to be living in almost unremitting drudgery, as the following selection of quotes illustrates:

> 'Leisure is a comparable term. Anything which is slightly less arduous or gives a change of scene or occupation from the active hard work is leisure.'

> '....out of necessity to rest her legs it seems most leisure will involve having a sit down. Real breaks away from the house are very infrequent and then she often has her children with her.'

'An overwhelming proportion say that they spend their leisure time in sewing and doing other household jobs, slightly different from the ordinary work of cooking and house cleaning.'

(Spring Rice, 1939, p.99)

With regard to specific leisure activities, the cinema was rarely mentioned, and 'many women said they had never been to the cinema because it was too expensive'. 'The wireless' was also beyond the means of the poorer homes. Some of the rural women mentioned walking, gardening or going to church or chapel as their leisure interests. Women with children were usually only able to have some rest once their children were in bed, by which time they themselves would have been on their feet for twelve to fourteen hours.

Leaving the home during the day would either be for essential errands, shopping and so on, or might involve a visit to the welfare clinic. Spring Rice attributes the success of these clinics at least partly to the fact that women greatly enjoyed an afternoon away from the home in the company of 'kindly doctors and nurses, as well as other young women with whom she can talk (ibid). This is a prime example of women creating their own leisure in the face of adverse conditions and an illustration of the way in which women might gain some vicarious pleasures for themselves through their roles as mothers. Another way in which some women were able to carve out a little time and space for themselves was by visiting friends and neighbours who were often

in a similar position. The importance of female support networks is clear. Other trips outside the home were few and far between, particularly in the evenings when a woman could not leave the children 'unless her husband undertakes to keep house for one evening a week whilst she goes to the pictures or for a walk' (ibid). Even this small degree of co-operation was not always forthcoming, and women's difficulties could be compounded by the fact that many of them did not have any suitable clothes for a day or evening out.

What Spring-Rice's study highlights is the way in which access to the expanding leisure market was differentiated by gender and by social class. Spring Rice had very clear ideas about what steps should be taken to improve the lot of working-class women. She suggested the provision of well equipped commercial wash-houses and bake-houses which would relieve some of the drudgery and allow women to meet other women. She also advocated local women's clubs, near to home, where women could go to seek 'rest and companionship, cultural and recreational occupation and a blessed change of scene' (ibid). Finally she advocated that housewives should have at least one week of paid holiday per year. Modest though these demands were, over fifty years on few have been met.

The expansion within the leisure sector generally and the growth of highly capitalised forms available to a mass audience could be

interpreted as indicating the 'growth' of leisure. What is important is the precise nature of the leisure which was expanding. By the mid-twentieth century, the commercial sector was by and large established as the place where leisure needs were met. Other forms of provision, notably through the local state, seem still to have been predominantly baths, parks and so on. The voluntary sector was a significant leisure provider, and although this too was structured along lines of class and gender, women do have a history of involvement in voluntary organisations, clubs and societies. Nevertheless, for the majority of people, leisure was increasingly commercialised. Provision was profit oriented, and there was a growing emphasis on advertising as a means of reaching consumers. One crucial consideration that is often missing from conventional accounts of the commercialisation of leisure is the way in which women and men have been differentially constructed as consumers. Whilst men were being addressed in their own right as consumers of leisure, women were primarily addressed as consumers within the domestic sphere. Women's spending power was tied into their role as home makers. The exception to this were young, single, employed women, and as Rowbotham (1973) points out:

> 'in fact changes in the leisure industry meant that cosmetics, cheaper clothes and the film industry expanded along with the earning power of young women white-collar workers.'
> (p.125)

Gender was not the only division in the leisure market:

> 'Region, class and gender were factors which differentiated access to the market and its partial scope.'
> (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, p.75)

As has been noted, the First World War brought about a disruption to conventional morality, at least for some sections of the populace. To some extent the same was true of the Second World War. There is also no doubt that once again one of the most important implications for women was their participation in the labour force. Many more women became accustomed to earning their own income and to having some of the associated freedoms, albeit within a climate of wartime austerity. For the first time many of them were solely responsible for their families. This posed obvious problems once the war was over and the man returned, as a letter written to a women's magazine at the time illustrates:

> 'I am one of the many women whose husbands have returned from the forces and who suddenly find themselves without the crowding activities forced upon them during the war...Now that I am solely a housewife again, I am finding life very quiet.'
> (Everywoman 1946, quoted in White, 1970, p.133)

'The Lady' also comments on the problem of how women are to gain acceptance into civilian life for newer modes of behaviour in the area of leisure:

> 'The attitudes of women of all classes to the 'local' has changed in the war years. Girls in the services, away from home, have learned to use the public houses and to go to them with men friends in a decorous way, and it is unlikely

that when these girls marry or get into civilian employment again they will be willing to forgo these cheerful meetings.
                              (ibid)

The popular magazines offered a range of advice on personal and emotional problems. However, in relation to women's employment, most followed a traditional line and discouraged women from continuing to work outside the home. With the men home again, women were under pressure to return to the pre-war pattern, although of course many women continued to work from economic necessity. A few magazines, certainly the minority, did put forward the opinion that women should be able to combine a home and family with a career if they wished. It is worth noting that many of the debates around married women's right to employment took firmly for granted that such employment was an outside interest (i.e. outside the primary interest of home and family) and not a career.

Though wartime austerity continued through the 1940s and early 1950s, during the war itself leisure had been seen as an important element in keeping spirits high, and in the post war period:

> 'it was perhaps because of continuing hardships that enjoyment became a national obsession in the late 1940s... the immediate post-war years were a boom period for the leisure industries.'
>   (Walvin, 1978, p.149)

Whilst this is undoubtedly true, there is also no doubt that significant sections of society, including many women, were not

fully able to take advantage of the boom. One activity which did

retain its popularity with (predominatly working-class) women was

cinema going, with 1946 being a record year for attendances. The

1940s also saw the highest ever public attendances at football

matches. Following the 1938 Holidays With Pay Act, more and more

people went away on holidays, usually to seaside resorts in

family groups. However, this was still beyond the financial

reach of many: in 1949 three quarters of families with three or

more children took their holidays at home (Walvin op. cit.).

From the fifties onwards Britain entered a period of considerable

social and economic change. A higher proportion of women in the

labour force meant a rise in family incomes. The labour market

had changed in other ways too:

> 'Unemployment effectively disappeared during the war and
> remained scarely significant during the 1950s, a decade when
> consumer spending almost doubled.'
> (Walvin op. cit. p.152)

There was increased spending on non-essential consumer durables

manufactured in the new light industries and promoted by

advertising. Women as consumers continued to be addressed as

keepers of the family purse. A point worth emphasising is the

extent to which household artefacts were marketed as leisure

goods for women. Presenting women's work as leisure was perhaps

epitomised by one manufacturer who named a model of gas cooker

the 'Leisure' cooker, each one having this rather questionable

title printed on it. This is a particularly unsubtle example of a prevalent trend, perpetuating the idea that women's domestic work is not work at all.

One crucial feature of the post-war British economic expansion was the encouragement and subsequent direct recruitment of workers from the West Indies. As Fryer (1984) points out, there have been black people living in Britain for almost five hundred years. The first wave of post-war immigrants arrived in Britain in the late 1940s and during the following ten years, some 125,00 West Indians settled here. By 1955 there were also around 55,000 immigrants from the Indian sub-continent. The majority of these immigrant workers had to settle for low paid and low status jobs - jobs which as Fryer points out, the local white population did not want. They and their families faced direct discrimination in terms of housing and employment. They also encountered racist attitudes from the majority of the white population, and physical or verbal abuse from some.

Clarke and Critcher (1985) affirm that the 'shameful history of immigration to Britain' has had an influence on leisure during the last thirty years. They suggest that this influence has taken two forms: first, the development of cultural ghettoes whereby members of ethnic minorities necessarily preserved and developed their own culture separate from the mainstream racist white culture; and second, the development of ethnic

entrepreneurship within the leisure market, mostly centred around food.

Social historians who cover the post-war period are careful to point out that much of the growth in consumption was based on a massive rise in consumer credit. Walvin (op. cit.) lists the most important material acquisitions of the period as cars, motorcycles, televisions, irons, fridges and washing machines. No doubt these did bring positive changes to family life, and presumably the improved and more widely available domestic appliances did lighten women's workload. In terms of leisure, cars and televisions were important for family leisure, although this is not to presuppose that all family members had equal access to them. The continuing shift was clearly towards privatised domestic consumption as leisure. Public attendance at the cinema and at sporting events declined. In fact sport itself changed dramatically with the advent of televised sport and the increasing importance of advertising and sponsorship.

Certainly, the decline in cinema going had greater implications for women than did the fall in football spectatorship. Despite the shift towards home-based leisure, there was still a market for an activity which appealed mainly to working-class women. Bingo became extremely popular, being one of the few (fairly) socially acceptable ways for women to spend their leisure time outside the home. Like other forms of gambling it also offered

the potential for winning. Neither periodic moral panics over women supposedly gambling away the housekeeping money nor the dismissal of the game itself as 'mindless' by the uninitiated served to diminish its popularity.

The success of bingo is a telling instance of the drive within the private sector to develop profitable leisure provision. By the latter part of the twentieth century, the market had come to dominate leisure provision, with most people turning to the commercial sector to satisfy their needs or desires. More sophisticated targetting and the advent of niche marketing has lead to an increasing segmentation of the leisure market, and the incorporation of women into the categorisation in so far as they are consumers themselves or might influence the spending choices of others. The male stranglehold upon sport and public leisure has been challenged and is breaking down, but available figures indicate that there are still considerable differences between male and female participation, as Chapter Five will indicate.

3.4 Conclusion

Attempting to uncover the history of women's leisure is a difficult task, given the paucity of material available. The process of industrialisation brought changes in the lives of the majority of the British population and provided the framework within which we still understand and define leisure. The

separation of work and leisure into discrete categories means that women's leisure, as well as men's, came to be defined in relation to paid work. The sexual division of labour and the ideological location of women firmly within the domestic sphere (regardless of their actual employment status) rendered leisure a problematic concept for women. In practice, women's responsibility for home and family has meant that most women have never had the same kind of unambiguously free time as men, nor have they generally had access to the same degree of spending power. Whilst there are exceptions to these generalisations, an examination of the histories of working-class and middle-class women point to two things. Firstly, that women's opportunities for leisure have been considerably more restricted than those for men of similar status, and secondly that women's leisure needs have rarely been understood or met.

CHAPTER 4: <u>THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL WORK</u>

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology adopted for this study, and sets it in the context of existing approaches to the collection and analysis of data on leisure. It locates the study within broader debates about the development of feminist research methodologies within social science research. The relationship between this small scale detailed study and the larger study of which it forms a part is explained, as is the specific process of selecting case studies. The various stages of data collection are described and evaluated.

4.2 The relationship of the research to the Leisure and Gender project

As the introduction to this thesis indicates, this qualitative study forms a subsection of a larger research project which took place in the Department Of Applied Social Studies, Sheffield City Polytechnic between 1984 and 1987. The project, on Leisure and Gender, was funded by the joint Sports Council/E.S.R.C Panel on Leisure and Recreation Research, and the findings were presented to the Panel in 1987. The methodology and empirical work outlined here followed from and was developed out of the findings of a quantitative survey of the leisure lifestyles of 700 Sheffield

women, which provided a substantial body of statistical evidence on the impact of gender upon leisure. Although the project was titled 'Leisure and Gender', the research team decided very early on in the research to use the project as an opportunity to focus on women's experiences, and women's perceptions of the impact of gender upon leisure. It was felt that what little empirical research on leisure actually existed was almost exclusively male in its emphasis. The project provided a long overdue opportunity to at least partially redress the balance, and for this reason the entire survey sample was female. Before planning the survey in detail, discussions were held with local leisure providers and groups of local women in order to develop a survey questionnaire which was sensitive to women's experience. Questions which asked about "leisure" were kept to a minimum, as the available literature had shown this not to be a useful concept for many women. Instead women were asked about the structure of their lives, their social circumstances, their work and other commitments, their spare time and so on.

Survey methods are open to criticism for their positivistic bias, in generating descriptive data which have the spurious appearance of objectivity. However, the lack of empirical data on women's leisure made this kind of general mapping out of women's lives and the place of leisure within them an important starting point. My analysis of the Sheffield survey yielded a very considerable

amount of quantitative data which covered the amount and availability of women's free time, how it is spent and the constraints upon it. The survey also provided some information on women's attitudes to various leisure related issues. Writers such as Jayaratne (1983) have stressed the importance for feminist research of accumulating quantitative data on women. It is precisely their apparent objectivity which makes such data persuasive and influential on policy makers and public opinion. The scope for making comparisons and generalisations from quantitative data make them useful in identifying strategies for change, one important defining characteristic of feminist research.

However, there are limitations in using a survey to study women's leisure, some of which are inherent in the survey method and some as a consequence of the complex nature of women's leisure as a subject for investigation. For example, surveys can only provide fairly simplistic information about women's perceptions of leisure, and may not be very useful in gathering information about potentially sensitive issues, such as the impact of a male partner's behaviour upon women's leisure experiences. Surveys can compile statistical data on participation in a range of activities, but would not elicit the differential experiences within a category which was ostensibly a single activity, such as 'going out for a drink' or 'reading a book'. Surveys are also

generally less able than other methods to explore the complex patterns of negotiations and interactions which result in measureable participation, or the impact of wider prevailing norms and values. For this, qualitative methods are much more illuminating.

4.3 The Qualitative Tradition

This section aims to outline the rationale for the selection of qualitative research techniques in this study. The original survey data had indicated that some of the most significant influences on women's opportunities for and participation in leisure were their social class, level of household and personal income, employment status, age, marital status and stage in the family life cycle. The qualitative stage was designed to go beyond this factual data to elicit more in-depth information on women's perceptions about their experiences of leisure and about the social meanings which they attach to leisure.

The methodology adopted combines small scale social science research with the specific ethnographic perspective developed at the Centre For Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham (Willis 1980), but based on much earlier antecedents. The work of the Chicago School in the 1920s and 30s was pioneering in its use of qualitative methodology, specifically participant observation. This was then developed by sociologists such as Becker and

Strauss, and was later taken up by British sociologists including Stanley Cohen (Willis, op.cit.). At least in its early stages this essentially ethnographic work was, however, largely developed as a method through which 'outsiders' looked in on other groups or communities, as such sharing with quantitative methodology an approach which objectified the subjects of the research. Later work, including Willis' own development of this approach, contain some important points of common ground with the feminist approaches which began to emerge during the 1970s and 1980s.

Much of the early writing on feminist methodology arose as a response to the masculine bias within traditional sociology, and the androcentric methods of investigation which were integral to much of it. Whilst it would be inaccurate to make claims for any single template for 'feminist research', it is possible, as was indicated in Chapter 2, to identify a number of key concerns which certainly by the time the empirical work for this study was undertaken, had emerged as likely to characterise a feminist approach within sociological investigation. These characteristics, outlined briefly below, were influential in formulating the research framework for the Leisure and Gender project as a whole, and for this particular qualitative study. The qualitiative research framework was devised during 1984, and is in part reflective of the arguments which were current at that

time. Debates about feminist method, methodology and epistemology are still very much alive (Harding 1987, Smith 1987, Stanley 1991) and since this study was undertaken, a degree of reflection and re-assessment of the mid-eighties conventional wisdom has moved debates about a feminist standpoint and a plurality of feminist approaches forward (see for example Ramazanoglu's and Gelthorpe's response to Hammersley in Sociology Vol.26 No.2 1992), whilst retaining some basic defining principles and aims. One such fundamental principle of feminist research is that simply to add women into traditional research methodology would not serve either women or sociology particularly well. In fact,

> 'women's perspective [...] discredits sociology's claim to constitute an objective knowledge independent of the sociologists' situation.'
> (Smith 1987, p.91)

What is needed then is research 'for' women rather than 'on' women, research which serves the need to change the status quo and which contributes to the empowerment and emancipation of women. The objectives of feminist sociological inquiry become then the critical examination of sociological phenomena which women want and need, which serve the interests of women. The current project then shares with other feminist research on leisure a commitment to

> 'a theoretical and political analysis which will point to ways of overcoming the subordinating effects of gender relations and patriarchy.'
> (Deem 1988, p.10)

Feminist research shares with other forms of critical social research,

> 'a critical-dialectical perspective which attempts to dig beneath the surface of historically specific, oppressive social systems.'
> (Harvey 1990, p.1)

One enduring concern within social science research is the question of objectivity and bias. Feminist approaches share a belief that, regardless of the particular research tools or methods which are utilised, research can never be truly objective, and that partiality or subjectivity should be acknowledged and made explicit. An emphasis on the social relations of research, and a concern with the power relations therein, mean that it is impossible to regard the sociologist as an impartial or neutral enquirer. Feminist research is certainly not value free, nor should it pretend to be so. Rather it is, ideally,

> 'a reflexive sociology in which the sociologist takes her own experiences seriously and incorporates them into her work.'
> (Roberts 1981, p.15)

As Harding (op. cit.) states, it is necessary for feminists to avoid a stance that

> 'attempts to make the researcher's cultural beliefs and practices invisible whilst simultaneously skewering the research objects' beliefs and practices to the display board.'
> (Harding 1987, p.9)

Similarly, writing in their recent reappraisal of feminist

epistemology and methodology, Stanley and Wise point out,

> 'Researchers' understandings are necessarily temporally,
> intellectually, politically and emotionally grounded and are
> thus as contextually specific as those of "the researched".'
> (Stanley and Wise 1991, p.23)

From a feminist perspective, the researcher's own subjectivity
and standpoint should be made explicit rather than concealed.
This rejection of objectivism goes hand in hand with a commitment
to enabling and encouraging research respondents to speak in
their own terms about their subjective perceptions and
experiences, rather than forcing their responses into the
researchers' preconceived categories, irrespective of the
salience or relevance of those categories (Finch 1984, Roberts
1981). This is one of the main reasons why many feminist social
scientists have been critical of the use of the social survey
method as a tool for conducting empirical work for women (Graham
1983).

Informed by these considerations, the decision was taken to
utilise the research technique of semi-structured interviews.
These enable the researcher to collect data on a predetermined
range of subjects, but allow sufficient flexibility for the
research subjects to introduce material which they wish to be
included or to ask questions of the interviewer. Oakley (1981)
and Finch (1984) have both provided useful accounts of their
experiences of using this kind of interview technique. In her

reflections on her own research, Oakley launches a convincing critique of the conventional textbook approach to interviewing, with its masculine emphasis upon distance and control. She argues that such an approach, in which interviewers are expected to be simply the impartial collectors of data and to avoid disclosing information about themselves to the interviewees, is inappropriate for feminist research. Both she and Finch interviewed women in their own homes, and both point out that the offering of hospitality places the interviewer in a position more akin to that of a guest than a detached collator of information. Finch comments on the ease with which she was able to get women to open up and talk to her, and attributes this to the fact that the interviewing situation provides women with a willing listener who has assured confidentiality. However, as she points out, it is precisely the ease of identification and sharing of information which raises moral and ethical issues:

> 'There is therefore a real exploitative potential in the
> easily established trust between women which makes women
> especially vulnerable as subjects of research.'
> (Finch 1984, p.81)

A sensitivity to this exploitative potential should ensure that the extremely rich and often personal material generated in a woman-to-woman interviewing situation is used to benefit rather than undermine the interests of women in general.

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

4.4.1 Identifying the research subjects

My analysis of the survey data had identified a number of major material constraints upon women's leisure, and this made it possible to select as research subjects women who would be differentially affected by these constraints. The rationale for doing this was to enable a consideration of how different combinations of socio-economic and cultural factors work together to influence both the opportunities available for leisure, and how individual women perceive and utilise their leisure time. After discussion with the other members of the research team, the following groups of women were selected for this phase of the project:

i) Married women with at least one pre-school child, social classes C2/DE (based on partner's occupation)

ii) Married women with teenage or older children, social classes AB/C1 (based on partners occupation)

iii) Women with unemployed male partners

iv) Women who were lone parents

v) Young single women

These case studies were designed to offer in-depth, detailed information on the leisure lifestyles of particular groups of women and to illuminate the social processes by which gender roles inform leisure experience. It was also decided to include women's resident partners in the research process where

appropriate. The purpose of their inclusion was not to explore the leisure lifestyles of the men per se, but to explore the ways in which their behaviour and attitudes towards their partner's leisure had an impact upon the women's own experiences.

Social class attribution was determined by National Opinion Polls Ltd., who conducted the survey, in consultation with the research team. Women in paid employment were assigned to a social class category on the basis of their own occupation. Where women were not in paid work and had a partner, their partner's occupation was used. The classification system used was that of the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, and is broadly comparable to that of the Registrar General. Appendix 1 reproduces an appendix originally prepared for the end of grant report (Green, Hebron and Woodward 1987) , which discusses in some detail the shortcomings of the available methods for attributing women's social class position and which highlights the specific problems and ommissions this generated in the Leisure and Gender project.

4.4.2 The interview schedule

As the interviews were to be semi-structured rather than completely unstructured, I designed an interview schedule which, with minor alterations, could be used with each of the groups (see Appendix 2). A consideration of the areas already covered

by the survey and of the preliminary survey findings proved invaluable in determining the scope and range of the schedule. As was indicated in section 4.2, for the overall purposes of the Leisure and Gender project, the interviews were felt to be essential in moving beyond statistical data on participation and fairly simple attitudinal measures, and toward an understanding of the social meanings of leisure. The main topic areas therefore built upon and extended the paramaters of the original survey questionnaire, and were as follows:

   i)   personal leisure histories: schooldays, adolescence, adulthood; changes in leisure at different stages in the life-cycle

  ii)   daily routines, including paid and domestic work and their relationship to leisure

 iii)   definitions of leisure and attitudes toward leisure

  iv)   impact of childcare and motherhood on leisure

   v)   impact of partners' activities and attitudes on women's leisure

  vi)   sexuality and social control; notions of appropriate behaviour

The interview schedule was piloted on nine women from a range of social backgrounds, and some minor modifications were made. I also drew up an interview schedule for male partners, which was piloted by a male interviewer (see below). The purpose of the men's interview schedule was to examine men's understanding of and attitudes to women's leisure in general and to their

partners' leisure in particular, in order to map out the ways in which the presence of a male partner influenced or structured women's leisure experiences.

4.4.3 Making contact with respondents

All women respondents in the original survey had indicated whether or not they would be willing to participate in a further stage of the project. Having identified all such members of the target groups, I then used random number tables to pick out possible participants from those eligible. In the first instance ten women from each group were contacted by a letter seeking permission for me to interview them. A reply slip and a stamped addressed envelope were enclosed. The initial response rate was poor, with less than half the women returning the reply slips. At this stage I followed up the letters with telephone calls wherever possible, and this direct contact proved much more productive. Over half the women who were contacted were no longer willing to participate, and some women's circumstances had changed in ways which meant they no longer met the criteria. Women were recruited much more quickly in some groups than in others, for instance it was particularly difficult to find young single women who were willing to be involved. Two more selections and mailings were needed to secure sufficient respondents across all the groups.

4.4.4 The interviewing process

I conducted all the interviews with women respondents in their own homes. The research team reached the joint decision that male partners would be interviewed simultaneously in another room, wherever possible. This was felt to be the most satisfactory method of obtaining individual rather than collaborative answers. A male social scientist who was sensitive to the aims of the project was engaged to conduct the men's interviews. McKee and O'Brien (1983) discuss the impact of gender on the interviewing situation, and the decision to use a male interviewer was motivated by the desire to establish empathy and to elicit honest responses to questions about sensitive areas.

In all, some 44 audio taped interviews were completed: 28 with women respondents and 16 with male partners. Most interviews were completed during one visit, but some required a repeat visit. The length of the women's interviews varied from 35 minutes to 4 hours, with the most typical length being just over an hour. The men's interviews tended to be rather shorter than this, around 45 minutes on average.

The interviews were relatively informal, and I attempted to make them as relaxed and non-threatening as possible. Some interviews were subject to interruption, usually from children. It is worth noting that when couples were being interviewed simultaneously, mothers were usually responsible for attending to

children's needs, keeping them quiet and so on. All questions
about the purpose of the research were answered as honestly as
possible. During and after the interviews, hospitality ranging
from cups of tea to complete meals was offered, and in some cases
women had gone to some considerable trouble to provide cake or
other foods which are so often part of female interaction. This
signalled women's expectation that the interview would be an
'event', and perhaps enjoyable in its own right. Many of the
interviewees did volunteer the information that they had found
the interviews enjoyable and/or thought provoking, although in
some cases the pleasure was derived from the fact that the
interviews had provided a legitimate excuse for the women to sit
down for an hour or two. A fairly frequent comment was that the
researcher's questions had made the interviewees think about
areas on which they were not used to being asked their opinions.
I often stayed behind after the interviews to answer questions
about the research or about my own circumstances and opinions.
Like Finch (1984), Hobson (1978) and Oakley (1981), I found it
was important for the interviewees to be able to place me in
terms of age, marital status and maternity. As a woman and
therefore a member of the broader group being studied, I found
that many women took it for granted that a shared feminine
culture would enable me to understand easily what they were
telling me about relationships, childcare and so on. Some of the

older women were, in turn, maternal towards me, and treated the information they were passing on as knowledge I would need in later life. There was a good deal of curiosity about my single status, and I answered numerous questions about my future plans in relation to marriage.

Many of the women clearly expected the interviewing situation to contain a degree of reciprocity, and some asked my advice on a variety of subjects, ranging from personal problems to the availability of leisure facilities, and the range of courses offered by my own institution.

In addition to the tapes themselves as research evidence, I also made brief research notes about my perceptions of the interviews, noting such things as whether I felt they had gone well orbadly, whether I had found it difficult to pursue certain areas, and whether there were subjects that the interviewees had asked me not to cover. I also noted any considerations which I felt might have an impact on the quality and veracity of the data, such as the presence of other people during the interview. These notes were supplemented by an ad hoc research diary in which I noted such things as my experiences of interviewing, my thoughts on the interview schedule as a research tool, and my perceptions of my own experiences of leisure compared with those of the research subjects.

4.4.5 Analysis and Interpretation

All the interview transcripts were transcribed in full, and this analysis has principally been based on the transcripts, with some references back to the tapes for clarification of meaning. Little published work exists which makes explicit the process by which researchers analyse and make sense of their qualitative data, and whereas there are explicit accounts of data gathering, as outlined above, few researchers seem willing to make known their methods of analysis. Analysis then becomes a mystical process, with researchers talking about 'sitting on' data, waiting for themes to emerge in some sort of organic way. Two feminist research seminars proved to be useful forums for the exchange of ideas about the analysis of qualitative data. One was held at the Centre for Leisure Research at Dunfermline, the other was convened in Sheffield as under the auspices of the Leisure and Gender project. What seemed evident from these discussions was that whilst such analysis is subjective and exploratory, it is usually structured to some degree by the research questions, with themes emerging and being related back to the original theoretical perspective. Whilst this process forms the basis of qualitative data analysis, Willis is emphatic that the researcher must have the capacity to 'be surprised' by data, and to reconsider theoretical assertions in the light of this (Willis op. cit.).

In this particular instance, interviews were summarised with page references, and specific quotations were identified and logged, organised thematically and cross-referenced by group. This was done to make possible the drawing out of shared experiences across the groups and the distincive experiences within each group where they appeared.

The relationship between the survey conducted as the first stage of the Leisure and Gender project, and the qualitative study which effectively formed the second stage, has been discussed in the preceding sections with regard to methodolical issues and data collection. This relationship was also important at the level of data analysis and interpretation. Whilst some preliminary survey analysis had been completed before the small-scale interviews were conducted, analysis of the survey findings continued alongside the analysis of the interview data. So although the data was collected in two distinct periods (separated by about one year), the two sets of data were considered in tandem, rather than in a chronological, linear fashion. Each offered insights which inflected the interpretation of the other. For example, statistical evidence of the sexual division of labour could be considered alongside women's interview comments about their negotiations with partners over housework and childcare. Moving from the interview data across to the survey data enabled the detailed comments to be

placed in the context of the broad trends identified by the survey, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of data collected from a comparatively small number of women. A third tier of analysis interpreted the data in light of existing empirical work about women's lives, and Chapter 5 presents a number of the Sheffield findings presented in this way.

4.4 Conclusion

The Sheffield project on Leisure and Gender provided the broad framework for this qualitative study of women's leisure experiences. My analysis of the statistical data provided by the Sheffield survey provided a range of quantitative data on the leisure patterns, domestic situation and attitudes of the survey respondents. Following from this initial analysis it was possible to select five target groups of individual interviewees for the qualitative stage of the research. The target groups were chosen in order to contrast and compare the experiences of women who were variously constrained in terms of their access to leisure. The research methodology was significantly informed by contemporary debates in the area of feminist methodology, and aimed to allow women to contribute their own subjective definitions and experiences to the research. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the women respondents, and where appropriate a male researcher interviewed their male partners.

All of the interviews were transcribed in full by the project secretary, and I then analysed them thematically and by group, drawing on the Sheffield survey findings and other empirical work in the field to assist in interpretation.

CHAPTER 5: <u>LEISURE AND GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN</u>

5.1 Introduction

Following the brief exploration of the historical material on women's leisure in Chapter 3, this chapter aims to give an overview of the experience of leisure for women in England in the 1980s. It will identify existing sources of statistical information about the impact of gender on participation in leisure activities, concentrating particularly upon those sources which are contemporary with the Sheffield survey. The discussion will also draw on other forms of research, including small scale qualitative studies. In keeping with the rest of this study, it is informed not only by work in leisure studies, but also by empirical research in the areas of the sociology of the family, employment and race, and from cultural studies. It includes data from the Sheffield survey, and selected material from the interviews with Sheffield women. The full discussion of the interview data comes, however, in Chapter 6. The breadth of the framework used here designed is to enable some analysis to be undertaken of the place of leisure in relation to the broader patterns of women's lives, and the economic and social context in which women's leisure is variously experienced, enjoyed or denied. The chapter will look at some of the structuring variables which shape or determine leisure, considering both

women's material conditions of existence and the related
ideological structures.

5.2 Gender Differences in Leisure

The statistical information which is available about women's
leisure patterns is usually drawn from surveys in which women and
men are asked about their participation in a range of activities,
either prompted or not. Of these, the General Household Survey
is one of the most often quoted sources of leisure statistics,
(see Deem 1986, Green, Hebron and Woodward 1990). Despite the
limitations if its fairly rudimentary quantifying approach, the
large scale nature of the survey and the regularity with which
it is conducted make it useful for charting general trends in
leisure behaviour. The data which follows is from the 1983
General Household Survey, this being the year closest to the
Sheffield survey in which questions on leisure behaviour were
included. The data are derived from interviews with a
representative national sample of almost 20,000 adults. The
survey showed that the leisure activities which men and women do
most frequently in and around the home are apparently quite
similar. In the month preceding the interview, 98% of both women
and men had watched television, 86% of the women and 87% of the
men had listened to the radio and 62% of the women and 65% of the
men had played records or tapes at home. More women had read

books or knitted or sewed, whilst more men had done D.I.Y. or gardening. Very similar findings came from another national survey carried out in 1983, which found that the three most popular activities were watching television, listening to the radio and to music, done by equal numbers of men and women. Again there was much greater gender differentiation in relation to reading books, knitting and sewing, gardening and D.I.Y. (National Opinion Polls, 1983).

The pattern of differention is greater still when out of the home leisure activities are considered. More men than women do out of home activities in general, and both the G.H.S. and N.O.P. surveys report men to be much more likely to go out drinking, to gamble and to engage in sporting activities. The General Household Survey 1983 shows almost 20% more men than women had taken part in sports, games and physical activities in the month before the interview. There were also clear gender differences in the actual sports done, with women more likely to do keep fit, yoga or swimming whilst men favour football, pool and darts. However, the single most popular physical activity for both women and men was walking.

According to Kenneth Roberts, the five most popular leisure activities in England are drinking, gambling, watching television, having sex and playing football (1978). The G.H.S. reports that fewer than 1% of women play football. It is also

questionable as to what extent male and female experiences of the other four activities are comparable. Whilst large numbers of women might watch television, drink, have sex and gamble, the form of these activities and the social meanings attached to them are likely to be rather different from the male experience. For example, gambling for men mainly takes the form of football pools and betting on horse-racing, whereas women are much more likely to play bingo (Dixey and Talbot 1982). Similarly, Morley's (1986) work on television viewing and family relations found that many of the men in his sample watched television more than their women partners, which seems to contrast with many survey findings in which women watch at least as much or more television than men:

> '...I would argue that this is to do with the fact that in most families women are simply at home more than men and are therefore "available" as viewers more than men. My point is that while women are there, in front of, (or rather to the side of, in earshot of) the set, their dominant viewing practice is much more "bitty" and much less attentive than that of men. This is partly because there are so few programmes on, apart from soap operas, which they really like, and partly because their sense of guilt about watching television while surrounded by their domestic obligations makes it hard for them to view attentively.'
> (Morley, 1986, p.154)

He also highlights a shortcoming of the findings produced by this sort of survey, by using Peter Collett's research to show how the activity 'watching television' can encompass a broad range of other activities:

> 'The tapes made by Collett show the families concerned engaging in an almost bizarre variety of different

activities: we eat dinner, knit jumpers, argue with each
other, listen to music, read books, do homework, kiss, write
letters and vacuum-clean the carpet with the television on.'
(ibid.)

These examples illustrate that whilst surveys can provide useful,

numerical information about participation in some leisure

activites, simplistic comparisons of gender differences in

participation are unlikely to contribute much to our

understanding of the complexity and subjectivity of leisure, or

indeed to the reasons which underlie observable differences in

participation.

5.3 Leisure, gender and ideology

In the context of an examination of leisure and everyday life,

Johnson emphasises the importance of

> 'looking critically at innocent practices: those practices
> that seem not to be implicated, that is, in politics and
> power,'
> (Johnson 1987, p.207)

Leisure, more than many other social practices, has been

constructed as 'innocent'. Indeed, the tendency is to contrast

leisure with those areas of life where politics and power do

impinge, most notably the public domain of paid work. However,

even a cursory glance at historical and contemporary experiences

of leisure reveal that leisure has by no means escaped the

intervention of either power or politics.

Clearly, our existing social structures are characterised by

obvious inequalities and relations of power. Furthermore, as social beings we are actively engaged in the reproduction of society and its inequalities. Not only is leisure divided along lines of class, race, gender, age and more, but leisure must also be seen as an area of life in which these divisions are negotiated, redefined or reproduced. Of crucial importance in relation to understanding women's leisure is the need to understand the relationship between leisure, in both conceptual and experiential terms, and the maintenance of inequality between men and women. One useful analytic tool in understanding this relationship is the concept of hegemony, which has enjoyed currency for some time in cultural studies and more recently in leisure studies.

Hegemony refers to the process by which dominant groups win consent to their dominance. Although originally developed by Gramsci to analyse unequal relations of social class, it is also relevant to a consideration of gender relations. Gramsci used hegemony as an analytic category to examine:

> 'the precise political cultural and ideological forms
> through which, in any given society, a fundamental class is
> able to establish its leadership as distinct from more
> coercive forms of domination.'
> (Bennett, 1981, p.187)

As Hall (1977) has pointed out, hegemony depends upon both force and consent, but for Gramsci in 'the liberal capitalist state'

consent is usually primary, operating behind 'the armour of co-ercion'. If this is applied to women it implies that not only do they generally share a subordinate economic and social position, but the hegemonic process works to secure the perceived legitimacy of male domination and female subordination. This legitimation is a continual process: hegemony is never won absolutely, but involves constant struggle. This struggle takes place at the level of social institutions such as the education system, the family and the media, as well as through the more overtly repressive agencies such as the legal system, the police and so on. As a cultural process leisure itself can be seen as a site of hegemonic struggle.

In terms of conceptualising how consent is won, and how it is that women can sometimes be said to collude in their own oppression, it becomes necessary to consider the role of ideology. Ideology is the complex system of representation and perception through which we experience ourselves and come to make sense of the world. Barrett (1980) defines it as 'a generic term for the process by which meaning is produced, challenged, re-produced, transformed'. Ideology can be seen as a process which is neither completely shaped by the relationships of production nor completely autonomous from them. Representations of 'reality' are shaped through the medium or signifying system through which they are articulated.

Ideology is central to the struggle for hegemony. In his definition of ideology, Eagleton (1976) characterises it as a process whereby 'the situation in which one social class has power over the other is either seen by most members of society as "natural" or not seen at all'. Ideology seeks to conceal contradictions and antagonisms, rendering them invisible or else as seemingly a normal part of the social order. This applies as much or more to antagonisms around gender and race as to class antagonisms, so that women's unequal position in society is either not seen or is seen as natural, immutable, or given. Whilst the foregoing is not intended to imply that all women are the passive recipients of a dominant ideology imposed from above (see also Perkins, 1979), work in relation to cultural forms such as film, television and popular writing has shown the restricted range of representations of women and women's lives which are currently on offer at the level of culture and which are consumed during leisure time (Winship 1978, McRobbie 1982, Ballaster et.al. 1991). Furthermore, leisure itself can also be seen as 'a grossly ideological category' in so far as it is 'based firmly on a male and relatively affluent experience.' (Johnson op. cit. p. 214).

Chapter Three has chronicled the historical construction of leisure as time free from the obligations of paid work. Central to the capitalist organisation of paid work has been a sexual

division of labour. Men's primary role was in production, whereas women's was in the necessary reproduction of the labour force (although of course women have always been involved in the productive process too, depending upon their particular position in the class hierarchy). This division has well developed 'accompanying ideologies of the appropriate meaning of labour for men and women', (Barrett 1985, p.74). Arguably it also has accompanying ideologies about the appropriate meaning of leisure for men and for women.

In day to day life we each encounter a vast array of information, from commonsense assumptions and norms, from books, magazines, television and other cultural forms, which present particular versions of women's lives, of what it is to be a woman. Only selected parts of the female experience are represented, but are presented as being the whole. Gender ideology is grounded in and builds on the biological distinction of sex, and women's reproductive capability becomes the basis for definitions of what constitutes 'femininity' as opposed to 'masculinity'. A recourse to biology has been used historically to offer a general definition of women as inferior, but it has also been mobilised to render particular activities, such as most sport, unsuitable or inappropriate for women because of the potential damage to their reproductive organs. (In fact, as recent work by Blue (1987) has made clear, it is male genitalia that are

substantially more at risk from injury during sport than women's). Although the social construct of 'femininity' does have a degree of historical and cultural specificity it is not unreasonable to assert that current definitions are remarkably similar to those that prevailed in this country during the nineteenth century.

Fundamentally, 'femininity' is centered around maternity and domesticity. It intersects with a particular ideology of the family and incorporates an ideology of romantic heterosexual love. Femininity implies a preoccupation with the private, the personal. If 'masculinity' is strength, superiority, domination, then 'femininity' is weakness, inferiority, subordination. Women gain their identities through their relationships with men: they are daughters, wives, mothers. This applies not only to women who fall into these categories but also to those who do not, who are identified as not wives, not mothers.

These assumptions and definitions of what it is to be female have important implications for leisure. First, even when women do engage in paid work, this is still typically seen as secondary to their work within the household or family, so consequently women are not seen to 'earn' the right to leisure in the same way as (employed) men. Second, domesticity and maternity are presented as the source of women's pleasure and fulfillment, therefore other forms of personal satisfaction are perceived as

unneccessary or selfish. From an early age women learn to moderate personal needs, desires and wishes and to prioritise those of others. This applies as much in leisure as in other areas, so that much of so-called family leisure is supported and serviced by women's hidden work, whether this takes the form of washing men's and children's sports kit, ferrying children to activities or just generally being 'on call' to other members of the household.

5.4 Access to leisure

Women's access to leisure is facilitated or constrained by a web of often interrelated material and ideological factors. Some of these, such as income, have a direct and observable effect upon women's choices about leisure. Others have a less direct and apparent effect, but are none-the-less significant, such as women's perceptions of where they feel comfortable. In practice, these structuring elements are very closely linked. However, whilst connections will be made as far as possible, the need for ease of analysis means that they are initially treated as separate in what follows.

5.4.1 Leisure and social class

Despite the difficulties associated with developing a social class classification system for women (see Appendix 1), it is reasonable to assert that women's leisure experiences are

differentiated along class lines. Most working class women have leisure experiences which differ significantly from those of most middle class women, despite any blurring of class boundaries (Clarke and Critcher, 1985). The small amount of empirical data on women's leisure which is available (General Household Survey 1983, Deem 1984), together with the findings of the Sheffield survey, support this assertion. As Deem notes:

> 'Middle class women have on the whole more inclination to engage in leisure activities outside the home.'
> (Deem, 1984, p.8)

The Sheffield research indicates that they also have more opportunity. Working class women have lower participation rates in sport and organised leisure. The only out-of-home activities in which more working than middle class women regularly participate are drinking and bingo. Attendance at cinemas, theatres and concerts remains predominantly middle class. Moreover, activities which seem to cross class boundaries may in fact be very different experiences, as Clarke and Critcher explain:

> 'Thus, "going out for a meal" may be a leisure activity common across all social classes, but hidden from view are crucial differences in the sorts of food, restaurants and groupings involved.'
> (Clarke and Critcher, 1985, p.148)

The interview data for this study certainly indicated that class related cultural differences are significant in relation to women's leisure. For working class women, leisure frequently

revolves around extended family networks, particularly other female family members. Whilst both working and middle class women reported spending leisure time visiting relatives, working class women are more likely to do this more frequently, not least because their own relatives are more likely to be living nearby. The more geographically mobile middle class are less likely to have relatives in close proximity, and so leisure companions are more often friends, colleagues from work or from clubs or interest groups.

Aside from the differences in participation and social networks, the Sheffield survey also highlights the greater spending power of middle class women, even taking account of the differential division of money within households. Whilst social class cannot be equated simply with income, there is clearly a correlation between the two. Income is just one of the structuring variables of leisure where social class has a powerful effect. Race, employment, the sexual division of labour, and stage in the family life cycle are all divisions which interact with social class. Even factors which in principle affect all women, such as personal safety, are differentiated by social class. So middle class women, with their greater access to private transport or with more disposable income to pay for taxis, are less likely in practical terms to find fears about safety such a significant constraining factor as working class women.

5.4.2 Leisure and income

The relationship between income level and leisure participation was one of the most significant correlations to emerge in both the survey stage of the Sheffield study, and in the interviews which make up the empirical research for this qualitiative study. With most leisure being commercially organised, buying power - or lack of it - will obviously significantly enhance or restrict the range of leisure choices which are available. In the Sheffield survey, two thirds of women reported that lack of money was a major constraint on their leisure, and half the women said that they would go out more often if they had more money. The concentration of women's paid employment in the service occupations and other poorly paid occupations has been well documented elsewhere (Barrett 1980). A report from the Sheffield Low Pay Campaign, produced during the same period as the Sheffield study, states:

> 'In the Sheffield area more than 3 in 5 full-time workers
> and some three quarters of all women working part-time earn
> low wages.'
>   (1985, p.1)

The sexual division of labour and related labour market inequalities encourage women's economic dependence on men, and wage-bargaining for a 'family wage' for men has assumed the existence of a male breadwinner with a financially dependent wife and children. Given the high participation of women in paid work

and the fact that already by 1981 only 26% of households consisted of a married couple with one or two dependent children (Gittins 1985), this is a somewhat outdated assumption. In households where a woman is the only or the main wage earner, this can mean struggling to pay for necessities, with very little if anything left over for leisure spending.

However, notwithstanding the importance of total household income, the actual distribution of money within households can have more crucial implications for women's leisure. Pahl's research on the political economy of household units, together with community studies and sociological analyses of the family, have all indicated the links between income and power. She states:

> 'there is a substantial body of evidence testifying to the deferential dialectic in which wives are seen as subordinate to their husbands largely because of their financial dependence.'
> (Pahl 1984, p.10)

In her study of 102 couples, she found few instances of an equitable division of resources and little evidence of equality at work in couples' financial decision making processes:

> 'Even amongst couples who pooled their resources in a joint account there were still substantial inequalities between husbands and wives.'
> (Pahl 1991, p. 57)

The control of household resources may largely determine how women can spend their spare time, particularly where they have no

personal income. Pahl found that wives spend less money on leisure than their husbands, especially in low income groups. The interview data for this study corroborated Pahl's findings. When money is tight, leisure is one of the areas where spending is cut back. Because women's leisure is usually regarded as a comparatively low priority within households, any spending on women's leisure is often the first area for economy, whereas men are more likely to retain the right to some money for personal leisure spending.

In households which do rely on the wage of a male breadwinner, it is not difficult for a woman to be denied access to leisure which requires any level of spending, or for both partners to assume male ownership of the wage in such a way as effectively to deter her from asking for money to facilitate such leisure. This can be especially difficult with regard to out of home activities which male partners may not approve of. Even in apparently more equitable households where money is pooled, it may not necessarily be seen as legitimate for women to use it for personal leisure spending. Men's entitlement to at least some personal spending money is rarely questioned. However, there is some evidence that women who earn their own income through paid work are in a substantially stronger position in negotiations over access to leisure. Their participation in the field of paid work makes them feel entitled to some time and space for leisure,

and they have some level of personal income to facilitate this (Deem 1984).

In addition to money, other material resources are important in determining the scope and nature of women's leisure. Perhaps the most significant of these is access to private transport. At the time of the study, Sheffield had a remarkably good public transport system. However, even when services are frequent and convenient and fares are affordable, travelling to leisure venues by bus is not always practicable. Even short journeys can become arduous for a woman who is ferrying small children with her, and 'inessential' journeys to and from leisure venues may not seem worth the effort (see also Dixey and Talbot 1982 and Graham 1984).

A further problem related to lack of private transport is the restrictions this imposes on women's ability to move about freely at night. Over half the women in the Sheffield survey reported that they were nervous about walking alone and waiting at bus stops after dark. Many women would forego activities if such travelling was necessary. Others persisted, but not without anxiety and unease.

In some households, the financial resources necessary for a car are not available. However, even when households do have a car, this does not necessarily mean that women have access to it. A lower proportion of women than men have driving licences (Pickup

1981) indicating that for women learning to drive is often seen as a low priority particularly where money is tight or where women live with a partner who has a driving licence. Even if a woman does have a driving licence, use of the 'family car' is still likely to be controlled by her male partner if she has one, particularly if he uses it to travel to work. Women may be allowed to borrow the car for special occasions with prior agreement. The one exception to this, when male partners often actively encourage their wives to drive, is on joint outings to a pub.

In practice, the distribution of resources within most households means that women are frequently placed in the position of having to ask for resources for leisure, rather than being unambiguously entitled to them. This gives those being asked the opportunity to refuse, and effectively takes the choice out of women's hands.

5.4.3 Leisure and race

Very little work exists which has examined the impact of race on leisure experiences, and even less on women's experiences in particular. Some general texts on the experiences of black women in Britain, such as Bryan, Dadzie and Scafe (1985) and Wilson (1978) discuss the significance of cultural difference, but certainly mainstream leisure studies has by and large not addressed race as an issue. General survey findings often fail

to consider race as a variable which is of sufficient significance to monitor. Similarly, the data used in this study derives exclusively from interviews with white women. Of course 'black women' cannot be treated as a homogeneous group, and nor is it only black women for whom race is an issue. There are other groups of women who have their own cultural identities, customs and practices - such as Irish or Eastern European immigrants and their descendents - which will clearly determine their leisure experiences, and which the indigenous population is alternatively ignorant of, fascinated by or, most often, hostile to. However, there is some published material which documents the experience of black women in Britain, and this will provide the focus for this section. The two largest groups of black women in Britain today are those of Afro-Caribbean origin, and South Asian women, and what little literature exists deals mainly with the lives of these two groups.

Britain's Afro-Caribbean community, predominantly of West Indian origin and descent, currently stands at around half a million people. Fryer (1984) has noted that black people have been a part of British society for hundreds of years, albeit in comparatively small numbers. A history of colonial exploitation and slave trading meant that ports such as Bristol, Liverpool and Cardiff had established black communities long before the major wave of immigration to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. The

British government, needing a cheap supply of labour for post-war reconstruction and expansion presented immigration as an escape from poverty and unemployment in the West Indies, and attracted large numbers of people looking for an improved way of life. The reality, of a society which was both economically and socially hostile to its immigrant members, was rather different from the rosy picture presented by the government.

The historical development of the household unit in the West Indies has been of an essentially matriarchal nature, with women being not only primarly responsible for the support of the family in domestic and emotional terms, but also largely responsible for its economic support. Following from this, levels of employment amongst Afro-Caribbean women in Britain are correspondingly high. Cook and Watts (1987) note that immigration figures for Britain in the 1970s show more work permits issued to women from the Caribbean than to men. They also give statistics from a study conducted by the Policy Studies Institute in 1982 which indicated that at the time of the survey, 74% of West Indian women were in paid employment, compared with 46% of white women and 39% of Asian women (Brown 1984).

In Britain, the main forms of employment available to Afro-Caribbean people of either sex have been, and continue to be, badly paid, low status and insecure. Economic pressure has often led to the need for both men and women to maximise their earnings

by working overtime, shiftwork and unsocial hours (Patterson, 1965). Afro-Caribbean women may find it difficult to arrange childcare to fit with such working hours. Cook and Watts (op. cit.) point out that women shiftworkers face particular difficulties in finding childminders, and that racist attitudes may mean that some childminders are unwilling to look after black children. The combination of long and often unsocial hours of paid work, coupled with the principal responsibility for household organisation and childcare can leave little time for leisure. Black women's low earning power may result in little money being available for spending on women's leisure, particularly given that available research indicates that when money is tight, it is women's personal consumption which is sacrificed first (Glendinning and Millar 1987).

Financial and time constraints can be compounded by problems of social isolation. Women who have left behind an extended network of female family members, found in most Caribbean societies, may find themselves lacking women relatives to help with childcare or to act as leisure companions. Alongside this, the fear of racist attack or harassment on the streets and of discrimination in leisure venues can act as powerful disincentives to participation in out of the home leisure. A study of women's mobility, conducted by the Greater London Council in 1984 provides evidence to support this (cited in Green, Hebron and Woodward 1990):

'The pressures on Afro-Caribbean women's time and finances...showed themselves in significantly lower frequencies of travel to and from leisure activities. Only a third of Afro-Caribbean women travelled for pleasure each week, compared with 54 per cent of a larger sample of London women. They were likely to identify the following barriers to participation in leisure activities: having too much to do at home or at work; the cost of events and travelling to them; knowing too few people with whom to share leisure interests; it being too far to travel to events; and things being on at the wrong time.'
                    (Green et al. op. cit p. 74-75)

Afro-Caribbean women were more likely than other women to take part in clubs and classes, to do voluntary work, to visit relatives and to entertain at home. Bryan et al. (op. cit.) document the importance of the church as an enduring social institution for older women: it provides a forum for sociability at little or no cost, and without fear of racial discrimination. The G.L.C. survey indicated that, in common with many women, a large proportion of the Afro-Caribbean respondents were anxious about personal safety outside the home after dark. This is particularly constraining given their generally low incomes and correspondingly low levels of access to private transport. 45% of the Afro-Caribbean respondents said that they did not go out on their own at night; 85% were afraid to go out after dark and almost half felt that there were places near their homes that were unsafe even during the day-time.

Young black women may have different perceptions and expectations of leisure than their older counterparts. Many younger black

women have been born and brought up in Britain, and their leisure
lifestyles may be similar in many respects to those of other
young women, with whom they are likely to share a common
preoccupation with commercial leisure forms and the artefacts
which are integral to youth culture - music, entertainment,
clothes and cosmetics. Certainly, the commercial cultural
industries have never been reluctant to incorporate those
elements of black culture which they perceive as having an outlet
in the market place, particularly in relation to music and
fashion. Despite some similarities at the level of consumption,
there is, however, one overriding difference. Thus whilst young
white women may find their leisure circumscribed by social
control resulting from their gender, young black women are likely
to be doubly constrained by individual and institutionalised
racism.

Nevertheless, even given these restrictions, it seems that Afro-
Caribbean women enjoy comparatively higher levels of freedom and
autonomy in their lives in general and in their leisure than do
women from the Indian sub-continent. The Asian community in
Britain numbers around one million people, around half of whom
have been born in Britain (Ballard, in Rapoport et al., 1982).
Most migrants come from rural, peasant backgrounds and so the
move to Britain means they encounter change not only in terms of
language, religion, culture and climate, but also change from a

traditional agrarian lifestyle to life in an urban environment in

a 'developed' society.   Even if second generation British Asians

do not have direct experience of traditional rural culture, their

parents may have, and this will shape their family value systems.

I contrast to the female-centred family stucture prevalent in

Afro-Carbbean families, the typical Asian kinship pattern is

based on the patrifocal extended family. In such households women

are formally subordinate to men, and also to older women such as

mothers-in-law.   The social status of the family is achieved by

men, and there is pressure against women's involvement in roles

and activities outside the home, except where these are a product

of women's maternal and domestic roles. Women may be discouraged

or prohibited from finding employment outside the home if this is

seen as a threat to family honour, and may also be discouraged

from learning English. When Asian women do work outside the home,

language and cultural barriers and the discriminatory attitudes

of workmates may make it difficult for them to form friendships

with colleagues. For example, Westwood (1984) found that the

black and white factory workers in her study rarely engaged in

joint social activities outside the workplace. In such

circumstances, strong female kinship bonds can be an important

source of support, company and affection (Wilson 1978).

The GLC study of women's mobility in London (op. cit.) provides

some useful insights into the lifestyles and leisure of Asian

women in Britain.   The survey showed the Asian women respondents
to be significantly less likely than other women to travel alone,
to engage in leisure activities away from home, to travel to and
from paid work, or to use public transport (GLC 1984). They were
more likely to entertain at home or to visit friends and
relatives, and were much less likely than other women to attend
clubs or classes, or to do voluntary work. Life and leisure was
depicted as home centred, a situation reinforced by the
experience of racial harassment and attack outside the relative
safety of the home. Even during the daytime, only half of the
Asian women interviewed felt safe on British Rail trains or using
the Underground, and under two thirds felt safe walking. After
dark only a very small minority of Asian women felt safe using
any of these modes of transport, and 95% said that they did not
go out on their own after dark.

Obviously the degree of constraint upon their leisure which Asian
women experience is dependent on a number of considerations,
including their age, caste or social class, degree of integration
into Western culture, and the level of male control within
individual families. However, it seems evident that many Asian
women share:

> 'clear cultural and religious barriers to their
> attainment of autonomy and sexual equality, above those
> faced by most white and Afro-Caribbean women.'
>   (Green et. al. op. cit. p.81)

5.4.4 Leisure, age and stage in the family life cycle

There is little doubt that age can exert a significant influence on leisure - both in terms of the amount and nature of free time available, and in the way in which such time is spent. As Clarke and Critcher (op. cit.) point out:

> 'The biology and psychology of the ageing process seem
> likely to involve different physical abilities and personal
> interests at its various stages.
> (p. 153)

The ageing process may involve deteriorating physical health, and mobility may become impaired. The elderly deserve special consideration in any discussion of women's leisure (see Mason 1988). A significant proportion of the elderly are women, and are frequently isolated, with little leisure provision directed towards them. The Sheffield survey, and hence the sample from which the interviewees for this study were drawn, was restricted to women between the ages of 18 and 60 years. This was because the age structure of the Sheffield population would have led to a third of the total sample being aged over 60, thereby leaving too few respondents to be of statistical utility in other desired categories.

However, some evidence of the impact of ageing upon leisure is to be found in the General Household Survey. The probability of reduced income and, for some, deteriorating physical health coincided with a move towards home based-leisure. Compared with

younger women, many fewer women aged 70 or over gamble (other than by playing bingo), go out for meals or drinks, do D.I.Y., listen to music at home or go dancing. Nevertheless, as Parker (1985, p.21) notes, 'there is no one pattern of life and leisure which can be said to be typical of older women.' The same social divisions of class, ethnicity, employment status and family situation apply as much to elderly women as they do to other women. Patterns of sociability and recreation established earlier in life continue so long as women have the financial resources, physical health and availability of companions to make their continuation possible.

In Abrams' (1978) study of 800 people aged over 75 years, two thirds of the respondents were women. Much of their spare time was filled with home oriented activities such as watching television, listening to the radio, reading and 'just resting'. A quarter of the women did knitting or sewing. Organised clubs and activities for the elderly were unpopular, whereas social clubs which catered for a broader age range and religious organisations such as church, chapel or synagogue groups were more popular, especially with women. Mobility problems were a significant constraint, as was lack of money. A comparatively high proportion of elderly women are poor:

> 'Elderly people dominate the poverty statistics...But
> poverty is not evenly distributed among the elderly, and
> gender is one of the clearest lines along which the economic

and social experience of old age is divided. Thus more than twice as many elderly women than men live in poverty or on its margins. Among those in advanced old age (80 years and over) the ratio is around five to one.'
(Walker 1987, p. 178)

They are also more likely than men to live alone, especially if they are over 75 years old (Phillipson 1982), and therefore to be more likely to suffer loneliness and social isolation (Abrams op. cit.).

It is not just in old age that the process of ageing effects women's access to leisure. Perhaps the most significant consideration in examining age as a variable is the importance of the social construction of ageing. Whilst some women may be constrained by physical problems of ill-health for example, associated with ageing, the majority of women are more likely to be constrained by cultural assumptions about appropriate activities for women of a particular age. Not surprisingly, such received wisdom is often implicitly, if not always explicitly, linked to an assumed stage in the life cycle. Definitions of femininity are modified with age: 'leisure' for adolescent girls is a substantially different experience from the 'leisure' of married women with children or women with growing families. Despite the increase in separation, divorce and remarriage, the rising number of single parent households and the considerable numbers of women who live outside of 'families' as traditionally understood, the dominant definition of the family life cycle

still assumes a linear progression through adolescence, courtship, marriage, rearing a family, departure of children, old age. More and more women are experiencing interruptions and changes to this flow, or are finding alternatives to it. For example, women who are separated or divorced may find themselves suddenly single again, which has particular implications for their leisure experiences. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, and in Green and Hebron (1988).

As was indicated above, other social divisions interact with class, making it difficult to treat all women in particular age groups as if they are homogenous. However, it does seem from existing research, including the Sheffield survey and the interviews conducted for this study, that definitions of appropriate behaviour at different stages do to some extent operate across class boundaries.

Adolescence is typically conceived of as a time for pleasure and enjoyment, a temporary phase prior to settling down to the serious business of adult life. Much commercial and some public leisure provision is geared towards the young, who have comparatively few financial commitments and, at least if they are in paid work, some disposable income. Nevertheless, many public leisure venues frequented by young people are controlled by men, and much of young women's leisure is determined by their relationships with men. Feminist work on the lives of young

women (McCabe 1981, Griffin 1981) has highlighted the importance of this stage in heterosexual women's lives for finding an acceptable, steady male partner. Physical appearance is given great importance in this search, and this involves spending not only time and energy on looking good, but also money on the clothes and cosmetics which are marketed as necessary to achieve this. The apparently frivolous nature of much of young women's leisure conceals a great deal of work and strategic planning. However, young single women are relatively advantaged in terms of access to leisure and any seemingly 'deviant' behaviour is likely to be tolerated. So for example, getting drunk in public may be passed off as youthful overindulgence, whereas such behaviour would be less acceptable for an older woman, particularly if she also happened to be a mother.

After this brief period of frivolity, it is assumed that women will 'settle down'. The first phase of this settling down is courtship. On finding a steady boyfriend, young women may find their leisure choices start to be circumscribed. In their work on leisure and the life-cycle, the Rapoports (1975) drew on data from Leonard's study of courtship in Swansea, finally published in 1980, and note how young women's leisure interests are often subsumed under the interests of the boyfriend during courtship. A more recent study indicated that this pattern is still prevalent:

'If a young woman started to go out with a fairly regular

> boyfriend, she gradually lost touch with her girlfriends,
> often at the young man's insistence.'
> (Griffin 1986, p.61)

Griffin also points out that there was rarely an equivalent
breakdown of male friendships when a young man started to 'go
steady'. The interview data support these findings, as is
discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

A move towards couple-based leisure is likely to be compounded if
couples marry or start living together. Moving into a home of
their own means that many couples begin to engage more in home
oriented leisure, feeling that there is less need to go out in
order to get time and space together, and the costs of setting up
home may mean that less money is available for spending on
leisure.

If a couple have children, this almost certainly brings greater
practical restrictions for women than for men (Henderson et al.
1989). 'Paternity' has rather different and arguably less
restrictive implications than 'maternity'. At this stage women
are expected to restrict their activities to those which fit with
their roles as mothers. Women's leisure interests typically
become submerged beneath those of other family members. Domestic
obligations and financial considerations may in any case render
arguments about women's leisure outside the home academic. Even
where this is not so, the ideological weight of definitions of
what constitutes being a good wife, and in particular a good

mother, may make specific activities or even all autonomous leisure seem inappropriate and out of reach.

It might be assumed that as children get older, women have greater opportunities for enjoying leisure. However, this is not always necessarily the case. Teenagers can require a good deal of ferrying to and from their own activities, and women are likely to find that much of their so-called spare time is spent in servicing the leisure of other members of the family (Deem 1986). Also, by this stage in the life cycle, many women will have re-entered the labour market, and so may have less time available for leisure. Even if women are in paid work, their primary status is still likely to be perceived to be that of 'mother', with all its attendant definitions of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

5.4.5. Leisure and the domestic division of labour and childcare

Women's responsibilty for housework and for childcare is one of the most significant constraints on access to leisure, a constraint which is largely not shared by men. As Barrett (1980) notes:

> 'As is now well known, even when women work outside the home they normally carry the burden of household organisation and labour at home as well.'
> (p.208)

97% of the women in the Sheffield survey reported that they did most of the housework themselves. Women's paid work, whilst in

many cases providing an essential contribution to household resources, is still often seen as being secondary to the work of nurturing the family and providing a pleasant environment for the male worker to return to. As was noted above, despite statistical evidence to the contrary, a particular familial ideology of male breadwinner with financially dependent wife and children is still the dominant social definition of family life in Britain. Women are held to be responsible for housework and childcare, and the degree of participation by other household members varies widely. From the Sheffield survey data it was clearly indicated that very few households had anything approaching an equitable division of domestic labour between male and female members of the household. The best that most women received was some assistance with housework, and there was clear gender demarcation in relation to specific tasks. The Sheffield survey confirmed the findings of Oakley (1974), an indication perhaps of the rate of change in gender relations. When men contribute to household tasks they typically 'help with' a narrow range of activities: washing dishes, tidying up and driving wives to the supermarket. Some tasks, notably doing the laundry, doing the ironing and planning meals were done almost exclusively by women (Green, Hebron and Woodward 1987).

The Sheffield findings also concur with those of a range of other studies, including Pollert's (1981) study of women workers in a

tobacco factory, and Sharpe's (1984) study of women workers. They found that even when women are in paid employment, domestic responsibilities are seen to be women's concern. Of course this is not to deny that some changes have ocurred during the last thirty years, as comparisons with earlier studies such as Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter's community study of a mining village show (1969, first published in 1956). Sharpe's research found examples of greater participation in housework by male partners when some women returned to work after having children. But Pollert found there were still restrictions on what men actually did and to what standards, and little indication of men assuming any real measure of responsibility for housework and caring:

> 'And with most women it became apparent that 'sharing' meant a limited delegation of specific tasks to their husbands while they bore the responsibility for the endless, undefined niggling work. And even this division often broke down - women had high standards, the men lacked training and skill.'
> (Pollert 1981, pp. 114-115)

A more recent study of three mining communities supports the assertion that there are still clear gender demarcations in relation to specific activities (Hebron and Wykes 1991). The 400 respondents were asked if they 'normally do' a range of activities including cleaning (women 98%, men 75%), washing dishes (women 97%, men 85%), laundry (women 98%, men 35%) and childcare (women 58%, men 36%). In Hunt's (1980) study she

describes how all the women studied had higher standards for housework than did their husbands, a point reinforced by Sharpe's illuminating discussion of men's 'cultivated ineptitude' in relation to performing particular domestic tasks.

This domestic division of labour has direct consequences for women's access to leisure. Firstly it can severely restrict the time available for leisure, particularly when women are combining paid and unpaid work. For men, the majority of non-work time is leisure, but this is not true for women. Domestic obligations are not neatly confined to eight hour long slots, clearly separated from leisure. It is not only the amount available which may be a problem, it is also the quality of the time. Stockdale (1985) states:

> 'Apart from the more concrete restrictions such as lack of money or transport, women feel particularly constrained by the fact that their free time occurs at inconvenient times or in periods too short to do anything worthwhile.'
> (p. 208)

Even so-called free time may be interrupted by the demands of other household members, given that wives and mothers are almost always 'on call'. Women's major responsibility for home and family also means that when they do have some time for leisure, they may be too tired to do anything except sit down and relax.

For many women, children form the centre point of their domestic responsibilities and caring role. The findings from the interview data indicate that having children influences all areas

of life, including leisure. Having children may result in less time and money being available for leisure, but the results are rarely felt equally by men and women. Because children are deemed to be primarily women's responsibilty, it is women's leisure which is typically most circumscribed by having children, as many of the women in the interviews revealed:

> 'My husband can come home on a Saturday and he is finished at dinner time and get his fishing tackle and go fishing, or in the winter he goes shooting. I can't get up and go, I've got him (their son) to see to.'

Whilst children can in themselves constitute a source of enjoyment and fulfilment, they can also operate as a real constraint on leisure in a number of ways. They can restrict women's access to free time through the care and attention they need, whether this involves performing tasks such as washing, feeding and so on, or more generally being on call. Women's responsibility for children includes finding someone to look after them if they themselves are not available. Ideologies of good mothering incorporate clear definitions of who constitute acceptable substitutes. The interviews show that if a woman has her own mother living nearby, then she is often the preferred childminder. This supports the findings of Green and Parry's (1982) study of part-time women workers. As one of their respondents, a mother living in Sheffield, said:

> 'I mean, he's with somebody he knows. I shouldn't like to leave him with a childminder or anybody that you don't know,

but he's with somebody he knows. He goes out shopping and
that with my mum so he's alright. I know he's alright.'

Because of their lack of earned personal disposable income, many
women with young children lack the necessary funds to pay for a
regular childminder or babysitter, and in any case may be
reluctant to leave their children with 'strangers' except in
emergencies. Whilst male partners may be asked to look after
children on some occasions, the interviews for this study
certainly provided no evidence of any real shared responsibility
for childcare, and several women commented on male partner's
unreliability as childminders. When male partners are unreliable
or uncooperative with childcare arrangements, this can severely
limit women's leisure outside the home.

Delamont (1980) reviews a number of community studies which
indicate that women often receive help and support from their
women friends or family members which lightens their domestic
burden. However, these female networks can also serve to control
or restrict women's behaviour. There may be censure for women
whose domestic work is not up to a particular standard, or who
are seen to be behaving outside the bounds of 'normal'
respectable behaviour. Gossip or ostracism are sometimes used as
effective means of control. Whitehead (1976) argues that newly
married and/or young mothers are often isolated from social
contact with peers, and so may be particularly subject to this

kind of control. For many women, being a good wife and mother is one of the few avenues available to them for securing respect and approval. The censure of women who are deemed to fall short of the domestic or maternal ideal enhances the moral virtue of the critic as well as reinforcing traditional norms (Delamont op. cit.). In so far as women are controlling each other, the patriarchal nature of the control is obscured, and the use of more transparent repressive forms of control becomes unnecessary (see 5.4.9).

5.4.6 Leisure and employment

Paid employment has a number of consequences for women's leisure. Perhaps the most obvious of these is that women's own paid employment takes time which is therefore not available for leisure. It also restricts potential free time to specific, residual time slots outside working hours. Paid work can however also bring certain benefits in relation to leisure, including the availability of some independently earned income, opportunities for work-related sociability and perhaps the perception that employed women have earned the right to some leisure time. The interview data from this study supports other research which indicates that the influence of employment upon women's leisure depends to a considerable degree upon women's commitments and obligations aside from their employment. For example, the young

single women in this study saw all their time outside paid work as being potentially available for leisure. They were far less constrained than those women who were combining paid and domestic work and who needed to fit their considerable domestic tasks into the residual time left after paid work obligations had been fulfilled.

The preceding section highlighted the fact that even women in paid work are assumed to be principally responsible for household organisation and care, and are therefore doubly restricted in terms of the amount of time they have available for leisure. As Stockdale (1985) states:

> 'working women are acutely short of free-time, constrained in its use and in many instances overloaded by the dual responsibilities of a job and a family.'
> (p.112)

Almost a third of the women in the Sheffield survey felt that the demands of their job left them with too little time for leisure. For women in full-time employment, domestic work and the myriad tasks of running a home have to be fitted in at the weekends or during evenings, precisely those times normally associated with relaxing and enjoying leisure. Part-time work can seem to be an attractive option, particularly for women with children. As Sharpe (op. cit. p.187) points out, it can seem to be the ideal solution, providing some additional income for the family and a break from domestic routine, whilst leaving women with sufficient

time to fulfil their domestic and familial obligations. However, once both sets of demands have been met, even part-time employees may find they have little time for leisure. This difficulty may be compounded by the nature of the part-time work which is available, much of which is characterised by poor wages and working conditions, and little job security. Employers regard part-time work as 'women's work' and, as the following quote from an employer in a recent study indicates, they often feel that the demand for part-time work is such that they have little obligation to improve their employment practice:

> 'These women are not going to be too concerned with their employment rights. For many they are anxious to return to work for social contact.'
> (Maguire 1991, p.134)

Whilst this quote recognises the importance of work-related sociability, it fails to acknowledge that many women are forced into seeking part-time work out of economic necessity.

Furthermore, existing research indicates that women in either part-time or full-time employment are unlikely to find that their participation in the labour market results in any substantial redistribution of household tasks (Harper and Richards 1979, Edgell 1980, Hunt 1980), and consequently finding time for leisure may be difficult.

However, as was noted above, paid work does not only constrain or disadvantage women's access to leisure. It can also be have

beneficial influences in so far as it can raise women's self
esteem and improve their bargaining position within the
household. Having a degree of economic independence means that
women may be less subject to male control and more powerful in
domestic decision making (Pahl 1991, Sharpe 1984). Pahl notes:

> 'Research on decision making in marriage has suggested that
> the partner with the largest income is likely to play a more
> dominant part in decision making and that wives are likely
> to have greater decision making power if they are in paid
> employment rather than working at home.'
> (Pahl 1991, p.47)

Where leisure is concerned, womens's participation may no longer
depend on the approval and therefore the financial support of
male partners. Even allowing for the comparatively low levels of
many women's earnings, the symbolic importance of access to even
a small independent income can have positive repercussions for
women's confidence and assertiveness in household negotiations,
including negotiations over leisure. A degree of financial
independence can also help women achieve an identity separate to
being a wife and/or mother, and can 'earn' women the right to
some autonomous leisure (Green, Hebron and Woodward 1990).
Aside from the benefits associated with having a degree of
financial independence, paid work often also had another obvious
benefit in providing women with a level of social contact which
might otherwise be lacking from their lives. The workplace
itself can be the site for sociability, 'having a laugh' or

chatting with colleagues. Westwood (1984) provides a good deal

of evidence of the thriving female culture to be found amongst

women workers. In some cases work also provides women with the

opportunity for nights out or other leisure activities outside of

work by widening women's social networks and increasing the

number of available companions.

5.4.7. Leisure and partners' employment

Although there is little available material which investigates in

any direct way the impact of men's employment patterns on women's

leisure, studies which explore the relationship between men's

employment and family life do provide some insights, as do some

studies which focus more directly upon family life (Edgell 1980,

Finch 1983, Pahl and Pahl 1971). These studies indicate women's

own routines are frequently tailored to fit the needs and demands

of male partners' patterns of work. One study which investigates

the incorporation of women into their male partner's work offers

a useful examination of the impact of men's work on their wives,

rather than studying its impact upon 'the family' (Finch 1983).

Finch notes:

> 'Certain features of the content and organisation of men's
> work typically imposes stuctures and constraints upon their
> wives' lives, obliging women to construct their own lives
> within the consequent limitations.'
>   (Finch 1983, p. 21)

She points out that not only do women structure their own time around the working lives of men, but that women also contribute to the work that men do, both directly in the case of certain professions and indirectly through domestic labour. Finch also notes that inequalities in the earning power of men and women mean that, in many cases:

> 'the range of lifestyle choices open to a wife are fundamentally governed by her husband's earnings.'
> (ibid.'

The tendency within many households to give precedence to a male partner's employment, often based on sound economic judgement, can operate as a constraint upon women's leisure. The interviews for this study indicated that when men's employment takes priority, the joint acceptance that women are responsible for caring for partners and children means that many women have to organise their own paid and unpaid work routines and their leisure patterns around those of their partners. In her study, Hunt (1980) discovered that:

> 'All the women...make adjustments to their husband's work. The preparation and serving of meals is planned to correspond to the wage earner's hours of work and leisure is also tailored to fit in with his movements.'
> (p.49)

This can be particularly disruptive when men work odd or irregular hours, shifts or overtime. Women may be called upon to provide meals and other services which fit badly with normal daily routines (Aubrey et. al. 1986) or they may simply be

expected to be around, as one of the interviewees in this study commented:

'He expects me to be in when he is in.'

Shiftwork patterns can be most disruptive to joint or family leisure, and to leisure outside the home. In the Sheffield survey, just under a third of the women with employed partners said that they themselves would go out more often if their partner worked better hours. Several interviewees commented on the way in which husbands' long working hours, especially working at the weekend, impinge upon their opportunities for leisure:

> 'My husband works all day Saturdays so I'm with the kids most of the time.'

> 'My husband works every weekend, so there's only like afternoons, and after you've had your dinner.'

A further way in which partners' work can constrain women's leisure, particularly for middle class women, is the extent to which women may be called upon to service their partners' careers by entertaining their colleagues and clients. In her study, Finch (op. cit.) comments that the significance of this function should not be underestimated. Similarly, Deem (1982) notes:

> 'Women with husbands or partners involved in running businesses found that they had to spend time visiting business colleagues, attending social functions and entertaining business acquaintances, which they might otherwise have spent on their own leisure.'
> (p.35)

The interviews with middle class women certainly support this

finding. As one respondent, a woman in full-time employment who
was also the wife of a company director, put it:

> '...my husband will ring up and say "we're coming home late,
> can you find us something to eat?". It doesn't happen very
> often, but occasionally it does. [...] I suppose it's an
> element of backing my husband up in his work.'

In addition to being called upon to entertain, women may also
find that they are required to accompany their husbands to a
range of social functions related to their work. Whilst these
may be a source of pleasure, they can also involve an element of
duty which means they are not perceived wholly as leisure.
Depending on the frequency with which they occur, they can erode
women's already limited free time.

5.4.8 Leisure and unemployment

A growing literature documents the impact of unemployment on
daily life and family relationships (Campbell 1984, Coyle 1984,
McKee and Bell 1986, Callender 1987). Lack of financial
resources is the most obvious and widespread effect of
unemployment, even when workers have received redundancy
payments. For unemployed women, living on state benefits results
in progressively declining standards of living. When finances
are strained to the limit to provide the necessities of food,
shelter and clothing, there is little left for spending on
leisure. In a study of women previously employed in a clothing
factory, Callender (1987) discusses the changes in spending which

were adopted by the newly redundant women:

> 'They curtailed their social activities, they abandoned
> trying to save, they dispensed with their holiday plans,
> home improvements and repairs, their cars, telephones and
> televisions.'
>   (Callender 1987, p. 151)

Leisure was an area where the women made immdiate economies:

> 'A major economy all the women faced was a reduction in
> their social lives. They could no longer afford to go to
> pubs, clubs or bingo, nor for the occasional day out or
> trip. These activities had to be either totally abandoned or
> curtailed. Fun was an expensive commodity that many of the
> women could no longer afford.'
>   (ibid. p. 153)

Callender notes that this was not the case for men in the

households she studied, who, regardless of their own employment

status, retained at least some money for personal leisure

spending.

Aside from lacking financial resources for leisure, unemployed

women are also likely to suffer from low self esteem and

confidence, and social isolation. Exclusion from the world of

paid work can cause women's social networks to shrink

considerably, and women's already home centered lifestyles may

become increasingly privatised and circumscribed. The Sheffield

survey indicated low participation rates in both home based and

out of home activities for unemployed women and for women who had

unemployed male partners.

Male partners' unemployment can operate as a serious limitation

upon leisure in a number of ways. It is often not financially

worthwhile for a woman living with an unemployed man to go out to work, given the current system of state benefits and the differential between men's and women's wages. For women who have been previously employed this can mean the loss of a work-related social life. Whilst some unemployed men may increase their contribution to domestic work and childcare, the work of McKee and Bell (op. cit.) indicates that this is not usually the case. Because male unemployment is widely seen as a threat to a man's identity and self-confidence, his greater participation in what had hitherto been defined as women's work could be seen as a further blow to male self esteem.

In some cases, women's domestic workload is increased by having a man around the house for much of the time. This male presence can make women feel unable to invite their friends to the house and can inhibit them from staying to chat to other women at the shops or school gates, for example. McKee and Bell (1983) note that not only do women restrict their own contact with their friends, but that friends might also feel as if they should stay away for fear of intruding upon marital privacy. They also point out that some unemployed men actively discourage their wives from having any kind of social life.

The presence of an unemployed partner can also make women feel as though they should be constantly busy, feeling guilty if their partner perceives them to be 'doing nothing'. Not only does

living on a limited income mean that shopping and the preparation of meals, for example, become more time consuming, but women may also feel that an ever present partner is judging their standards of housekeeping and childcare, and may therefore feel obliged to spend more time on domestic work.

5.4.9 Leisure, sexuality and social control

The preceding sections have examined the extent to which a range of structural divisions affect women's access to leisure, and their experiences of it. Material inequalities make it difficult to speak of women as an homogeneous group. However, within the structures of patriarchy, women as a group do share a subordinate position which, it was argued above, is negotiated and maintained primarily through consent rather than coercion. Despite the different experiences of women, structured as they are by class, ethnic origin, age, family and employment status and sexual preference, the ideological construction of femininity cuts across all our lives. Central to definitions of femininity are particular assumptions about female sexuality.

Commonsense ideas about female sexuality typically divide women into two categories which have endured for so long that their continuing currency is all the more remarkable. The fundamental distinction is between good, respectable, moral heterosexual women, and immoral, promiscuous heterosexual women. (Women who

are anything other than heterosexual are still likely to be seen as abnormal or exceptional, and therefore to fall outside the dominant typology). The legitimate expression of female sexuality comes within the context of a monogomous heterosexual and, ideally, romantic relationship. A rightward shift in the moral climate in the U.K. during the last decade has encouraged and endorsed 'family values' and has condemned promiscuity, but within this a double standard still pertains.

The important considerations for women's leisure are the ways in which women's sexuality and respectability are policed and controlled. Leisure for all women is highly constrained by dominant assumptions about what constitutes acceptable female behaviour. Once identified as primarily wives and mothers, or potentially so, women's sexual identities and social behaviour are required to conform to acceptable norms.

Without resorting to a crude conspiratorial model, it is possible to identify the ways in which the structures of patriarchy legitimate the regulation of women's lives on a day to day basis. It was noted above how men's unhelpfulness or unwillingness in relation to childcare, for example, can serve as an effective way of preventing women from having access to leisure. Similarly, women who are economically dependent on men who deny them money for personal spending are likely to find their desires for autonomous leisure largely thwarted. It is surprising to

discover just how far women's leisure, an area of apparent autonomy, is controlled by men in both the private and the public sphere.

In their work on domestic violence, the Dobashes noted:

> 'The dictum that a woman's place is in the home doesn't so much mean that she shall not go out to work, but that she should not go out to play.'
> (Dobash and Dobash 1979, p.91)

They chronicle the ways in which, historically, husbands have been legally allowed and even encouraged to chastise wives who were unsatisfactory in fulfilling their wifely duties. This went hand in hand with a moral double standard which required wives, but not necessarily husbands, to be respectable and circumspect in their behaviour. Smart and Smart (1978) also note the way in which the control of women by individual male partners has historically been regarded as legitimate.

The interview data in this study indicate a range of strategies which men employ in order to restrict their partners' leisure. Aside from those mentioned above, a common method is to use women's own feelings of guilt as a preventative measure. Male partners of women with children may be able to regulate women's participation in leisure pastimes by reminding them of their roles as mothers. Other strategies used during negotiations over access to leisure can be viewed as points along a continuum, ranging from apparently minor forms of control such as sulking,

through to the explicit exercise of male authority, actually forbidding the woman to participate. This may be backed up by threatened or actual physical violence. Binney et al.'s study (1981) of battered women, and Burgoyne and Clark's (1984) study of divorce and remarriage (both conducted in Sheffield) have provided substantial evidence of violence being used by husbands against wives in negotiations over leisure. Similarly, Dobash and Dobash (op. cit.) found it a common occurrence for husbands to set limits on the amount of time wives may spend away from home for social activities.

The interviews indicated that male disapproval and displeasure is particularly marked in relation to drinking alcohol, and this is a point at which sexuality becomes most overtly an issue. It seems that much of men's resistance to women's independent leisure, especially when it involves consumption of alcohol, or going into leisure venues where alcohol is served, relates to male anxieties about their partner's sexual behaviour. The pub has long been regarded as a bastion of masculine culture, and access to pubs for 'respectable' women has typically been through their male partners. Both Whitehead (1976) and Westwood (1984) have recorded the high degree of sexual antagonism and objectification which unaccompanied women are subjected to in pubs and nightclubs. Even if women go to pubs in the company of other women, they are often assumed to be available and expected

to be receptive to sexual advances from men. In the interviews, women mentioned their partners' jealousy at the possibility of them receiving attention from other men, and attributed their partners' restrictive behaviour to this jealousy and to the fear that the women would grasp the opportunity to form relationships with other men. The opportunities offered by many out of the home activities may be regarded as a threat to the established order, calling into question both the woman's status as 'respectable' and the man's status as the keeper of her sexuality.

Individual male control over women's behaviour cannot be separated from the ways in which women's behaviour is regulated in public places. Fundamental to this is the question of women's right to occupy certain public spaces. Women's proper place has traditionally been seen as the domestic sphere, with the public sphere being the domain of men. Men have a range of strategies for maintaining their control of public spaces and for indicating to women that they are not welcome there. In the Sheffield survey, the majority of women reported that they would not feel comfortable going alone to a range of leisure venues, including pubs, wine bars, social clubs, cinemas, theatres, discos, nightclubs, sports or health clubs. A smaller proportion of women, especially older women, said they would not even feel comfortable going there with female friends. Most of the women

felt that it is still not appropriate for a woman to walk into a pub on her own. This discomfort arises from the assumption that unescorted women in leisure venues are 'asking' to be picked up, and from the unwelcome male attention which may accompany this belief.

The social control of women in many public spaces and the effective exclusion of women from others can take a number of forms. Interviewees reported a range of behaviour used by men from silent disapproval, through a variety of joking and riduculing behaviour and sexual innuendo, to open hostility. This supports Whitehead's study of sexual antagonism (op. cit.). Underlying these strategies may be the threat of physical violence, ensuring that women know that should non-coercive methods fail, men have the option of using direct coercion.

Men not only control public spaces, but also control access to them. Fear of being out alone after dark can and does severely restrict the ways in which women are able to spend their leisure time. Many women are afraid to use public transport after dark or late at night, whilst for others it is having to walk to bus stops and wait there which deters them. The findings of the second British Crime Survey state that half the women interviewed only went out after dark if accompanied , and 40% were very worried about being raped (Hough and Mayhew, 1985). Despite statistical evidence that violent attacks upon women are most

likely to occur in their own homes and to be perpetrated by
someone known to them, the majority of women who were interviewed
for this study regarded the possibility of physical attack in a
public space a very real threat:

> 'I think there's more likelihood of a woman being attacked
> than a man.'

> 'That fear is always there.'

Deeply held norms about appropriate places for women to be are
reinforced by both the fear and the actuality of male violence.
Women are deemed to be responsible not only for their own
behaviour and propriety, but also for that of the men they come
into contact with. Police comments upon and media coverage of
reported sexual attacks highlight the distinction between what is
perceived as legitimate and illegitimate violence against women.
They frequently focus upon the time and place of the attack, what
the woman was wearing, her relationship if any with the attacker,
as well as drawing in the woman's sexual history as a means of
establishing whether or not she is an 'innocent' victim. Women
may be seen as culpable if they are out after dark unescorted:

> 'A lot of it is still attitudes: that is, if you're on your
> own you're fair game, you know, and especially for some
> reason once it's dark.'

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the place of leisure within women's
lives as a whole, drawing on the interview data generated within

this study, but situating this within the context of a range of other empirical sources which examine not just leisure per se, but also the broader social, economic and political considerations which structure everyday life. Existing survey material provides some evidence of gender differences in leisure, particularly men's relative privilege with regard to out of home leisure. However, there are drawbacks with a reliance on survey material to deepen our understanding of the meaning of leisure. Asking research subjects about their participation in a range of activities can obscure very real experiential differences. Leisure is not simply a series of activities or innocent practices; it is an area of social life in which questions of power and politics intervene, and in which meanings and understandings are played out, reproduced, negotiated or challenged. The role of ideology, specifically in the form of prevailing definitions of masculinity and femininity, needs to be taken into account in analyses of leisure.

Women's access to leisure, then, is constrained by a series of material circumstances and related ideas about what it means to be a woman. Social class, income, race, age and stage in the family life cycle, employment status (both women's own and that of partners) - all these divisions interact with gender to structure women's leisure. Furthermore, issues and assumptions about sexuality and sexual behaviour bolster a system whereby men

are able to regulate women's behaviour, both individually and collectively. Evidence to support these assertions comes from a small number of feminist investigations of women's leisure, but is enhanced by studies which ostensibly explore other areas of women's lives, such as employment or the family. Taken together, this material provides a convincing argument that, for the majority of women, leisure is far from being an arena of free choice and freedom from constraint. Whilst undoubtably some choices can be exercised over leisure, women's still subordinate position means that these choices are made within a more circumscribed context than that experienced by men.

CHAPTER 6: <u>CASE STUDIES</u>

Introduction

The previous chapter provided a generalised overview of the factors and processes which structure and influence the kind of leisure experiences which women in different social circumstances might have. This chapter aims to cover in more detail the experiences of particular groups of women: working class women with young children, middle class women with older children, lone parents, women with unemployed partners and young single women. The Sheffield survey of the leisure experiences of 700 women, referred to in Chapter 3 and reported in full in Green, Hebron and Woodward (1987), formed the point of departure for this subsequent qualitative study. It raised a number of hypotheses which can be explored more fully here. The survey indicated that whilst women to some extent share certain experiences of leisure as a consequence of their gender, there are nevertheless important differences between women in the ways in which their lives in general and their leisure in particular are structured. The survey identified social class, age, stage in the family life cycle, level of household and personal income and employment status (with reference to both women's own employment and that of male partners) as important structuring variables. As was

discussed in Chapter 5, these factors are rarely mutually exclusive. Therefore, this discussion of five case studies aims to highlight both points of communality and also points of difference between women in a range of socio-structural positions.

The necessarily small numbers of women who were interviewed in the course of this research make it unsafe to make generalisations on the strength of the interview data alone. Whilst these data are enormously illuminating at the level of recording and comparing the ways in which a range of women subjectively perceive and experience leisure, in the following discussion they are also contextualised, where appropriate, by referring back to the findings of the original survey. What follows then is perhaps best described as a series of 'snapshots' of the differential experiences of a small number of women, set within the broader picture of available information both from the Sheffield survey and from other relevant research on women in comparable circumstances.

After some initial discussion of the respondents themselves and their relationship to the survey, the analysis of the interviews is organised to look firstly at women's own perceptions and attitudes to leisure, including feelings of entitlement and their own definitions of leisure, to explore the extent to which leisure is a meaningful concept for women. Secondly, the women's

own access to leisure is discussed, in terms of constraints and enabling factors. Finally, in this context, women's actual experiences of leisure are documented. What is provided then is the women's own accounts of their leisure, rather than counted or observed behaviour. This can be related back, for example, to quantitative data collected during the survey about leisure activities, amount of free time and so on. However, it is precisely these subjective accounts which can uncover the complexity and contradictions which are arguably central to women's experiences.

6.1 WORKING CLASS WOMEN, MARRIED WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

6.1.1 The Respondents

66 of the Sheffield survey sample of 707 women were working class
women who were married with pre-school children. (Appendix 1
gives details of the way in which social class was defined in the
original study). Of the survey respondents in this group, 72%
were not participating in any paid employment, and were therefore
financially reliant on their partner's earnings. Women in this
group were also less likely to have access to other material
resources for leisure, such as a car. 40% of C2/DE households in
the survey did not own a car, compared with only 5% of AB/C1
households. Well under a third of the women with working class
partners held a driving licence, compared with over 80% of middle
class women. Working class women were also those most likely to
have completed their education at the minimum school leaving age
and consequently to have fewer, if any, formal qualifications.
The following women and their husbands were interviewed:

> 1. Aged 30, married with one child (3 years old) and was
> expecting a second at the time of the interview. She worked
> part-time (alternate Saturday mornings) as a bank clerk. Her
> husband was a self-employed builder. She left school at the
> age of 18 with 'O' and 'A' levels and had clerical
> qualifications. The household income was around £8,500 per
> annum (1). They lived in a house which they were buying and
> they owned a car which she drove daily.

> 2. Aged 28, married with two children (one and two years
> old). She was a full time housewife who gave up work as a
> swimming pool attendant to have her first child. Her
> husband was working as a swimming pool attendant. She left

school aged 16 with no formal qualifications. The household income was around £5,500 per annum. They lived in a house which they were buying and they owned a car which she never drove as she did not have a licence.

3. Aged 30, married with two children (one and four years old). She was a full time housewife who gave up work as an insurance clerk to have her first child. Her husband was employed as a joiner. She left school aged 16 with C.S.E.'s. The household income was around £7,000 per annum. They were buying their own house and owned a car which she sometimes drove.

4. Aged 28, married with one child (four years old). She was a full time housewife, having left her part time emploment as a Care Assistant due to ill health. Her husband was employed as a Heavy Goods Vehicle driver for the local council. She left school aged 15 with no formal qualifications. The household income was around £7,000 per annum. They were buying their own house and had a car which she never drove as she did not have a licence.

5. Aged 26, married with two children (seven and four years old). She was a full time housewife who gave up work as a receptionist when she had her first child. Her husband was employed as an electrician. She left school at 16 with 'O' levels, and had clerical qualifications. She did not know what the household income was, but received about £30 per week housekeeping. They lived in a house which they were buying, they did not have a car and she did not have a driving licence.

(1) All salaries given are at 1984 prices. Average annual earnings in 1984 were £9,256 (gross) for men, £6084 (gross) for women (Social Trends 1986).

6.1.2 Definitions And Perceptions Of Leisure

Definitions of leisure for the women in this group centred around

the notion of choice, of being able to please oneself:

> 'Time when you're doing things you really want to do instead of things you've got to do. When you're left with a choice really.'

For these women, who spent much of their time being on call to the needs of children and partners, the idea of being able to have some time when they could be free of these demands was very important. Although these women reported that the majority of their leisure time was spent with their partners, it also emerged that much of what they defined as leisure was in fact solitary. The important consideration seemed to be that of being able simply to sit down and read or watch a television programme without being interrupted.

> 'Leisure to me is being on my own and just being able to sit and read a book, sit and knit without him (child) saying "Can I have this? Can I have that? Can I do this? Can I do that?"'

Although these mothers did talk about sociability as being important, this was often secondary to their definition of leisure as being essentially relaxing or recuperative. This meant that time categorised as leisure often involved being away from or separate from the children with whom they spend so much of their time:

> 'It's evening time, at night, when the kids are in bed.'

Of course even when children are in bed there were no guarantees that the mothers' leisure would not be interrupted, so any form of relaxation had to be seen in relative rather than absolute terms.

It is clear from the following comment about men and women's

differential access to free time, that certainly one of the women

saw her childcare and housework as equivalent to employment:

> 'Some men would think that if you're staying at home all day
> and you're not doing anything, that you've got lots of free
> time, they don't...it's a sort of non-career, isn't it, to
> some people, staying at home...I think when men's time is
> when they've finished work, time is free time. Whereas a
> woman usually, seems as though you can be called upon at any
> time, to go back to work, sort of, at three o'clock in the
> morning or whatever time it happens to be.'

The consensus amongst the women interviewed in this group was

that men do have more time for leisure than women,and that this

is a consequence of women's greater domestic and familial

responsibilites:

> Q. Who would you say has the most free time, generally
> speaking, women or men?
> A. Men I suppose, really, because women are working all the
> time, with cooking and thing like that. Men don't do that.
> Well, some men do, but mine doesn't.

Two of the women thought that men have a greater choice of

leisure activities, and again the pub was mentioned as a highly

gender specific leisure venue. In the discussion of gender

differences in leisure, one woman raised the following crucial

point:

> 'I think men tend to have more money to spend on leisure
> than women do. Women get money for leisure and spend
> it on other things sometimes.'

She went on to elaborate the point, saying that women's own

perceived sense of responsibility leads them to sacrifice

personal spending money to buy either essentials or treats for

their children, an action which men would be less likely to consider.

6.1.3 Access to Leisure

The survey showed that 60% of mothers with young children found it difficult to set time aside for themselves, compared with 32% of the sample as a whole. They were the most likely to say that their daytime free time was fragmented ('odd bits of time here and there'), and they had the least free time at the weekend of any of the women surveyed. Lack of time, along with lack of money, form the two most significant constraints on women's access to leisure.

Lack of time is primarily a consequence of the women's responsibility for childcare and domestic work. Each of the women had given up full time work to care for their child(ren) and only one of the women was engaged in any form of paid work at the time of the study, and at a half day every two weeks that was extremely part-time. Whilst the practicalities of child care were not seen as exclusively the role of women, it was certainly assumed that children were women's responsibility, in the same way that earning enough to keep the family fed and clothed was assumed to be men's. It was left to women to organise childcare and to be chiefly responsible both for looking after the children themselves or for making alternative arrangements, finding

babysitters and so on if necessary.

Working class women, often resident in or near to the area in which they grew up, were most likely to turn to their mothers or mothers-in-law or other female relatives if they needed someone to look after their children. The women interviewed all had strong extended family networks, and shared an assumption that if alternative childcare was needed, then another family member was the most appropriate carer. This parallels Wimbush's (1985) finding that, whilst some mothers would use friends as babysitters, most preferred to keep childcare within the family, and thus avoid the potentially judgemental gossip networks about standards of childcare and domesticity. However, some of the Sheffield women felt guilty about relying too much on close family members, and worried about 'putting upon' them. The following quote highlights the dependency of mothers on family networks:

> 'We're really stuck at the moment, because my dad's poorly now, so I'm a bit reluctant to ask my mum and dad, and my sister's courting, and that's about it really. I'm stuck.'

Only one of the interviewees reported having no problems in finding babysitters, largely because her active involvement with her local church furnished her with a comparatively extensive social network of acceptable sitters.

Although all the women who were interviewed were strongly in favour of mothers having some time free from their children

(indeed they spoke of this as being a necessity), they felt ambivalent about asking other people to look after their child(ren) in order to make this possible. They clearly felt limited in the amount of time it was reasonable to ask someone to mind their child, and some felt that it was only appropriate to leave children with their fathers for any extended period of time:

> 'I wouldn't really have left him with anybody for a full day. My mum has him for the afternoon, you know, but I wouldn't really leave him with anyone but my husband for a full day, unless it was an exception.'

There was also a sense in which the mothers did not feel it was legitimate to leave their child with someone else simply in order that they could pursue a leisure activity:

> 'I only feel justified in leaving him if I'm going to work. I wouldn't feel happy leaving him with someone whilst I just went swimming or...I'd take him with me and he does things with me.'

The practical demands of childcare, the obligation to fit activities around the timetable of children's needs or to engage in activities in which children can also participate, coupled with women's feelings of guilt over asking someone else to look after their child(ren) have obvious consequences not just for the amount of time women had available for leisure, but also for the kinds of activities which were possible or considered appropriate. Each of the women interviewed spoke about changed perceptions of self upon becoming a mother, and agreed that

motherhood confers a status of maturity which carries with it social expectations about responsible and (most crucially) respectable behaviour.

In addition to their responsibility for childcare, women in this group were also principally responsible for domestic work. The fact that these were women without significant paid work outside the home meant that they were by and large operating within a very traditional division of domestic labour. Each of the women's partners made some contribution to housework, but this was often fairly negligible in practical terms and certainly constituted helping out rather than any more equitable division of responsibilities. This was justified by the women themselves on the grounds that it was unreasonable to expect men in full time work to contribute more when they themselves had taken on the role of housewife along with their role as mothers.

Q. What does your husband do in the way of housework and childcare?
A. Not an awful lot - but he does do some.
Q. And are you quite happy about the amount he does?
A. I have to sometimes give him a reminder to do more things, but yes, I think so, because he works hard, he works seven days a week mostly.

Q. Does your husband do any housework or childcare?
A. Well he just, he doesn't do anything really...he will hoover up for me if I do ask him for a certain reason. I don't really ask him to do it unless I'm ill or something like that. If he's not working or not busy he'll do quite a bit with the children.

> Q. Are you quite happy with what he does around the house?
> A. Yes. He works a lot of overtime and he's not at home a lot anyway.

Both partners in these couples perceived the domestic domain as women's responsibility, and whilst men are increasingly likely to take some interest and actively participate in the bringing up of children, they were less keen to involve themselves in the mundane and repetitious aspects of domestic labour. Nevertheless, those contributions which they did make were frequently the result of their wives persistence:

> Q. What does your husband do in the way of housework and looking after the kids?
> A. He's not too bad really, he'll do...well, he'll do anything if I ask him to, he doesn't bother otherwise. He'll wash the pots after tea and he helps with the kids, gets them bathed and ready for bed.
> Q. Has the amount of housework he's done been the same throughout the period that you've been married?
> A. No, at first he didn't do anything at all, but he's come round a bit since then.
> Q. Have you had to work on him?
> A. Yes, I have. He thinks I've got an easy time at home with these two.

For one husband, the experience of looking after his son whilst his wife went out to work one day each week had led to a greater understanding of what it means to be a housewife and mother:

> 'I think it's been quite good for him to have a day at home every week, because he realises what it's like. He's enjoyed it but he's said he'd rather go out to work. He doesn't think it's an easy option being at home, put it like that. He realises there are days when you just don't get anything done. If the baby's been in a bad mood you don't get a lot done, you don't have much to show for eight hours at home.'

149

Women's own feelings about their combined domestic and maternal role were quite mixed. When asked about the positive aspects, the interviewees perceived themselves as having a greater degree of autonomy and as being more in control of the way in which their time was structured than when they were employed. This feeling was rather contradicted by dissatisfaction with the repetitive nature of their lives:

> Q. What do you think are the best things about being a housewife?
> A. Well, it's got its own rewards when you've got children, anyway. It's nice just to be able to do what you want to do, sort of. You can fit things in when you're not tied to too much of a routine.
> Q. And what about the worst things?
> A. It's a bit boring. It's just the thought of the same jobs over and over again that I never finish.

> Q. What are the best things about being a housewife?
> A. Not a lot. Well I mean you're your own boss. I've only got to do what I want to do. Only in the last three weeks the little boy has started school so he only goes half a day so I have to make sure I'm back, but then when I've taken him to school I'm very much my own boss.
> Q. And what about the worst things?
> A. Every day is the same. Doing the same thing day after day.

So it seems that time which is apparently free is still relatively constrained, albeit in a rather different way to the time of an employee who is contracted to be at work between certain hours. A housewife's time is constrained by the needs and wants of children and partner, and by the necessity to carry out at least basic housework. This makes for a pattern of free

time which is fitted in around other demands, rather than a completely autonomous schedule. Furthermore, the acknowledgement by the interviewees that their lives were in fact very repetitive indicates either that the women were particularly poor at harnessing their apparent freedom, or indeed that this freedom was notional rather than actual.

Aside from the constraints imposed by pressures on their time and their domestic and maternal responsibities, the most significant factor which limited these women's enjoyment of leisure was lack of money. The women interviewed in this category were in households reliant on one relatively modest wage, which was often severely stretched to cover even necessary basic expenditure. For instance, one household had sold their car when the arrival of their second child had necessitated a move to a larger house. Four out of the five households organised their finances by means of a joint account, whilst the in the fifth household one woman did not know what her husband's earnings amounted to, and was given a weekly housekeeping allowance from him. As was noted in the previous chapter, in households where only one partner is earning, there can be inequalities in terms of how money is allocated, particularly in relation to personal or leisure spending. No matter how enlightened the household accounting system, there still prevails an assumption that men are not only the earners of the 'family wage', but also that having worked to

earn it, they are entitled to some money for leisure spending. The domestic work which women do, often unrecognised and always unwaged does not carry the same entitlement. Particularly when money is tight, it seems hard for husbands not to feel at least slightly aggrieved at the idea, never mind the actuality, of their wives spending their hard earned money on their own leisure.

As was noted earlier, only one of the working class mothers had any kind of paid employment. However, two others had their own methods of earning some personal income, which dovetailed neatly with the structures of their lifestyles: one by running the local playgroup, the other by sewing babies' bootees from home. Although neither of these were particularly lucrative, they did provide the women with at least some money of their own. It is questionable, however, whether this actually constituted personal spending money, or whether it was simply absorbed into helping the 'family wage' stretch a little further. When questioned about what would be needed to improve the quality of their leisure, 'money' was the resounding reply. The women were fairly modest in their monetary aspirations, and were at pains to point out that they were not hankering to be wealthy, but would like to be 'comfortable'. As an example of what this would mean in practice, one woman spoke longingly of her desire to spend a holiday in an hotel, rather than in their usual caravan by the

sea.

Allied to a lack of money for leisure spending was a shortage of other material resources, such as a car. As has already been noted, a comparatively low proportion of women in this group have full driving licences, and even for those women who can drive, getting access to a car can vary from difficult to virtually impossible. Like 'the family wage', 'the family car' is often no such thing. If men use the car as part of their work, or to travel to and from work, women are effectively denied access to it for substantial periods of time. Men assume control of the car and women's use is secondary and has to be negotiated. This is exacerbated by the tendency to regard cars as central to male culture, but of little concern or interest to women.

Assumptions about entitlement to resources for leisure overlapped with a series of other perceptual constraints which structure women's leisure. For the women in this group, these were fundamentally tied into their role as mothers and wives. Each of the women was asked about their leisure history, and each reported changes in their leisure at key transitional stages: courtship, marriage and motherhood. Courtship marked a move to more couple based leisure, and a falling off or curtailing of social activities done with friends, except perhaps with other couples. The Sheffield survey and the interviews corroborated other research which indicates that women are more likely to lose

contact with their friends than men are. This is a pattern which becomes more pronounced upon marriage. Each of the women described the process whereby marriage and the aquisition of a home led to a much more home based lifestyle, with much of their time and money being devoted to homemaking. However, so long as both partners were in paid work, they still tended to engage in a social life outside the home and to have evenings out together. The arrival of children marked a watershed in this respect, not just because resources were more limited and children were seen as primarily women's responsibility, but because motherhood carries with it notions of appropriate behaviour. All of the women felt that having their first child changed the way in which they saw themselves. Their entitlement to independent leisure, already circumscribed by their relationship with their partner, was diminished even further when they had the responsibility of a child to look after. So certain activities, such as going to a nightclub with a group of friends, fell some way outside the realm of sanctioned motherly behaviour. Ideas about sexuality, respectability and even age converge to prescribe limits to the ways in women with young children should behave.

A final perceptual constraint, which emerged unprompted from the interviews, concerns women's perceptions of their physical self. Three of the five women interviewed saw themselves as overweight, and mentioned this as a constraint on their leisure. Two felt

that if they were slimmer, they would have been more likely to participate in sporting activities and the third talked about how the possible pleasure to be gained from shopping for clothes was negated by the difficulty in finding clothes to fit.

6.1.4. Experience Of Leisure

Given the conditions which structure the lives of working class women, as outlined above, it is not surprising that much of their leisure is home based or home oriented. In this respect, the survey findings by and large replicated other quantitative analyses of leisure (such as the General Household Survey 1983 and Dixey and Talbot 1982). The Sheffield survey examined both the range of activities which the respondents ever do, and the frequency with which they are done. With regard to home based leisure, there was a surprising degree of homogeneity amongst the different groups of women. Watching television and reading featured significantly in the leisure time of most women, and this group of working class mothers was no exception. However, they were more likely than any other group in the survey to spend free time doing knitting, sewing and other crafts. It is possible to read this as both an extension of their domestic role, and a means of keeping spending down within tight family budgets. Whilst the survey revealed that women's stage in the life cycle has some bearing upon their participation in out of home leisure,

this appears to be a less crucial source of differentiation between women than is social class. Obviously the women in this case study were constrained on both counts. From the survey it appeared that working class women with young children were likely to spend more time visiting family than are any other group. As was indicated above, many of these women lived in or near to the area in which they grew up, so had close family networks. Mothers and sisters in particular are often sources of advice for women with children, and apart from any direct travelling costs, visiting family is an inexpensive leisure option for women with little disposable income. The survey also indicated that women in this group were less likely to go out for meals (presumably because lack of money prevents this), or to be members of clubs or societies.

Two of the women in this group had managed to retain a high level of commitment to those sporting activities which they had enjoyed before having children. Interestingly, this had happened despite their alienation from sport whilst at school. One woman was a regular attender at keep-fit classes and also played squash with her husband. The other played badminton and went swimming (with her sister in both cases), although at the time of the interview she had temporarily given up both activites due to the imminent arrival of her second child.

The women interviewed in this case study spent most of their

spare time with their partners and children, although as was noted earlier, most of the time which they categorised as leisure did not include their children. They had been spending much of their leisure time with partners since their courtship days, although the kinds of activities they engaged in had changed over the years. During courtship and marriage prior to the advent of children, they had more time and money for out of the home activities such as eating out, going to the cinema, going drinking or dancing. At the time of the interview joint nights out seemed to be largely restricted to special occasions such as birthdays or anniversaries, when the preferred activity was to go out for a meal with their partner and possibly one or two other couples. The women looked forward to these outings, which allow them to dress up and feel special, and which could also inject a spark of romance into their daily lives:

> 'The mood of the moment sweeps you along and you perhaps talk about things that perhaps you haven't said for a bit, because especially in our case we don't go out a lot. So you go out and hold hands and things like that, and I don't know, I just think it puts a little bit of spice into your marriage that's perhaps been lacking for a couple of months because you've got into a boring routine and not gone out.'

The need for a babysitter made these joint evenings out infrequent, and it might be assumed that a pattern of independent leisure would be more feasible for both partners. However, the strong ideology of couple based leisure as an ideal, combined with a lack of money, militated against this. Even if mothers of

young children desire this, there can be problems in finding companions with whom to do things. By this stage in the family life-cycle, the tendency is not only for women to have lost contact with their friends from their single days, but also with friends and colleagues who they may have known through their previous employment. So whilst men may have retained their friends or have made new ones through their work, social isolation is a problem for women who are at home looking after children. In the survey, some 40% of mothers of young children felt that lack of companions prevented them from doing more in their leisure time. Also, whilst it may seem perfectly 'natural' and socially acceptable for a man to go out for a drink now and then independent of his wife, it remains less acceptable for women to go out to the pub leaving husband and children behind. Nevertheless, the women interviewed did have some limited leisure independent of their partners. During the daytime when husbands were at work, mothers of young children were restricted to activities where they could take their child with them. Leisure was not seen as a legitimate reason to ask someone to mind their child(ren) in the daytime. Any daytime sociability tended to be highly informal and usually involved visiting immediate family, or other women with small children. In the survey, half the women with children under 5 said that they would go out more often if there were facilities where they could take their

children with them. This was re-iterated by the interviewees, who complained that all too often children's facilities make no provision for parents to meet or chat. Rather, parents simply drop children off at the door and return to collect them afterwards. The alternative may be to wait around in uncomfortable surroundings. Although this can offer opportunities for social contact, as Dixey and Talbot (op. cit.) note, this tends to be in spite of rather than because of any facilities offered. Interviewees felt that facilities which provided activities and supervision for children, combined with a space where they could meet and chat with other parents, would be best suited to their needs:

> 'We could do with a bit more for the parents, not just for the children'

> 'Just a general meeting place for the parents to get to know each other, have a cup of coffee or something and just a general chat.'

Occasionally children were left at home with partners in the evening, enabling women to have a 'girls' night out'. In such cases, the actual activities undertaken were far less important to the women concerned than the chance to have 'a laugh' and 'a good natter'. A night out with the girls would usually involve a drink in a pub (but meeting outside rather than inside the pub), or going out for an occasional pizza:

> Q. What sort of places do you go to?
> A. Just local pubs mainly. If there's something special

coming up like Christmas or something we try to go out
somewhere, probably in town, and have a meal.

A. I go to town with my girlfriends

A. Mainly I tend to go out in mixed groups, but if I do go
with women it'd be for a meal, or badminton.

One other independent leisure activity which several of the women

mentioned was going to jewellery or other kinds of 'parties' at

friends' or neighbours' houses. The selling purpose of such

events is contradictory: on the one hand there is a perhaps

unwelcome pressure to buy goods, whilst on the other hand it is

precisely their consumption oriented nature which makes them a

legitimate opportunity to go out in the evening. Shopping is

after all expected of women, especially if the items on sale are

home or child related (eg. Tupperware, Pippadee children's

clothing). In her study of Scottish working class mothers,

Wimbush (1985) also found such parties to be popular.

One woman talked about going out for a drink with her women

friends:

> 'We always have to meet outside, we never meet inside. Even
> though I know there's going to be half a dozen people
> waiting for me, I couldn't actually walk in on my own.'

The women in the case study emphasised the difference between

going out with their partners or in mixed company, and going out

with their female friends:

> 'The talk is a lot different - it is when we go out, anyway.

You say a lot more when you're out with the girls than you
would with your husband or in couples.'

'If you go out with the girls, you could go anywhere really
because it's just the talk really, that's what you go for, a
good natter.'

'We don't go out to drink a lot or anything like that, we
just go for a good talk and a chat...say things you probably
wouldn't say to your husband...have a good laugh.'

The idea of having a good laugh was crucial, and being able to do

this was regarded as a kind of safety-valve, a means of coping

with the stresses, strains (and boredoms) of everyday life.

However, nights out with the girls could be a source of friction

or conflict with partners. The couples interviewed each had

their own limits on what was and was not acceptable. Most

husbands did not object, so long as the women's nights our were

neither too frequent nor too costly. Mostly, the women

negotiated with their partners, and often used their partners'

independent leisure as a bargaining point. For one woman, the

fact that her (very occasional) nights out with her girlfriends

took her into a city centre nightclub was a major source of

conflict:

A. He doesn't like me to go to town at all.
Q. What is it that he objects to?
A. What I can get up to in town, I suppose. He just doesn't
like me going to nightclubs.
Q. Does he ever say you can't go?
A. He probably gets in a mood, but he knows I'll go anyway,
whether he says I can or not. He doesn't say I can't go
because he knows I'd just go.

In this case her husband's objections are clearly grounded in

sexual jealousy. Even though his wife would be going out for a good time with her girlfriends, he would be anxious that being in a nightclub would enable her to pick someone up or be picked up. He also had a further objection. His wife said:

> 'I think it's the money as well. He thinks I'm spending too much money, when we could go out together with it.'

It was clear from the interviews with husbands in this group that they were not happy about their wives pursuing independent leisure in public places such as nightclubs, where they might meet other men. A consensus emerged from the men interviewed that other men were not to be trusted, a view which was used to justify both their own unease about their wives going out without them, and the strategies they employed to restrict such outings, which usually involve various forms of sulking rather than direct requests or demands.

One woman who rarely went out alone thought that her husband would object if she did it regularly, but commented that she would also object to him having regular outings without her:

> 'Well, he doesn't object because it's so rare, and he knows where I am and who I'm with and it's just local so he doesn't object. And the same applies with him. If it got too regular, I think he'd go up the wall and so would I.'

From the survey, it seemed that working class women with young children were one of the groups who were least likely to have had a holiday during the preceeding twelve months. The women

interviewed were asked about their most recent holiday. All had had some kind of holiday in the previous two years. One woman had taken a package holiday in Majorca with her husband and child, whilst the other four had each spent a week with their husband and child(ren) in a seaside caravan (in Skegness in each case, a resort which is easily and fairly cheaply accessible from Sheffield). Holidays were likely to be fairly impromptu, and often determined by the availability of last minute or free accommodation, such as caravans owned by family or friends. But when holiday planning and organisation was necessary, this was typically done by the women:

> Q. Who plans holidays?
> A. I tend to. I tend to be the one with the ideas really.
> I mean obviously it's a joint thing to some extent, but it's
> usually me who takes the initiative and gets things
> planned.

> Q. Who plans the holidays?
> A. Me - otherwise we'd never go.

6.1.5 Summary

These working class mothers experienced substantial constraints on their access to leisure, which was reflected in their actual experiences of leisure. The demands placed upon their time by other family members led to a resounding consensus that leisure is, or should be, about pleasing oneself. Although these women spent the majority of their time with their children and male

partners, some felt that their real leisure time was time when they were completely on their own and able to act autonomously. Such time was extremely limited, given that within households they were seen as having the ongoing and ever present responsibility for childcare. Access to free time, especially anything other than fragmented time, was a problem. There was a recognition from these women that men were not subject to constraints upon their time to the same extent, as they do not have anything approaching the same level of domestic commitments. The women's lack of time for leisure was compounded by a lack of money and other material resources. Lack of any personal income was a major problem. Accordingly, leisure for these women was essentially home and family centered. Some daytime sociability was a possibility for those women who had friends or neighbours in a similar position, and the women often had strong family networks which offered both support and some practical help, such as babysitting. However, the women felt guilty about leaving their children for reasons which were seen as 'non-essential', which included their own leisure activities. Nights out with their partners were infrequent, because of the cost and because of the difficulty of finding babysitters. Some of the women had occasional nights out with other women friends, but these had to be negotiated with partners who sometimes objected either to the activities themselves or to the cost involved. In short, there

is little doubt that these women's status as 'mothers' had significant effects on their leisure, which was further constrained by their economic position.

6.2 MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN WITH OLDER OR ADULT CHILDREN

6.2.1 The Respondents

30 of the 707 survey respondents fell into this category (4%).

The survey indicated that women in this sub-group enjoyed a

comparatively high degree of material comfort, derived from their

higher than average household incomes. This was reflected in the

fact that 97% of this group were in households with at least one

car (compared with 64% of the sample as a whole), and a high

proportion of these women had full driving licences (82%). They

were also likely to have finished their education later than

average, and to have gained more formal and/or vocational

qualifications than women in the other groups.

The material used in this section derives from interviews with

the following women and their husbands:

> 1. Aged 42. She was married with two children: a daughter
> aged 19, who was away at university, and a son aged 18 who
> was still living at home. She was employed full time as a
> civil servant. Her husband was employed full time as a major
> in the army, recently posted abroad. They moved to Sheffield
> because of her husband's job, had lived there for three
> years and were buying their own home. She left full time
> education in her early twenties, after training to be a
> teacher. Their household income was over £11,500 per year
> and her personal income was around £5,500 per year. They
> had a household car which her husband had taken abroad with
> him, leaving her without access to a car.

> 2. Aged 43. She was married with three children, aged 21,
> 18 and 12 years. The two younger children were living at
> home. She worked full-time as a self employed shopkeeper and

her husband was employed full-time as a civil servant. They had lived in Sheffield for over ten years, and were buying their own home. She left full-time education aged 16, with commercial and clerical qualifications. Their household income was over £11,500 per year, and she was unwilling to disclose her personal income. She owned her own car which she drove daily.

3. Aged 51. She was married with three adult children, none of whom were living at home. She was employed full-time as a nursery teacher, and her husband, previously a polytechnic lecturer, was self employed doing some part-time tuition and some voluntary work. They had lived in Sheffield for over ten years and owned their home. She left school aged 17 with 'A' levels, and returned to full time education in her forties to train as a teacher. Their household income was over £11,500 per year, and her personal income was between £7,500 and £9,499 per year. They had a household car which she drove occasionally.

4. Aged 54. She was married with two adult children, neither of whom were living at home. During academic term time only she was employed full-time as a finance assistant. Her husband was the managing director of an engineering firm. They had lived in Sheffield for over ten years, and owned their home. Her mother lived nearby and required visiting several times each week. She left school aged 17 and went on to commercial college. Their gross household income was over £11,500 and her own income is between £2,500 and £4,499 per year. They had two household cars, one of which was used by her and shared by her son when he returned home during college holidays.

5. Aged 57. She was married with three adult children, none of whom was living at home. She was employed part-time as a waitress, working between 14 and 36 hours per week. Her husband was the director of a sheet metal and engineering company. She had lived in Sheffield for over ten years and they were buying their own home. She left school aged 14, with no formal qualifications. She did not know what the household income was and was unwilling to disclose her personal income. She had her own car, which she drove daily.

6.2.2 Definitions and Perceptions of Leisure

With four of the women in this group employed full-time, and one employed part-time, it is perhaps not surprising that leisure, for them, tended to be conceptualised in terms of its relationship to paid work. Typical definitions included:

'Something which I do outside work, completely separate from my work, my job, which gives me pleasure and which helps me to relax.'

'It's being able to do what you want to do instead of having to go to work'

'Well, mainly because of the hours I work, if I'm talking about leisure, I'm talking about not doing anything at all - really relaxing.'

None of the women in this group went out to work because of basic economic need, and they all enjoyed their work for a variety of reasons, most usually because of the social contact which it provided. Leisure was characterised as different from work because of the potential for relaxation and 'switching off' which it offered. However, because women in this sub-group were employed out of choice, it was clear that it was not necessarily easy to draw distinctions. One woman distinguished between work and leisure on straightforward economic grounds:

Q. What do you think it is that makes leisure different to work?
A. Hmmn. Now then, I don't know. I suppose it's more enjoyable than work. I mean, I enjoy work, but I get paid for that. I don't get paid for what I consider is my leisure time, and whereas the pay isn't the be-all-and-end-all of going to work, you do associate work with something

168

you're paid for, whereas leisure isn't. But on the other hand, I'm not saying I don't get pleasure from going out to work. I do. So there's pleasure in both leisure and work, but somehow, always at the back of your mind, when you think of work you think of something that you're paid to do.

All except one of the women felt that leisure was important, not least because of the opportunity it gave to re-charge ones batteries. One woman commented that as she gets older, leisure becomes more important, and she consequently had plans to change from full to part-time employment in order to devote more time to one of her favourite leisure activities, gardening.

Three of the women interviewed felt that men 'definitely' or 'probably' have more free time than women, remarking that women's domestic labour leaves them with less unequivocally free time than men, whose time outside the working day is not so constrained. It is interesting to note that the remaining two women, who thought that women have more free time than men, were attempting to think in general terms rather than of their own circumstances. In so doing they were thinking of women not in paid work, despite their own circumstances as employees. When asked about differences in relation to the range of activities open to men and women, four of the interviewees felt that men have a greater choice:

'I think men can do a lot more things'

'I would say that men probably have a lot more choice, and of the places they can go to spend their leisure time.'

The other interviewee described different kinds of activities as gender specific, but felt that in absolute terms, neither gender had particularly more or less activities open to them:

> 'I don't think there's a great deal of difference. The opportunity is there for anyone who really wants to take part, equally, men and women.'

For women who did perceive an inequality, they freqently cited access to pubs as the most significant or obvious example of men's greater choice.

6.2.3. Access To Leisure

In the survey, middle class women in paid employment proved likely to suffer from lack of time for leisure. For this group, it is also necessary to take account of women's stage in the family life cycle. None of these women had major childcare responsibilities by this stage in their lives, and in fact only one of the interviewees felt she was seriously disadvantaged in the amount of free time which she had. Her working day as a shopkeeper often ran from 7a.m. to well after 10p.m., clearly leaving her little time for leisure. For three of the remaining women in this subgroup, the pattern of their employment meant that their free time came in the evenings and weekends, whereas for the fourth woman the irregular hours which she worked as a waitress made her leisure time more fragmented. In the survey, the age of women's children had a marked effect on the amount of

free time available to women at weekends, with 61% of women with children aged 16 or older having five or more hours of free time, compared with 47% of women with young children. Women at this stage of the life cycle had a comparatively high level of satisfaction with the amount of free time they have (53% are satisfied compared with 40% of women with young children).

So for most of these women, taking account of the obvious structuring effect of their hours of work, access to time for leisure was relatively unconstrained. However, one factor which did further impinge upon their leisure time was the unequal division of domestic labour. In these households where both partners go out to work and children are either non-resident or virtually grown up, the women we interviewed still took on - or were left with - a disproportionate amount of domestic work. In only one household, where the husband was employed part-time, was the housework divided more or less equally. For the rest, any contribution from husbands (or indeed from children) really only constituted 'helping out':

> 'He'll put the hoover on for me and wash up for me.'

> 'He knows how to operate the washing machine and the dish washer, and he knows where the switch is on the hoover, that kind of thing, but it's not the general course that he does it.'

One woman also interpreted this as a question about outside help:

> Q. Do you do most of the housework yourself?
> A. All of it, yes. Well, my husband (laughs), I mean he's

very good, he will help me to wash up at night and things like that, he's very handy. But I don't employ anyone, no.

Her husband's response to similar questions in his own interview illustrated the extent of his help:

> 'I usually do or half do the washing up. Er, I'm pretty slow at it and it usually takes me through to about 8 o'clock in any case. This is on the nights I'm home, of course.'

Major domestic chores were usually left until the weekend or days off:

> 'Housework works out quite well actually. My elder daughter who's 17, she helps me sometimes, but Tuesday is sort of my day off, I'm here doing the housework and I'm here if needed.'

In this case the woman was not only spending her day off doing domestic work, but in addition was also 'on call' in case she was needed in the shop.

Given that three of the women had no children living at home, their domestic work load was considerably lighter than in previous years. However, as they had either given up paid work or changed to part-time work when their children were young, it was difficult to establish how much more time was available for leisure since their return to full time employment. One woman, talking about her leisure now that her children were older said:

> 'Oh, I suppose I'm not as tied to them. Yes I suppose I must have more free time, but I don't really feel as if I have.'

Nevertheless, in comparison with the other groups interviewed,

satisfaction with the amount of free time was generally quite high for women in this group who, on the whole, feel they have neither too much nor too little time for leisure.

If the women were not seriously disadvantaged in terms of their access to time for leisure, they were also not constrained by lack of money. They each enjoyed a comparatively high household income, and each had some money which they earned themselves. The sub-group was split between those women whose wages were simply incorporated into a joint pool of money which covered all household expenses, and those who kept their wages for their own personal spending. One of the women in the second category was responsible for all household expenditure and was reimbursed for the appropriate amount each month by her husband. She saw this as justifiable, given her own contribution to the running of the home:

> 'I pay for all my own holidays and I pay for all my own clothes and really, as I tell him, he ought to be paying me because I'm a housekeeper, a cook, a nanny, a chauffeur when he wants to drink and I have to drive, a gardener, a decorator, so that he doesn't mind. I mean, I stash mine away and this is how we've always been. He pays for all the bills and I have a housekeeping allowance each month and he never queries it.'

Whatever the financial organisation of the household, each of the women evidently had at least some disposable income to spend on leisure, and none of them felt unduly constrained by lack of money. Similarly, access to transport for leisure for these

women was comparatively good. Three had their own cars, although

one was shared by the woman's son during the college holidays

('so when he's home I don't get hold of it'). All of the women

had full driving licences, and felt that learning to drive had

been a liberating experience:

> 'It made a marvellous difference.'

> 'It's made a big difference to me. I wouldn't like not to
> be able to drive. I mean I don't drive an awful lot, but I
> think it's something everybody should be able to do.'

Related to the issue of transport, women in this group were

anxious at the prospect of walking or travelling around after

dark:

> 'I think we've just got to be on the look out all the time.
> I mean, the days when you could walk around and feel
> confident are over, aren't they?'

Although it was in practice rarely necessary for these women to

walk or to travel on public transport at night, one woman spoke

of how this would limit her leisure activities:

> 'If I hadn't got somebody to go with and it meant going
> somewhere and it was dark, I wouldn't go.'

Generally, the women felt safer in their own neighbourhoods, and

more anxious about the prospect of being alone in the city centre

after dark.

Perhaps because of the social status and the age of women in this

group, their access to leisure seemed less constrained by norms

of appropriate behaviour than that of many other women. Arguably

their identities at this stage were less defined in terms of
their sexuality or maternity, and their behaviour perhaps less
likely to be censured on those terms. The women were asked about
their comfort in leisure venues, and once again the example which
women cited in relation to lack of comfort or to a feeling of
being somewhere inappropriate was the perennial favourite, the
pub:

> 'I'll go into a pub if I'm meeting somebody there...but I do
> feel a bit self conscious even so, I don't feel terribly
> comfortable going into a pub on my own. I think it's the
> fact that there are more men than women in as a rule. And
> it probably stems back to my childhood when I was always
> brought up to believe that pubs were a bit unsavoury for
> women to be in.'

For this group, their discomfort was not enough to stop them
using pubs as places to meet other female friends, for instance,
but was sufficient to make them head for the lounge rather than
the tap room. Once in pubs, none of the women had been on the
direct receiving end of unwanted attention from men, although
they were very willing to acknowledge that this does happen, and
related this to a still prevalent idea that if a woman is in a
pub by herself, then men may assume she is there to be 'picked
up'. Their own escape from this they regard as being due either
to their age (which in itself says something interesting about
prevailing cultural opinion on the relationship between age and
sexuality), or to making prudent choices about where to go:

> 'I think there are places that you might go into, and the
> fact that you've gone into that particular place can lend

itself to thinking that you're available or something. I
think you've got to choose where you go to on your own,
really.'

To some extent then, the women in this sub-group did experience

some of the constraints upon their leisure which are associated

with male domination or control of certain public spaces.

Arguably their effect was less than on some other groups of women

who did not share the class advantage of this group. One woman,

when asked to comment on her access to and ability to participate

in leisure activities had this to say:

'I can't think of anything really that I want to do that I'm
not able to. It's just motivation, isn't it? I think the
older we get, the less inclined we are to tackle anything
new.'

6.2.4 Experiences Of Leisure

According to the survey findings, middle class women were likely

to have higher levels of participation than other women in a

range of activities including playing sport (although age has an

important effect here), going to the cinema or theatre, visiting

museums, galleries or stately homes, the country or seaside,

doing voluntary or church work, going out for meals and going to

evening classes or clubs and societies. This correlates with

Deem's (1984) finding that middle class women on the whole not

only have better access to leisure than their working class

sisters, but that they also experience greater diversity in terms

of the ways in which they spend their spare time. The survey findings are also in accord with Clarke and Critcher's assertions that public leisure facilities, with their connotations of 'improvement' (museums, galleries, evening classes) are actually far more likely to be used by the middle class than by the working class for whom they were often originally intended. Aside from their greater participation in these out of home activities, middle class women were also more likely to spend time reading books, newspapers and magazines, listening to music, cooking for pleasure, gardening, spending time on other hobbies, and having visits from relatives.

The women interviewed in this group showed considerable diversity in the ways in which they choose to spend their spare time. Favourite activities mentioned in the survey included going to the countryside, walking, crown green bowling, gardening, flower arranging, going to the theatre, eating out and listening to music. Four of the five women said that a good night out would be a meal out or a visit to the theatre or possibly both. For the fifth woman, a good night out would be an evening spent 'somewhere lively, with lots of people.'

Without exception, the women in this group spent the greater part of their leisure time with their husbands. All of the women were at a stage where leisure patterns are well established:

'It's always been sort of an understood thing that we went out together. If he did want to go out on his own, fair

enough. I mean, I have had the odd night out, as I say, with the leaving parties and that, for people at work. I've gone on my own and the same for him, I mean for the stag nights and bachelor do's, he's gone to them. But as I say, by and large, we've done everything together.'

For some women this pattern of couple based-leisure had become more pronounced since their children had left home and participation in activities which may have been done as a family had diminished. Two of the women were unable to spend as much time with their partners as they would like, in one instance because of the partner's long working hours, and in the second because the partner spent a significant amount of time on independent leisure. The woman who was married to an army major had been accustomed to spending a good deal of time with him as her main leisure companion. His move to an overseas posting had caused a considerable diminution in her out of home leisure activities. Although she had lived in Sheffield for several years, the tendency to spend almost all her leisure time with her husband had made it difficult for her to make friends, and although she enjoyed her own company, the lack of a companion prevented her from doing previously enjoyed activities such as eating out or going to concerts and the theatre.

For this group, couple-based leisure also included time spent with other friends, particularly other couples. In some cases women had become friendly with their neighbours or with women who had children at the same school as their own children. In others

the friendships had been established through work or interest groups. The women interviewed for this case study were the only group to have any involvement in organised groups, ranging from C.N.D. to floral clubs. Partners were also members of voluntary associations including the Rotary Club and the Freemasons.

Paid employment was a source of some social activity for women in this group. All of the women interviewed had mainly women as their workmates and colleagues, a reflection of the highly gender-segregated nature of most occupations. One woman went for a weekly lunchtime drink with her workmates, whilst for others the informal opportunities for a chat and special organised events such as work parties marked the extent of workplace social activity. The self employed shopkeeper was the only woman to feel that paid work seriously impinged upon her leisure, with the other women feeling that it somehow improved it. This need not necessarily be through the direct provision of opportunities for outings or activities, but could simply be a question of providing them with additional topics of conversation and making them feel more interesting:

> 'I think it makes me do things and perhaps join in and talk about things that I wouldn't do otherwise.'

Women in this group also tended to spend some of their spare time with other family members, most notably with their children. Each of the famlilies had kept in quite close contact with children

who had left home, particularly with those who were geographically close. Time spent with older or adult children ranged from informal visits, mothers and daughters going shopping together, through to family meals or other more organised outings. One woman saw her married daughter daily and helped her out by doing some childminding for her. Another woman had her own mother living nearby, who it was necessary to visit two or three times each week. In addition she often accompanied her mother to the theatre, concerts etc. Whilst these activities were enjoyable in the main, the level of obligation involved made them impossible to define wholly as leisure.

Although much of the leisure time of the women in this group was spent with husbands, most of the women did have some activities which they did independently of their husbands. These were usually fairly infrequent, and were an opportunity for women to do things which their husbands were not interested in, such as flower arranging. Only one woman had an independent activity which she did on a regular basis, whereas several of the husbands had regular commitments. Disagreements with partners over women's independent leisure were reportedly few. None of the women had ever wanted to do anything which their partners objected to, and did not feel this to be a likely scenario. One woman said that conflict with her partner had been greater when her children were young. Her husband had kept up his leisure

pursuits whilst she had stayed at home with the children. Where
disagreements over leisure did arise, this tended to be in
relation to male partners' independent activities. One woman in
particular felt that the amount of time he spent on his
activities (two or three evenings each week) impinged on time
which she would have preferred them to spend together. However,
she went on to explain why she did not object too strongly:

> 'I just have a niggle once in a while and I say "Oh no, not
> out again?". But really I quite enjoy it when he does go
> out because it means I can watch what I want to watch [on
> television] without any arguments.'

This gives an insight into the struggles which may exist over
domestic leisure as much as out of home leisure. Whilst this
woman dealt with dis-satisfaction by 'niggling', another spoke
much more explicitly about manipulating her husband:

> 'This is where you get round to manipulating each other. I
> mean, if I really wanted to do something, I would do
> something and I'd get him to...I don't think I could
> really have done it without him agreeing.'

By and large, the husbands accepted their wives' entitlement to
some autonomous leisure, and all said that in principle they
would not mind if their wives were to go out more without them,
whilst feeling that this was unlikely to happen. However, one
man did comment that if his wife had more frequent nights out
without him, he may be inclined to read this as a signifier of
marital dissatisfaction:

> 'I would perhaps not be unduly concerned about it, although
> if there was a tendency for it to be...I wouldn't want to

say "Well, you can't do that" or "You shouldn't be doing that", but I would say "Well, is there anything happening in our relationship", look at it that way, "which has occasioned it?".

One form of social activity which was important to two of the women in this group was the church, an interesting finding in the broader social context of increasing secularisation as a national trend. These two women not only attended church regularly, but were also involved in a host of church-related activities from friendship groups to flower arranging. In both cases their husbands were also active church goers. These women lived in localities where many community events and initiatives are church related, and both women felt a sense of belonging to their own particular church and its related social networks.

A popular way of spending leisure time for this group was entertaining at home. This was the only group who regularly bought alcohol for entertaining at home, and all the women said they invited people to their homes for meals or drinks. 'Entertaining' for this group ranged from impromptu barbeques with neighbours to formal dinner parties. Most entertaining took place at the wekends, as the demands of paid employment made it impractical during the week, when the women felt too tired to take on the necessary work:

> 'I find apart from the weekends, I'm quite tired, and to come home and get a meal and invite people and be sociable...'

The women themselves were responsible for most of the preparation and cooking, with some limited assistance from partners. This was regarded as leisure if it was done for friends. However, for some of the women entertaining their partner's business colleagues was also expected, and this was regarded as more work than leisure.

Shopping, particularly shopping for clothes, was another activity which was regarded as enjoyable by women in this group, for whom lack of money is unlikely to be a constraint. However, whether or not it is enjoyable does depend on the circumstances:

> 'I quite enjoy it, shopping for clothes, which I think is leisure. It does depend on when you do it. I think Saturday afternoons are terrible, and I remember shopping for our son's wedding and trying to get a frock to wear and that certainly wasn't leisure, but I think generally it is.'

What is more, it is not the actual buying which is the source of pleasure:

> 'I like shopping. Well I like looking in shops, not necessarily buying.'

So browsing and window shopping can be at least as pleasurable as purchasing. Interestingly, the women in this group preferred to go shopping on their own, rather than in company. They preferred to browse and make up their own minds about purchases, rather than be influenced by other people:

> 'I suppose I have one or two dresses that I have, that I bought when he (her husband) was with me, because he liked them, that somehow or other aren't quite me, you know. I'll wear them now, I would say it, more to please him than to please me.'

'If I go with David (her husband) he gets a bit fed up. My daughter's alright, seem to quite enjoy going with her, but then if I go with her she'll sort of influence me as to what I'm going to buy, and sometimes, you know, when I get back I think "well now, would I have bought that if she wasn't there?". It's better to choose on your own I think, really.'

Only one woman mentioned the possibility of going shopping with a friend rather than a member of the family, indicating the extent to which family activities are the norm.

One area of leisure where couples in this group were likely to escape from the rest of the family was holidays. The survey indicated that middle class women and women with older children were amongst the repondents most likely to have had at least one holiday in the twelve months preceding the survey. This was reinforced by interviewees, who had all been on holiday during the previous year, and who were also able to take short breaks from time to time either to visit friends or to go on long weekends away. One of the women had just spent a week on holiday with her daughter, and another occasionally went off alone on a special interest holiday. In both cases these were supplementary to rather than instead of the main holiday of the year. These women were able to holiday abroad, including long haul destinations such as Australia, India and North America. Clearly, having comparatively high levels of income is an important factor here, combined with the fact that grown up children would make their own holiday arrangements and no longer need to be budgeted

for or looked after. A number of the women expressed their lack of interest in beach holidays, preferring holidays where they could get out and about with things to see and do. Whilst money was not a major constraint, time could be, particularly arranging holidays which suited both partners' work schedules. The woman whose husband was in the army, commented on how difficult his work made it to arrange holidays or plan them in advance:

'Because of the nature of his work he's never absolutely sure what time he's going to get off, or when, you know, and I mean a holiday is a regular thing we just don't have.'

Consequently their most recent holiday had been an impromptu camping trip to Scotland.

6.2.5 Summary

In summary, women interviewed in this group had comparatively high levels of access to leisure, and accordingly high levels of satisfaction. Whilst their paid employment reduced the amount of time they would otherwise have had available for leisure, it provided positive benefits in terms of self-esteem, social contact and an independent income. The departure of adult children from the family home had reduced women's domestic workload, although all except one of the women had a disproportionate responsibility for housework. There was no consensus amongst the interviewees as to who has the most free time, women or men. However, there was some agreement that the

domestic division of labour does disadvantage women in the leisure stakes. The interviewees did agree that by and large men have access to a greater range of activities, and that activities are differentiated along gender lines, citing the pub as the most obvious example of this. This is significant, given the relatively low levels of constraint experienced by women in this group. Their relatively unconstrained access was reflected in a diversity of leisure experiences both inside and outside the home. Their leisure patterns were quite well established, and were dominated by couple-based activities, including activities done with other couples. The women in this group did have some interests separate from their partners, but partners were likely to have more. Therefore it is perhaps not surprising that on the infrequent occasions where disagreements over leisure did occur, these tended to be over partners' independent leisure, rather than over that of the women themselves.

6.3 LONE PARENTS

6.3.1 The Respondents

48 of the 707 survey respondents were lone parents (7%). They were likely, if employed, to be working in occupations classified as C1 or DE (see Appendix 1 for details of the determination of women's social class position in the original survey). The reliance on either one comparatively low wage or on state benefits gave them low household incomes, and accordingly little disposable income for leisure spending. 63% of the lone parents in the survey had household incomes in the lowest bracket, compared with 15% of the sample as a whole. Only 29% had a household car, compared with 64% of the sample as a whole. This group also had the lowest proportion of women with full driving licences, and the highest proportion who had ended their full-time education at the earliest opportunity.

The material used in this section derives from interviews with the following women:

> 1. Aged 28. She had been separated from her husband for two years and had one child aged five. She was employed part-time (one morning per week) in a local newsagents. She left school at 18, and had C.S.E.s. Her main source of income was Social Security and her annual household income was less than £2,500. She lived in a rented housing association flat and had a driving licence but no car.

> 2. Aged 43. She had been divorced for over ten years and had two daughters, aged seven and fourteen. She was a full-time housewife who previously managed a market stall which she gave up to get married. She left school at 15 and had

no formal qualifications. She lived in a rented Council house. Her main source of income was Social Security and her household income was around £3,500 per year. She did not own a car or have a driving licence.

3. Aged 49. She had been divorced four years earlier and had one daughter aged eleven. She worked part-time as a scientific officer in a hospital laboratory. She left full-time education aged 16 with 'O' levels and a technical qualification. Her household income was around £8,500 per year. She lived in a house which she was buying and owned a car which she drove daily.

4. Aged 52. She had been separated from her second husband for around two years. She had five adult children, none of whom were living with her at the time of the interview. She was a full-time housewife made redundant from her job as a television showroom supervisor five years earlier, and was registered disabled. She left school aged 15 with no formal qualifications. Her main source of income was social security, and her household income was in the region of £3,500 per year. She lived in a rented council house and did not own a car or have a driving licence.

5. Aged 49. She had been divorced for three years. She had three children, the youngest of whom (a teenage daughter) still lived at home. She was employed as a part-time book-keeper and typist, working from home. She left school aged 16 with 'O' levels and R.S.A. qualifications. Her annual household income was around £5,500. She lived in a house which she was buying, and owned a car which she drove daily.

6.3.1. Definitions and Perceptions of Leisure

For women in this group, the defining characteristics of leisure

were autonomy, enjoyment and pleasure:

> 'To me, leisure is doing something that you enjoy doing, that gives you pleasure.'

> 'Leisure is what you really enjoy doing.'

One of the women contrasted her own definition of leisure with an

alternative, more active and activity-based definition, which she

(wrongly) assumed was the agenda for the research:

> 'We're talking about different things.   I mean, I'm talking
> about sitting here with my feet up and a glass of wine and
> looking at the garden, and you're talking about things like
> going out and playing golf and that sort of thing, aren't
> you?'

This led into a general discussion of the difficulty of providing

a meaningful definition of leisure which is sufficiently broad to

encompass people's diverse perceptions and experiences.   The

discussion also highlighted the recognition of the lack of fit

between widely held, commonsense definitions of leisure, and

individual subjective experience.

Women in paid employment drew comparisons between work time and

leisure time ('the difference between putting your feet up and

standing on them') and also talked about the relationship between

the two.   One of the interviewees, who had been made redundant by

her former employer, expressed regret at the loss of social

contact which her unemployment had brought.   Another felt that

the strictures of work made her leisure time all the more

welcome:

> 'I think you value your hours more if you've been at work.'

Those women whose work was predominantly centred around their

children shared the perspective of other mothers in the study, in

saying that their leisure time was time spent alone, or at least

not spent with their children:

> 'I class leisure as when I've not got Emma (her daughter),
> because she's my work at the moment and it's nice to know
> she's gone to bed and I can do what I want for a couple of
> hours.'

One remarkable feature of the women in this group was their
unequivocal view about the way in which leisure is structured by
gender, in terms of the amount of time available for leisure and
the range of activities possible:

> 'Q. Who do you think has the most free time, women or men?
> A. Oh, I think men, definitely men, even if they're at home
> unemployed. They perhaps help in the house, but you can
> guarantee they're up the pub dinner time and night time, you
> know, or they play football or darts...A woman, if she's
> made unemployed, she's still the work to do in the house,
> she's still the children to look after, so it's common sense
> she hasn't as much spare time as a man has.'

> 'If a woman goes out to work even part-time I would say she
> doesn't get as much spare time as what a man does.'

These comments highlighted the difference between men and women
in terms of an ability or tendency to compartmentalise work and
leisure in such a way that men are able to regard all time
outside paid work as leisure:

> 'Men, they seem to have the attitude that when they've
> finished work, that's it, they've not got anything else to
> do. Whereas women are working right up until they've put the
> children to bed and even after, you know, clearing up the
> toys and things like that.'

One woman felt that the problems women in face with regard to
leisure are less about the choice of activities on offer, but
rather more about structural factors which constrain women's
ability to pursue certain choices:

'I think they (women) have got about the same choice, it's just that they've not got as many opportunities to do it as a man.'

Perhaps more clearly than any others in the study, the women in this group were willing to generalise from their own experiences to talk about broader social divisions. Whilst some of the women had formed new relationships, none was in what they would define as a 'serious' or long term relationship, and so had a lesser investment in presenting heterosexual coupledom and its relationship to patriarchal structures as unproblematic. With specific regard to leisure, it was precisely in 'free time' that conflicts in previous relationships had come to the surface. And for two of the women, negotiations over leisure were also proving to be less than smooth within the new relationships which they were developing.

6.3.2 Access To Leisure

In the survey sample, the amount of free time which lone parents reported having did not differ significantly from the average for the sample as a whole. Just over half the lone parents in the survey reported that they have about the right amount of free time. Lone parents experienced heavy demands on their time from dependent children or, in the case of one of the interviewees, a dependent parent, but because they were free of the additional

demands of a resident (male) partner, they felt that they had effectively had more time for leisure than when they were married. This seemed to be largely due to their adoption of a more relaxed attitude to housework and domestic tasks, which were done at times and to a level which suited them:

> Q. Do you have a regular routine for things like housework and shopping?
> A. I'm not a regular sort of person. When it's getting really bad I do it.

This autonomy and flexibility made it easier to accommodate their own leisure within their daily lives. This was particularly the case for the woman whose youngest child had just left home:

> 'Being alone I can please myself when I get up, when I prepare a meal, do what I like, go where I like.'

Each of the women interviewed in this group had been married or co-habiting at the time of having their child or children, and spoke retrospectively about the way in which their access to time for leisure changed at this time. For several of the women this was the point at which conflict over leisure started to arise:

> Q. Did having your daughter make you think of yourself any differently?
> A. I didn't have time to think! [...] It's quite a shock really, it's not like the advetising on T.V., is it? There was just so much to do in so little time...and no time to do what you wanted to do. It was a big change.
> Q. What about changes specifically related to your leisure time? What happened to your leisure time?
> A. Oh, it stopped.
> Q. What about your husband's leisure time?
> A. That didn't stop, no. He had all these promises that he'd stay in with me and we would take it in turns to go out and, you know, babysit once a week, but it never came on,

didn't work out. He has her more now than when we were married.

Another woman commented:

'After we had Susan you see, he still carried on going out, but I couldn't then...I didn't like it, but you know there was nothing I could do about it really. He just went, that were it. You've got no choice, have you? Can't just say "Well, I'm coming." Can't leave the baby, can you?'

The apparently minimal role played by male partners in looking after children meant that women finding themselves - or choosing to be - living alone with their children were already familiar with the considerable impact of childcare upon their own access to leisure. One difference between lone mothers and other mothers in the survey was the extent to which women in this sub-group were likely spend a good deal of their time solely with their children. So for example, holidays were likely to be spent with the child or children, rather than with alternative companions. In some cases this was felt to be a problem, in so far as adult leisure venues frequently do not welcome children. For lone mothers, the availibility of facilities for children may well mean the difference between being able to go out or not.

Having to look after other dependent relatives can in fact be more constraining than being responsible for children, as was apparent from one of our interviewees, who visited her father four times each day. In her particular case, it is not just leisure but also paid employment which has to be fitted in around

this schedule of visits. Whilst acknowledging that some things would be impossible for a woman in her position, such as a holiday abroad for example, she regarded it as her duty to look after her father, and coped with the constraints which it brought. Her responsibility for her father and her daughter certainly circumscribed any access to leisure which she had:

> 'Most things I can usually do, provided it doesn't affect anyone else, you know, upset anyone else.'

Aside from this woman's familial commitments, the major factor associated with differences in access to time for leisure within this group was predicated on whether or not the women were in paid employment. As has already been noted for the other groups of women interviewed, paid employment could certainly act as a facilitator of social contacts for leisure and provided a greater separation between work and leisure:

> 'I think having a job, you meet people and you get a different outlook on life.'

Paid work could also be intrinsically satisfying in its own right:

> 'I enjoy work, get job satisfaction I suppose...I think I might possibly still go, even if they didn't pay me.'

Having been made redundant from her job, one woman spoke about the things she had missed since being without paid work:

> 'The people, as much as anything, and I think the independence. To be earning money that you have earned and not be dependent.'

However, employment also operated as a constraint upon free time, insofar as it limited the absolute amount of free time, and structured it into opportunities which only occurred at certain times of the day, usually weekends and evenings, depending on the nature of the work. Although the women in this group who had paid employment spoke positively of it in relation to leisure, as the former Director of the National Council of One Parent Families notes, lone parents are the most likely to experience:

> 'some of the difficulties associated with working - the "too much to do" syndrome combining working with parental and domestic responsibilities.'
> (H.M.S.O. 1974)

However, the comparatively lighter domestic load outlined above, combined with the fact that two out of the three employed women were working part-time, may well explain why the women interviewed did not perceive this 'double-shift' as a problem.

A far more weighty consideration for the women in this group, and one which was obviously related to their employment status, was money. The survey indicated that single parents were often amongst the poorest women in terms of household income, and 85% of this group reported lack of money to be a problem, compared with 64% of the sample as a whole. The interviewees reflected this general pattern, with three out of five being solely or largely dependent on state benefits. For the two women who were employed for more than 25 hours each work and who consequently

had higher incomes, lack of money was not a prohibiting factor.

For the others, it meant that some careful budgeting was

necessary:

> 'On Thursdays I have slimline oranges which are not very
> expensive, but that really is the only night I can afford to
> go out.'

One woman spoke of the relationship between mental wellbeing,

commercial leisure and money:

> 'You can solve anything if you've got the money. If you're
> depressed, you like to go out for a meal. You can do it if
> you've got the money. Go on a holiday, this'll cheer you
> up. Do what you want to do, it still takes money. So
> really, when people say money is the root of all evil, it's
> not. It can be the root of pleasure - if you've got it.'

As has already been noted, the survey indicated that in addition

to having low incomes, lone parents were also those least likely

to have access to a car, with obvious repercussions for their

access to independent leisure.

In addition to these practical considerations, a series of

perceptual factors influenced the access to leisure available to

these lone parents. All of the women interviewed spoke of the

effect of their separation or divorce upon their social lives.

For some, this contributed to a lack of confidence and social

unease. For women accustomed to being part of a couple and having

mainly joint social activities, strenuous efforts were needed to

rebuild some kind of social life, particularly if this entailed

venturing out into public leisure venues. One woman described

her first visit to a singles club:

> '...I sat outside in the car for twenty minutes. I just daren't go in. I was just trembling from head to foot.'

and of a later visit to a nightclub:

> '...to actually walk into a nightclub when you've never been out or done anything like that for years, you know, feeling very old and very decrepit because you've been rejected, oh it was terrible.'

Another spoke of the difficulties of being a single person in a world dominated by coupledom:

> 'You have this feeling that you don't want to go out with married company because, I know it sounds silly but it's there, that you feel that the women are thinking that you're a threat to their men and the men are thinking that you don't feel happy. Whereas if you've got your husband with you, even though you never see him from coming in to going out, you can wander round everyone in the room, you're alright. But once you're on your own you can't do that you see. You've got to start reshaping your life from the beginning.'

Given the preponderance of couple based leisure which was apparent amongst women in the other groups interviewed, it is significant if not surprising that 45% of lone parents found lack of a companion to do things with a problem, compared with just 14% of the sample as a whole.

Some of the women spoke retrospectively about the restrictive influence of previous partners on their leisure, whether this had taken the form of husbands' refusal to contribute to childcare and thus enable women to have some free time, or whether it had taken a rather more threatening form:

'...it was always "who have you been with?", "where have you been?"'

One husband's jealousy was such that he would follow his wife if she left the house without him. He was also convinced that social activity, even if it involved both of them doing something together, provided his wife with the opportunity for sexual liaisons:

> 'We did go dancing and every time I danced with somebody else there was a row...I love dancing and I dance for the pleasure of dancing with anyone who can dance, for nothing else. But of course everyone I danced with, I was making arrangements to go to bed with them. So at the finish there was so much hassle, it was better not to go out at all. And I didn't go out for about four or five years.'

This behaviour continued for six years, until she finally divorced him. In the interviews it emerged that rather than being simply consigned to the past and previous relationships, negotiations over access to leisure were also a feature of the new relationships which women were forming. This issue is discussed in detail below.

Apart from the restrictions imposed on lone parents by the attitudes and behaviour of their previous partners in particular, broader constraints relating to mobility and access to public spaces were also mentioned in the interviews. One of the women commented on the importance of having her car:

> 'I've got my own transport and to me that's my independence. I think I would have been nervous going out in the dark, but fortunately I've got the car...'

The three out of five interviewees without cars either relied on public transport, or obtained lifts wherever possible. For women in this group, with comparatively low incomes, taxis could be prohibitively expensive. The women were uneasy about the prospect of walking alone after dark, although in common with other women in the study, some of them felt they would be safer in their immediate local area and more at risk if they ventured into town. Only one woman said that her fears would affect her behaviour:

> 'It's like the point we were saying earlier about attracting attention that you don't want. There are places where I just wouldn't go.'

6.3.4 Experiences Of Leisure

Lone parents, according to the survey, shared the predominantly home based leisure patterns of the majority of the women questioned. In fact, their leisure seemed to be even more home based than most, with the notable exception that a higher proportion of lone parents went to nightclubs and discos. Women in this group had particularly low participation rates in sport and keep fit (8.24% and 15.23% respectively, compared with 23% and 24% of the sample as a whole). Wimbush (1985) found comparatively low participation rates in organised sport amongst her Edinburgh sample of lone mothers. Lone mothers were also less likely to visit museums, stately homes, the cinema, theatre

or evening classes than the sample as a whole, a finding which can clearly be correlated with their class position. They had comparatively high rates of participation in gardening and D.I.Y., which may be an indication that lone mothers take on activities - either through necessity or choice - which are often culturally defined as male.

For the women interviewed, popular activities included watching television, visiting relatives, drinking and shopping for clothes or leisure items. The fact that lone mothers shared some of the leisure characteristics of young single women (i.e. going to nightclubs and discos) was quite explicitly related to finding themselves defined as single after their previous relationships had ended. Going to such venues was something which, by and large, the interviewees had given up in earlier years, if not when they got married then certainly when they had children. Starting to go to them again was often motivated simply by a desire to have a good time and to take advantage of new found, or won, freedoms, or sometimes by a more conscious desire to find a new partner. However, this was not the kind of leisure activity which women engaged in immediately following separation from a partner. As was indicated above, lack of confidence and feelings about age and about appropriate behaviour made it difficult for women to rebuild their social lives. In the period immediately following a separation, female family members were often

significant because of their availability and willingness to provide companionship and understanding. Children were also a major source of support and companionship:

> 'Emma was inclded in all my leisure time to start with because the only things we did was just to go and visit relatives until I got settled into a routine, was just visiting my mum and my sister-in-law or my sisters.'

Family relationships were of continuing importance to the women in this group, and it seemed that the absence of a male partner could actually facilitate close family relationships. Similarly close female friendships emerged as sigificant for this group. Women friends, particularly other lone mothers, provided support and local contact for some women, especially during the day:

> 'They (friends) mostly live on here. It's funny because it seems to be a community of one parent families...The days when the children are at school we just sort of decide what we're going to do, go off down town or go for a sauna.'

Several of the women had strong locally based social networks of this kind, made easier by the fact that they were still resident in the community in which they had grown up. Of course these kinds of networks were less available to women who work during the day, and perhaps to those women who had been geographically or socially mobile.

As was noted above, on becoming single again, each of the women interviewed had taken steps to rebuild their social lives outside of close kinship networks. To this end, three of the five women

had joined social clubs specifically for the single, divorced and separated. Two of the women were members of the same club, and the third, a middle class woman, was a member of a singles club for professional people. Clubs such as these can prove invaluable for women who may not only lack self confidence, but also often lack available companions for leisure. One woman described the process of joining:

> 'When I found myself on my own I didn't go out much at all for six months, I didn't feel that I could go out [...] then a friend of mine found out about one of these singles clubs and they went walking and all the types of things that I like doing you see, so I decided to have a go because I needed something, I needed to make a new circle of friends because all my friends were married, and so I had to make a new way of life for myself and it's the best thing I've ever done.'

However, it seems there is still a stigma attached to this kind of organisation, and these reservations were expressed by a women who was a former member:

> 'I think the men who go to these single clubs, they wouldn't be the type of man I'd be interested in anyway. Because they wouldn't go if they weren't interested in latching onto somebody, would they, and I don't want to be latched onto.'

Despite the undeniable difficulties faced by women on becoming single again, there were also evident pleasures to be gained or regained:

> Q. Are you able now to do things that you'd wanted to do before but couldn't?
> A. Oh yes, it's lovely, it really is, it's great. I'm myself again you know [...] I got afraid to speak to people (which normally I'm not afraid to speak to anybody). You know, on Thursday night I talk to them all, new members and

the lot, make them welcome, you know. And it's lovely to be myself again.'

Despite the new found freedoms which the lone mothers had enjoyed, the development of a new relationship often followed very closely the pattern of previous relationships. Whilst one of the marked features of the transition to being single again was a move to having more evenings out, either with women friends or through the singles clubs, the presence of a new partner typically signalled a move away from this kind of independent leisure, and back towards more couple-based activities. In some cases this was exacerbated if previous experience encouraged insecurity and jealousy on the part of the man, with the end result that women would forgo their autonomous leisure, albeit reluctantly:

> 'I would still probably like a night out with my girlfriends, but he doesn't like that, one of the little problems. Anyway I just haven't been out with them. [...] He's a bit jealous, he thinks I might go off and meet somebody else and that'll be it, so he's not too happy about it.[...] I would appreciate a night out with my girlfriends now and again, just go for a meal. I mean I don't want to go flirting with other men, anything like that, just enjoy...I think with women it's a different type of night out, you let your hair down, you have a good old giggle and a laugh and I suppose I miss that to a certain extent.'

The new friends who initially helped to restore confidence and provided stimulating company were then required to compete with the male partner and exclusively couple-based pursuits. In addition, partly due to the age of the people involved and the

weight of family responsibilities, divorcees tend to enter new partnerships quickly and to assume domestic responsibilities for the new person in a very short period of time (Burgoyne and Clark 1984). Several of these points were illustrated by one of the mothers of a teenage daughter:

> '...we do everything more or less together now. The only thing is he doesn't altogether approve of the amount of time I put into the Phoenix (social club)', but having said that, I've been on the Committee for over two years now, so I am coming off it in February.'

> 'We've got pretty close now, so it's got that he comes up for his tea...he's up here all his time really, and then we go out together from here.'

One leisure pursuit which did emerge as comparatively popular amongst lone mothers (in contrast to the other groups of comparable age) was drinking, either in pubs or clubs or at home. All but one of the interviewees said that they drank alcohol on a regular basis and often this was done at home when they were alone. It may be the case that mothers were using the pouring of a drink as a ritual to mark the transition from time devoted to work, to children or to domestic responsibilities, to time devoted to themselves. Also, drinking at home does not require a partner, it is cheaper than drinking in licensed premises, and women may find the surroundings more congenial, particularly compared to the limited facilities provided in commercial venues for customers with children:

> '...this one we went in, it's like a cellar. It's underneath the hotel, you know, no carpets, really grotty

and because there was no actual bar in this place kids could
go in and they'd put a couple of pool tables in and we were
all sat on wooden stools and that's the facilities they
provide for parents with children.'

Aside from these specific problems which arose when women wanted

or needed to take children out with them, there were other

problems associated with pubs which lone mothers shared with

other women interviewed:

'I personally could not walk into a pub on my own. And
although times have changed, I still think that a woman
would not go into a pub in town, without putting herself at
risk to unwanted attention. [...] It's not happened to me
but I've seen it happen to others. Within about five minutes
there's a man gone up and starts chatting with her.
Alright, perhaps he's just company, intentions that, you
know, are perhaps quite honourable. But on the other hand
they might not be. And that's an age old thing.'

The difficulty and social stigma associated with unaccompanied

women venturing into public houses were issues which prompted

some ideas for improvement in the provision of leisure

facilities:

'It would be nice if there was a somewhere where women could
meet where they hadn't to be worried about night time...'

'Say there was a room for women, where women could drink,
where you wouldn't be bothered. Or if there was someone
there, a lady there, who would come and talk to you, you
know, the landlady or that [...] It's not that you want to
be segregated from the men but...Perhaps local pubs, you'd
get away with it if you had the courage to go in, but you
see it's the old stigma that the only women who used to go
into pubs were prostitutes...so you just don't go in.'

Despite the financial constraints outlined above, the lone

mothers interviewed in this case study did enjoy comparatively

frequent nights out, with each of them having at least one regular night out each week. They had a range of opinions on what constitutes 'a good night out':

> 'Good conversation with different people, I think. I enjoy that.'

> 'Going out between half past seven and eight o'clock, going into a pub and having a couple of drinks. If there was a nightclub open, to go into a nightclub and, most nightclubs now you can get a meal, say about twelve o'clock at night have a meal and then, you know, carry on dancing...If not, go out with a friend who's got a car, say go into the country, go round all these little country pubs and that, and then perhaps come back into Sheffield and call into a restaurant that's open late, and finish it off with a meal.'

> 'I like going out for a meal, I enjoy going out for a meal and a drink [...] Not last Saturday, the Saturday before, I invited some people, two more couples, and we had a meal and a drink and it was a very pleasant evening, I thoroughly enjoyed that.'

Most of the women entertained family and friends, inviting them round for meals or drinks. Adult children would often visit and be given a meal on a weekly basis, usually at weekends, and one lone mother regularly provided meals for her children's friends or other family members or neighbours:

> '...we really never know who's popping in...as I say I always cook extra, it never gets wasted, anyhow.'

This was regarded as an extension of the normal domestic routine, rather than as leisure. With regard to more formal entertaining, the women regarded the actual meal and the social interaction involved as pleasurable, but there was little question that the preparation involved was not particularly leisure-like:

'I enjoy it when it's all ready and we've had the meal, but I can't say that I enjoy all the work that goes with it, because it's amazing, I seem to be at it all day, just cooking, preparing food and washing up and, I don't know, it just seems to be hard work. Personally I'd rather just go out, if I could afford it, I'd like to say "come on, I'll treat you, I'll take you out for a meal", but of course it's too expensive.'

Lack of money was also a prohibitive factor with regard to shopping as a form of leisure. However, this was likely to mean that the women restricted themselves to comparatively inexpensive purchases, rather than that they did not shop for pleasure at all. For this group, as for oter women in the study, recreational shopping was clearly identified as having a therapeutic effect:

Q. Do you ever shop for treats or things to cheer yourself up?
A. If I,m feeling depressed it's usually bars of chocolate and buns...I can't afford much.
Q. And does it work?
A. It does for a few minutes and then you feel guilty afterwards. It cheers me up if I've got some money to spend on clothes, you know, it's really nice.'

The above quote illustrates not only the way in which women may turn to shopping as a means of comfort, but also the important role which food plays for many women. 'Special' or illicit foods such as chocolate and cakes have a comforting effect, albeit a rather short lived one. In the above quote, it is not really possible to ascertain whether it is the spending of the money or the eating of the foods which are a cause of guilt: either or both could be the case. There is little doubt that shopping for

clothes was generally regarded as leisure by the lone mothers in the study, with only one of the women stating that she did not find this pleasurable and largely either relied on clothes being given to her, or made her own. Shopping for clothes was usually done with one or more female friends or relatives for companionship and advice:

> Q. What about something like shopping for clothes - do you see that as leisure?
> A. Yes, oh yes.
> Q. And is that something you'd do by yourself or with other people?
> A. No, I go with my neighbour, she's younger than me and she's very straight and if I try something on and she doesn't like it, she'll tell me straight. Or if she likes it, it doesn't matter what it costs, she'll push me into getting it, you know.

The survey indicated lone mothers' low participation in another area of leisure activity directly related to income, namely holidays. 50% of lone parents had not had a holiday in the twelve months leading up to the survey, compared with 30% of the sample as a whole. They were certainly less likely than women in other circumstances to have been away more than once. These findings were supported by the interviews. Two of the women had not had a holiday since they had separated from their partners, when they would have had family holidays:

> 'I went with my mother-in-law and my father-in-law and all their family, you know. It wasn't my choice but it was a holiday for Emma really and we all went together. It was alright.'

Those women who had had holidays more recently had tended to spend them in English sea-side resorts, with their children. One of the employed women had been on a package tour to Spain. It emerged clearly from the interviews that holidays were seen as more important for children than for the women themselves. Holiday aspirations ranged from the comparatively modest 'I've never been abroad and I'd like to', or the desire to go 'somewhere sunny', to more ambitious ideas, with three of the women saying they wanted to go on the archetypal dream holiday, a world cruise.

6.3.5 Summary

Lone parents shared some of the characteristics, perceptions and experiences of leisure of other women in the study, but also had characteristics which were distinctive to their group. Leisure was principally perceived as involving autonomy and enjoyment. All of the interviewees had strong feelings about gender inequalities in leisure, and drew on their past experiences to substantiate them. Paid employment and domestic responsibilities ate into the time which these women had available for leisure, but there was evidence that not having a resident male partner reduced the domestic load, or at the very least made domestic routines more relaxed and flexible. The greatest constraints on access were lack of money, and the responsibilities of childcare

- either in the form of the problems or cost associated with finding babysitters, or in the lack of suitable venues for mothers to go to with their children. Leisure patterns for lone parents were predominantly home oriented, partly because of financial constraints. However, lone parents were comparatively high users of leisure facilities such as pubs and night clubs. This reflected their move back to single status on the breakdown of their relationships, and their assumption or resumption of leisure activities appropriate to this status. All the lone parents had experienced some loss of social contacts and self confidence, and had worked hard to rebuild their social lives. Consequently family networks and friendship groups were important to these women, and children were often regarded as leisure companions. Some women had started to form new relationships with men, but were experiencing patterns of negotiations over leisure which were not dissimilar to those which prevailed in previous relationships. However, without wanting to minimise their high levels of material and perceptual constraint, lone parents reported comparatively high levels of autonomy and enjoyment in their experiences of leisure.

6.4 WOMEN WITH UNEMPLOYED PARTNERS

6.4.1 The Respondents

At the time of the survey, 99 women had male partners who were unemployed (14%). These women were concentrated at either end of the age range, namely between 18 and 24 years of age or over 45 years. The majority were in the latter category. Reflecting the age structure, few of these women had children under 16, and for the most part either had adult children or no children at all. Predictably, their household incomes were heavily skewed toward the lower end of the scale. The socio-economic status of this group was low, irrespective of their current unemployment, in terms of respondents' and their partners' occupational status and age of leaving full-time education.

One couple originally selected for the study are excluded as the partner had found a temporary job between the survey and interviews, and as he and his partner no longer regarded him as unemployed, it seemed inappropriate to include them. The material used in this section derives from interviews with the following four women and their partners:

> 1. Aged 59. She was made redundant three years ago from her job as a tracer in a foundry drawing office, and lived with her husband who was made redundant a couple of years later from his semi-skilled job, also in the steel industry. Their household income was about £3,000 per annum, but they were drawing on their savings to minimise the reduction in their standard of living. She left school aged 16, having passed her school certificate. She had no children. They were

buying their home and had a car, but she had never learnt to drive.

2. Aged 59. She gave up her job of 17 years after her husband was made redundant five years earlier from his job as a lorry driver in the steel industry. He was very lonely at home on his own and her wages caused his unemployment benefit to be reduced pound for pound. She had two adult children and three grandchildren. Their annual income was about £3,000. She left school aged fourteen with no formal qualifications. They lived in a house rented from the council, and since her husband's redundancy, they had not been able to afford to run a car.

3. Aged 32. She gave up her part-time job as an agent for a finance firm shortly before the birth of her youngest child. Her husband had been made redundant some months earlier from his job as a lorry driver. She had three children, aged six, four and eighteen months. At the time of the survey her husband was employed and their household income was in the region of £11,000 per annum, but this had fallen by the time of the interview by about £60 per week in disposable income after he had become unemployed. She left full-time education with 'A' levels and had ambitions to train for a professional career when her children were older. They were buying their own home and had a car which was on temporary loan from her parents, which she used regularly.

4. Aged 30. She had been a full-time housewife since the birth of her children, now aged eleven and eight. By the end of the study she was expecting her third child. Previously she had been employed as a cleaner. Her husband had been unemployed for almost five years, and at the time of the interview had just started work again as a lorry driver. At the time of the survey, their annual household income was in the region of £3,700. She left school aged 15. They lived in a house rented from the council and did not own a car.

5.4.2. Definitions and Perceptions Of Leisure

The women in this group shared a common feature in their

definitions of leisure. The notion of autonomy, of pleasing

212

oneself, was central to the definitions which they gave:

> 'You do things you want to do, you've no stress involved
> really, you're not forced to do anything, you can just do
> more or less as you want.'

> 'You're doing things that you really want to for yourself.'

This was in some cases contrasted with definitions of work and

its connotations of supervision and control, the imposition of

someone else's schedule. One of the older women, commenting on

the difference between leisure and work, said of her existing

abundance of free time:

> 'Well I think it means when you sort of please yourself what
> you want to do, really. Actually, I could really
> almost nearly say all my time is leisure apart from things
> you've got to do in the house. But I quite enjoy whatever
> we do...'

The concept of relaxation which featured so prominently in the

definitions of some women was only mentioned in passing by two of

the women in this group. It appeared that leisure was often

associated with the need or opportunity for stimulation to

enliven otherwise fairly mundane and restricted lives. Where it

was mentioned by women in this group, it was done so by the

younger women in relation to their need for some time and space

away from the demands of children:

> 'To me, it's doing absolutely nothing, lying on a beach
> somewhere, that's leisure. But I suppose on a practical
> level it's just sitting having time to myself without the
> kids or anything else.'

This echoes the perspective of other mothers in the study who saw

their leisure time as time when they were not with their children, or at least as time when the children were in bed and they could relax, however temporarily.

Generally, the women in this group felt that men have more free time than women as a consequence of the domestic division of labour:

> 'On the whole I should think men must have, really, especially married men, because women do tend to do more in the household than men do, don't they, so I suppose really it works out that men perhaps have a little more leisure time.'

Both younger women compared the frequency of their own nights out with those of their partners, and one attributed men's greater free time to the fact that

> '...they don't seem to have that overriding responsibility for the kids. If Mark wants to go to a football match, he goes to a football match; if he wants to go fishing for the weekend, you know, "I'm going fishing, is that alright?", yes that's alright, he goes. If I wanted to go away for the weekend it would be like military manoeuvres, you know. I'd have to, the freezer would have to be stacked up, the ironing would have to be done for a fortnight, you know.'

The other younger woman spoke about her own entitlement to leisure, and the contradictory feelings she experienced in taking time for herself:

> 'I fitted in an hour to finish my book off this morning when I shouldn't have done. I was doing the bedrooms. I'd been working since half past eight, so I thought "well, I deserve an hour", so I finished my book off that I had, so I had an hour's leisure this morning and I felt guilty because I thought I should have been working instead.'

Gender differences in perceived entitlement to leisure does cause

214

some conflict in these households, as is detailed below. Whilst there was a strong feeling that men have more free time available for leisure, there was less certainty about gender inequalities in terms of the range of activities available for men and women. Whilst activities were seen to be gender specific, the women did not feel that men have more choice than women, simply that different kinds of activity are available to each. One woman mentioned historical changes in women's leisure, feeling that in the past women's leisure had consisted of activities designed to improve the quality of life within the household, such as cooking, needlework and so on, whereas these days a much wider range of recreations is available to women. One of the older women shared with her husband the view that enjoyable leisure is a right accrued through a working life, and held the government responsible for their current situation, including the low income which denied them the lifestyle to which they felt properly entitled.

5.4.3. Access To Leisure

The survey data indicated that women with unemployed male partners felt that they had more free time than other women on weekdays, both in the daytime and the evening, and about the same amount of time free at weekends. More of these women than others reported having over five hours a day free (16% of women with

unemployed partners, compared with 6% of the sample as a whole), and more of them (although still only a minority) felt that they had too much leisure time (14% compared with 7% of the sample as a whole). This was a feeling shared by one of the older women interviewees, whose own interpretation was that her excess of unoccupied time could in no way be described as leisure as she lacked the financial resources to do anything active or enjoyable in this time. Obviously, age and stage in the life-cycle have a significant impact on access to time for leisure, and it is clear from what follows that the younger women with children were much less likely to suffer from a surfeit of free time.

For couples subsisting on the level of income provided by benefits, poverty is a major constraint upon leisure. This was evident from he survey data as well as from the couples interviewed, and suports the findings of studies such as Cohen et al. (1992). 87% of the survey respondents with unemployed partners, compared with 57% of those with employed partners, said that money was a problem in relation to their leisure. The survey indicated that this group spent less. than others on leisure, and 40% spent less in the year of the survey than they had in the previous year, an indication of the cumulative effect on living standards of long term subsistence on state benefits. Interestingly, increasing hardship - or at least the removal of the male wage - seemed to have led to a greater democracy in

couples' leisure spending patterns. Both partners were more likely to share the cost of trips out, and the money was more likely to come from pooled resources or from the women themselves. However, a third of these survey respondents still felt that their male partners spent more on leisure per week than they themselves did.

The interviews offer dramatic and depressing evidence of the restriction on leisure activities brought about by poverty. Couples' joint leisure, especially outside the home, was likely to be significantly affected by their lack of money. This was reflected in their reduced participation in, or abandonment of, favourite leisure activities whose cost prohibited them from taking part. This effect was particularly marked for the two older couples. When asked about the effect of her husband's unemployment on their joint leisure, one of the women commented:

> 'I think we don't go out quite as much as what we did before. We were like perhaps going for a drink or to do dancing, but you see, whenever you go, it costs money. You're a bit restricted for your spending money, so you have to just work it out the best you can.'

This couple had savings which they could dip into, unlike the other older couple who talked at length and with some bitterness about the restrictions imposed on their social life by poverty. Their previous social life had considerable emphasis on going out for a drink with friends and/or relatives on a regular basis. To avoid debt, this couple were having to restrict their leisure

spending to £3 per fortnight between them both. Not surprisingly, this had forced them to abandon their former pattern of regular social drinking, and she had had to give up going to bingo. They were also reluctant to accept invitations even from close relatives to go out for a drink, as they were unable to pay their way and did not want to be the object of charity. Both the woman and her partner commented on the social isolation which resulted from their being deprived of access to the pub.

The younger women also commented on the impact of a restricted budget on their participation as a couple in out of home activities. Their need for babysitters, who had to be paid in cash or kind, made the possibilities for going out together even less frequent. In the survey, women with unemployed partners were less likely than other women to use babysitters, used them much less frequently, and were more likely to use relatives, who presumably were less likely to expect or accept payment. One of the couples had a joint night out on average twice a year, although the husband also had a regular Friday night out with the lads, with a budget of £3. The cost of both the activity and a babysitter made it impossible to have joint nights out more often. The husband had recently started a job, and with their slightly improved finances they had acquired a video recorder and were able to spend Saturday nights together watching videos.

The other younger woman also remarked on the effect of her husband's unemployment upon their joint leisure, over and above the impact of having small children:

> 'We hardly ever go out together now, maybe once a month or something like that.'

In discussion with other groups in the study, the domestic division of labour and childcare were frequently cited as constraining women's access to leisure. For the women interviewed in this group, having a partner who was not in paid work had different effects, depending on age. One older couple shared domestic tasks and relish the opportunities this gave them to embark on more joint leisure activities. For the other older couple, domestic work had become a source of friction. With so little to do, both partners wanted to do the housework as a way of filling in time. Having previously been largely responsible for the majority of the housework, the woman felt as though her partner had taken away from her this area of activity and expertise.

For the younger women with children, the impact of a partner's unemployment on their free time was rather different. Although it could be an advantage to have a husband available during the day for company, and to share child care and domestic tasks, it could also constrain women's own opportunities for leisure:

> 'Sometimes it's nice to have him around, sometimes he gets in the way, under your feet...I don't mind if he goes out,

because I'm so used to it now, with him working a lot, that
when he does stop in all the time, it drives me up the wall,
because you know, I can't have what I want on T.V., and I
can't go to bed what time I want, and if I sit and read a
book and he's watching something on television he doesn't
like it and if I want to watch something on television and
he's reading a book, I feel a bit humpy. So it's quite
difficult to adjust to it, really.'

The impact of a partner's greater availability on the domestic
division of labour, and hence on women's access to leisure time
was also somewhat unpredictable. Survey respondents with
unemployed partners reported having more help with housework in
general from their partners than other women, but when it came to
specifying what form this help took, there was no evidence that
partners did do more. In fact, unemployed partners actually did
less of some tasks, such as washing up, ironing and bedmaking.
The two younger women interviewed indicated the mixed impact on
their domestic workload of having an unemployed partner. Clearly,
the fact that the men have been forced to relinquish the role of
breadwinner was not associated with a major redistribution of
domestic tasks:

Q. So did your husband tend to do a bit more when he was out
of work then?
A. (Laughter) I'm tempted to say 'no' here - it's a good job
he's not in to hear! He'll probably say yes, he worked
hard. To me - no. I used to have a twin tub and I used to
be busy trying to get my washing done, and he used to be
sat, reading the paper. He'll probably say he worked hard.
He did shopping, hoovered up, that kind of thing.

The unemployed men seemed to decide for themselves which aspects
of housework they are willing to take on as their contribution:

Q. Do you think that the amount of housework that he does, or childcare, do you think that has changed since he's not been going out to work?
A. Yes, a little bit. He does a bit more now. You know, he's there mainly, so he can have the kids for me when I go out sometimes, or if I want to pop up to the shops. Instead of having to get the kids ready and cart them with me, he can have them. And he'll do things in the house. He'll do the ironing now and again you know. All through the summer it was great. He'd watch cricket and do the ironing and I'd have no ironing to do. He said he didn't mind that. He could listen to that and do the ironing at the same time, so he'd do it. He potters around, he doesn't mind cooking, he'll do anything if he's forced to, but he doesn't like to make a habit of it. He doesn't feel so totally degraded that he feels he ought to help with the house.'

This clearly remained her primary responsibility, as was tellingly indicated by the fact that when he looked after his own children, this was perceived by both partners as being help provided by him for her, rather than there being any sense of joint responsibility.

Mothers with unemployed partners are subject to the same kinds of practical and normative constraints as other mothers, even though in terms of access to leisure these constraints may well be subsumed under the overarching constraint of lack of money. Women in this group shared some of the attitudes of most women about mobility and access to public leisure venues, most notably pubs. Once again, the emphasis upon or significance of specific factors was at least partially mediated by age. Nevertheless, all of the women interviewed expressed their reservations about going into pubs on their own or without male companions:

> '...there are certain kinds of male pubs I wouldn't want to
> walk into [...] sawdust-on-the-floor type place where they
> all eye you up and down as soon as you set foot through the
> door. I wouldn't feel very comfortable in those.'

Unwanted attention from men, and an attitude on the part of men
that women going into pubs without men are 'fair game', were
given as sources of discomfort:

> 'Occasionally, as I say, Mark plays pool and that, and if
> I've gone in to meet him there and he's perhaps been in the
> toilet or something, or just not there, I've sort of felt
> all these eyes on me, that sort of thing [...] If he's
> there, and as soon as they see him they stop, but if he
> wasn't there and I was to just sit down and have a drink or
> something like that, then I think you would get unwanted
> attention.'

Women are deemed to be out of bounds to men's attention if
accompanied by another man, but in instances where this is not
possible or desired, women feel there is safety in numbers:

> 'If you're with another girl it wouldn't be as bad, but if
> you go in on your own, you'd feel as if they're all watching
> you.'

One of the older women reported feeling ill at ease in all pubs,
whoever her companions, which she attributed to changing social
circumstances which result in a higher level of violence in
general:

> '...when I walk into a boozer now, I'm sat stiff because I'm
> frightened of anything erupting, you see. I don't feel
> comfortable now.'

Women in this group had mixed feelings about walking after dark.
Only one woman had (temporary) access to a car, which she drove

on a regular basis. Even then, the car was seen as primarily for her husband's use, and her demands on the car could only be accommodated if they did not conflict with his:

> '...it's his car, I borrow it. Do you know what I mean? You know, we're supposed to share it, it's our car, but I always have to ask, "can I have the car?", and if two things clash, you can guess who finishes up on the bus.'

Other women had to rely on public transport or lifts. Their leisure patterns were such that they actually travelled around very little after dark. One of the younger women, who went to local evening classes, was not deterred by having to travel there after dark. The evenings when she attended them were her only evenings out, and as such were precious:

> 'It doesn't exactly bother me. I'm not frightened to go out after dark. Last week there were no lights on round here and I were a bit frightened then. Otherwise it doesn't exactly bother me. Mind you, I've thought about taking self defence, up at Woodhouse.'

The other younger woman also felt that the necessity of travelling alone after dark would not prevent her from doing something she wanted to do, but acknowledged that she would feel some anxiety about it:

> 'If I had to go into town at night on my own then I would, it wouldn't put me off to that extent, but I dare say I'd be a little bit more wary than I was.'

By contrast, both of the older women said that they would be sufficiently afraid to forgo an activity if it would require them to venture out unaccompanied after dark:

'...it's all these things I keep hearing. You know, it makes you frightened to go out.'

'I would never go down town or walk the streets late at night on my own.'

'I must admit it's a bit terrifying really.'

'I don't think I'd bother. And if I was going anywhere, which I have done once or twice, Fred would probably come and pick me up.'

Neither of them ever did this, and both would feel anxious about being out in town in the evenings and using public transport, even if they would be with their partners. Once again, women drew a distinction between their own local areas and the city centre, which they felt to be particularly frightening:

'Especially in town, I wouldn't like it at all I don't think. In fact I hate it.'

'Well it's not so bad round here, but on the Manor (estate) I wouldn't, from the top of the Manor to town, no.'

One woman spoke about her dissatisfaction with the self perpetuating nature of women's lack of access and feelings of fear about being in the city centre:

'As I say, you hear these tales about down town but I understand people hear these things so they don't go into town, which means the town's more deserted and then women don't venture down and, you know, it's a vicious circle. I'd like to see it broken really.'

6.4.4 Experiences Of Leisure

The differences in the leisure activities of this group, compared with others in the study, is striking. The survey results

indicated that activities which cost money were much less likely to be done by women with unemployed partners, with the single exception of bingo, which was done by more women in this group and done by them more frequently. All other out of home leisure activities were done less often. As far as home based leisure is concerned, here too this group manifested a picture of an existence which could be perceived as deprived and consequently limited. More of them watched television and watched it more frequently; they were also more likely to spend time sitting down, 'doing nothing', relaxing or taking a nap, or playing with children.

The women interviewed, like the survey respondents in this group, participated less than others in commercial recreation or sporting activities outside the home. Television and reading were popular activities, no doubt because they cost little, can occupy large amounts of time, and are easily available within the home:

> 'I watch television, although that's more of a time filler than anything.'

The two older women greatly enjoyed their walks and other daytime trips out as a couple:

> 'Well personally I like being outside, you know, fresh air. Anything to do outside, that's what I like best.'

For the two younger women, trips out as a couple or as a family were infrequent (a pattern replicated in the survey), again

presumably principally because of the prohibitive cost. However, this was not the only reason. One of the younger women reported how Sunday was a day which she hated because of the conflicts which arose over how it was spent. Her husband had a regular Sunday routine of lunchtime drinks with the lads, which he was unwilling to disrupt. This meant that it was rarely possible for them to have days out as a family in the way that she would wish. Partly the conflict was about her unhappiness with the amount and frequency of his drinking, but it also related to norms about happy family life and her own previous experience of Sunday as a family day:

> 'I get these visions of all these other happy families going out on trips at the weekends, you see, and I'm stuck at home in the kitchen cooking dinner and it drives me up the wall [...] I've never liked them [i.e Sundays] since I've been married. You see, this is it. I used to love them at home, because my mum and dad and sister and that, we always went out on a Sunday [...] I mean, he wants to spend every Sunday in the pub, and I found it very hard to take. I mean, that's been a continual bone of contention, since the day we got married practically, and he will not budge.'

She admitted that sometimes she would take the car and take herself and the children off for the afternoon (once she had cooked Sunday lunch). However, she did not feel this was satisfactory as they were still not together as a family. His rigidity in sticking to his routine stemmed from the time when he was employed and working nights, so that Sunday was a day he spent relaxing in a way of his choosing, legitimating it by

saying he worked the rest of the time and therefore was entitled to this relaxation. This pattern of activity had continued, despite the fact that he was no longer able to justify it as an entitlement earned through paid work.

Women in this group spent most of their leisure time with their partners. This was particularly true for the older women, whose leisure patterns were similar to those of many retired couples. The women had few social contacts aside from their immediate families. It was noted above that the financial constraints upon their leisure meant that social lives outside the home were severely constrained, whether this was independent or couple- or family-based. Contacts with former friends or workmates became difficult to sustain, especially for women who had already lost touch with friends when they married or had children. If going out is costly, entertaining at home may seem more attractive, but this too costs money and therefore tended to be done only for close relatives such as parents, in-laws, adult children and grandchildren. Fewer women in this group spent time with friends or entertained at home. However, those who did do these activities did so fairly frequently, presumably because they are comparatively inexpensive ways to pass time. The high level of residential stability of Sheffield's inhabitants meant that these women were likely to have relatives and friends living nearby. Three of the couples in the interview stage of the study

indicated a large degree of help from relatives to allieviate the poverty of unemployment. One of the older couples was treated to trips out and holidays by their adult children, and another couple spent a holiday with and subsidised by the husbands parents. A third couple were loaned a car for several months by the woman's parents. Whilst this provided otherwise unobtainable treats, the implicit dependency meant that at times the recipients seemed to resent these gestures, perhaps not surprisingly.

Although each of the women interviewed spent the bulk of her time with her husband, this was not always without its problems. The interviews revealed considerable conflict between partners about which leisure activities to do, their frequency and cost, and the implications for the other partner. The two older couples reported little disagreement about leisure. For one couple this seemed to depend on the woman deferring to her husband's leisure plans and preferences. The two younger couples had mainly separate leisure activities outside the home, although from necessities related to cost and childcare, rather than from choice. This evidently provided grounds for conflict, particularly over both husbands' regular habit of going out drinking without their wives. The women's objections derived from the facts that this cost money which could ill be afforded for personal leisure, that there was a discrepancy between

husbands and wives in terms of access to leisure, and that these habits prevented the women and/or the families from pursuing their own leisure interests. By and large, the men felt justified, especially in relation to drinking on Friday nights and Sunday lunchtimes, as was noted above. They cited prevailing local norms as justification, and one husband rather disingenuously commented:

> 'I don't go out a lot, although she seems to think that I do. I don't think I go out a lot. She's welcome to come out with me any time she wants, right, but if I'm going out, if I'm in mind to go out on a certain night, because she doesn't want to go, she isn't welcome to keep me in.'

Whilst being eminently reasonable in his own mind, this husband overlooked the problem of who would take care of their three children if she did go with him. His wife recognised and resented this perception of the children as exclusively her responsibility:

> '...when we get babysitters, I always get a babysitter, it's never a case of him getting a babysitter for us. It's my responsibility, which annoys me because it's as though the kids are my responsibility and not a joint one.'

She also commented on the way in which, having negotiated for him to look after the children on specific occasions so that she could go out, he would then decide to go out himself and would leave the children being looked after by his own mother.

All the women valued their occasional nights out with their partners, although these were lamentably few and far between.

Preferred ways of spending an evening out together were to go for a meal and a drink, either as a couple or with friends or immediate family. Dancing was also integral to some interviewees' definitions of 'a good night out':

> 'What would I count as a good night out? I don't know, it's difficult to answer...I suppose drinking, dancing, socialising.'

> ' Well, I wouldn't mind sort of going for a meal, only occasionally, and a dance or something like that with it, but we don't go that often.'

This kind of night out was restricted to special celebrations such as birthdays or anniversaries at best, being too expensive to do more often. One woman commented that it was not particular activities which made a good night out, but rather:

> 'It depends who you're with and what the company's like, whether you're in the mood and that sort of thing.'

Both of the older wives of the unemployed men strongly denied any desire to have leisure activities outside the home except in the company of their husbands, although in better days one of them had been a regular bingo player, which she did independently of him. For the younger women, the unremitting burden of childcare and housework gave them more impetus to enjoy autonomous leisure outside the home. Both enjoyed locally provided adult education classes in the daytime and the evening, learning activities from cake decorating to snooker and creative writing. The fact that day time classes had creche facilities was a vital factor in

enabling one of the women to go to them:

> 'It's wonderful, yes, I couldn't do it without them. I mean trying to fix up babysitters, and especially if you've got to pay them, it would be useless.'

She was also keen to point out that her young son also benefitted from this arrangement, which presumably made it easier to legitimate to herself and others the fact of leaving him in the creche whilst she pursued her own interests:

> 'Adrian enjoys it as well because he's got all these new toys and other kids to play with, so it works out well for both of us.'

Also important were the comparatively low costs involved in attending such classes, which were available locally with the fees subsidised by the local authority. The other younger woman went to two evening classes, leaving the children at home with their father. He was a reluctant babysitter, resenting the fact that her classes caused her to be absent from the house when he returned from his new job. Having been previously unemployed for five years, he found it difficult to adjust to a new regime:

> 'Q. How do you feel when you come back and she's not around? A. Sick, lost somehow, you know. I think what it is really is being out of work such a long time and being in the house all day with her as well as night time, you see. Now I'm out at work I look forward to coming home and spending the nights with her, and then when she goes out like that it's a bit lonely for me again.'

However, it was apparent from the interviews that male partners felt that these were safe and non threatening activities for the women to participate in, although this attitude varied somewhat

depending on the nature of the class - so snooker was seen as less safe than swimming. Aside from these classes, the interviews with both male partners revealed a level of monitoring of independent nights out. One husband explicitly mentioned his jealousy and concern about her fidelity when his wife went out with other women. In fact, the last occasion when she had had such a night out had been two years earlier! Similarly, the other younger woman had particular friends, divorced women, with whom her husband did not approve of her spending time. In his case, he felt sexual jealousy was unnecessary, working on the assumption that his wife was unlikely to be unfaithful as she knew that this would lead to retaliation on his part. He clearly regarded this as both a legitimate and successful way of policing his wife's behaviour.

The survey indicated that women with unemployed partners were far less likely than average to have been away on holiday for a week or more in the twelve months preceding the survey. 53% of women with unemployed partners, compared with 30% of the sample as a whole had been unable to do this. Those who had had a holiday were also much more likely than average to have stayed in a caravan or tent, reflecting their lack of disposable income for holidays. The interviews fitted with this picture of modest or non-existent holidays. Three of the women had been on holiday in the previous year. All had been with their families or extended

families on self-catering holidays in British sea-side resorts (Rhyl, Skegness and Blackpool, all within easy striking distance of Sheffield). As was mentioned above, two of these holidays were only possible because they were paid for by other family members. This contrasted sharply with previous experiences when the women's partners were in employment and the annual holiday constituted a significant leisure experience.

6.4.5 Summary

In common with other groups in the study, women with unemployed partners placed considerable emphasis upon leisure as opportunity for autonomy and self expression. However, the material privations suffered by this group made it difficult for this ideal to be achieved in reality. The younger women with children faced the same constraints on their time as other mothers interviewed for the study, and so were often short of time for leisure. The older women were, in contrast, likely to have an excess of free time. However, the women agreed that men on the whole have more leisure because of the unequal division of domestic work and childcare. These were areas of conflict: for the younger women because the contributions of their partners had not increased significantly since they became unemployed; for one of the older women because her partner had taken over areas of skill which had been exclusively hers. The major constraint upon

leisure was lack of money, with a consequently low rate of participation in all out of the home leisure activities. In some cases this had led to an enthusiastic taking up of subsidised, municipal facilities. Reliance upon public transport had implications for personal safety, and exacerbated the difficulties of participating in out of the home leisure. All of the women and their partners had given up previously enjoyed activities, although men were more likely to have kept up some independent leisure. This was often a source of conflict. Most of the womens' leisure time was spent with their partners, and the women had few other social contacts. However, family networks were important to this group, and families were often a source of financial and other forms of support. In summation, the financial deprivation of these women, combined in some cases with the additional constraints of being a mother, had extremely restrictive consequences for their leisure.

6.5 YOUNG SINGLE WOMEN

6.5.1 The Respondents

16% of the survey respondents were single women - some 112 women in total. Of these, the majority (82%) were aged under 25 years. Of the single women, 54% were employed full-time, 9% were employed part-time, and 37% were not employed, being either students or unemployed. Much of the employment was in jobs categorised as C2 or DE (see Appendix 1), reflecting local patterns of women's employment. The high proportion of them in full-time employment meant that this group of women had personal incomes higher than average for the survey respondents. They had finished their education later than average, largely due to the successive raising of the school leaving age, and also to the fact that poor job market prospects in the early eighties were encouraging many young people to stay in education longer. Just over half of these women had left school at 16, with 17% staying on until aged 19 or over. Just over a half lived in car owning households, and just over a third had a full driving licence.

The material used in this section derives from interviews with the following women:

> 1. Aged 19. She was employed full-time as a clerical worker for the D.H.S.S. (now the D.S.S.). She lived at home with her parents, both of whom were unemployed, in a house rented from the council. Her personal income was around £70 per week gross. She left school aged 16 with one 'O' level and several C.S.E.'s, and she had some clerical qualifications. She could not drive and her family did not own a car. She

had a steady boyfriend whom she had been seeing for about two years. He was three years older than her and employed as a bank clerk.

2. Aged 20. She was employed full-time as a Tax Officer for the Inland Revenue. She lived at home with her parents, older brother and younger sister. The house was being bought by her parents. Her personal income was around £70 per week gross. She left school aged 17, with several 'O' levels. She had an additional part-time job in a local pub as she was saving in order to buy a car, having recently passed her driving car. She did not have a steady boyfriend.

3. Aged 21. She was employed full-time as a clerical assistant for the local authority. She lived at home with her parents, who were buying the house. Her income was around £70 per week gross. She left full time education aged 18 with C.S.E.'s, 'O' levels and commercial qualifications. She had a full driving licence and some access to the family car. She had had the same steady boyfriend for several years. He was a few years older than her and employed as a builder.

4. Aged 21. She was unemployed but previously worked as a packer in a pharmaceutical company. She lived at home with her mother and her younger sister. Her income was supplementary benefit - around £23 per week. She left full-time education aged 18 with 'O' levels and C.S.E.'s and was waiting to begin a psychiatric nursing course. She had a full driving licence and some access to her mother's car. She had a steady boyfriend of her own age who she had been seeing for the past two years. He was employed as a joiner.

5. Aged 25. She had recently left her parents' home to live in shared rented accommodation. She was employed as a part-time tutor at a local Further Education college, and earned around £70 per week gross. She also did some freelance textile designing from home. She left full-time education aged 22 with a degree, some commercial and clerical qualifications. She did not have a driving licence or access to a car. She had recently started a relationship with a man seven years her junior.

6.5.2 Definitions and Perceptions of Leisure

In common with the other groups of women studied, these young

single women defined leisure in terms of autonomy, enjoyment and

relaxation:

> 'Just doing what you want to do, I think. If you just want
> to laze about you laze about. It's just what you want to do
> in your own time.'

> 'Forgetting about work, relaxing, doing what I want to do,
> seeing who I want to see.'

The distinction between work and leisure was an important one to

the women in this group and was mentioned, unprompted, by several

of them:

> 'Time when you're not working [...] because you relax, do
> something you want to do, whereas your job might be
> something you just have to go to for the money. But leisure
> is doing what you want.'

> 'Nobody's watching you, you know, you've got to be on your
> guard all the time at work you know, if anybody sees you
> talking...but your leisure time you can do just what you
> want and you can do it when you want.'

> 'There's no pressure on you to do things or get things done
> by a certain time, you can do everything at your own pace.
> There's no-one breathing down your neck, not that they do
> breathe down your neck, but there's always someone there
> who's sort of keeping an eye on you all the time.'

Because of their age, women in this group were likely to be at an

early stage in their careers, and therefore subject to a degree

of supervision or control at work, which made the freedom of

their leisure time all the more welcome. As will be discussed

below, paid employment was reported in the survey as one of the

few constraints which might impinge upon the leisure time of

young single women, and as the comments above indicate, was the

area of life in which they felt least autonomous. However, for

the women who was a lecturer at a local college in subjects

related to her own creative work as a textile designer, there was

no such distinction between work and leisure, and she recognised

features which are normally associated with leisure as being

present in her paid work:

> '...enjoying myself, doing things that I enjoy, that's
> leisure. So I mean, my work's my leisure really.'

In common with the lone parent group, the young single women who

were interviewed had strong opinions about gender divisions in

leisure, including the amount of time which men and women have

available for leisure:

> Q. Who do you think has more leisure, men or women?
> A. I suppose if you're single then it's equal, but I suppose
> once you're married, then it's...I don't really know, I
> suppose it's a man really. A woman's always...a mother's
> always a mother, always got children and always got to look
> after the house, whereas I suppose a man can come home from
> work and you know, he doesn't really help.'

> A. It depends whether you're married or not, I think. I
> could do what I want because I'm single, but if you're
> married you've got ties and you've got to be in at a certain
> time and things.'

> A. I think it depends, because I think if say they're
> married, women still tend to come home and get the housework
> as well as their job [...] I still think men probably have
> more time at night.'

The women recognised that their own comparatively high levels of

free time were largely due to their lack of domestic responsibilities. What was perhaps significant was the extent to which they accepted these perceived inequalities in married life as normal and universal.

Aside from gender inequalities in the time at their disposal for leisure, some of the women also felt the range of activities is greater for men:

> 'I think men have got more choice. They can always go down to the pub, can't they? It's not as acceptable for a woman to walk in a pub on her own as it is a man.'

Statements about male access to 'the pub' were the most frequent way in which women in this group commented on leisure or spare time activities as being gender specific. Once again, marital status was presented as a key determinant of the scope of activities available to women:

> '...if you're single there's more varied things you can do, and I think if you're married you probably spend your spare time in making a dress for your little girl or knitting or cooking, you know. But for men they can, like I say, they can go to matches, they can go to the pub and that.'

The same woman had a degree of optimism about the extent to which this pattern is changing:

> 'I don't think people who are getting married today think like that, you know. It'll be just like going out with somebody, I think you'll probably have a real choice of what to do.'

5.5.3 Access to Leisure

According to the survey findings, young single women appeared to

experience few constraints in finding time for leisure. 60% of young single women were satisfied with the amount of spare time which they had, compared to 50% of the sample as a whole. The fact that many of them were in full-time paid work meant that spare time was likely to be concentrated into evenings and weekends, but the proportion of these periods which were free for leisure were comparatively high. 58% of young single women had four or more hours free each weekday evening, and 88% had five or more hours each Saturday and Sunday, compared with 30% and 68% percent of the sample as a whole. This group generally viewed most time outside working hours as available for leisure. They found it easy to set aside time for themselves, and incidents rarely arose which made it necessary for them to change their plans. This enabled them to plan ahead for leisure, and unlike most other women they rarely had to alter arrangements once made. These findings were by and large endorsed by the interviewees in this group. Four out of the five women still lived in their parental homes, and three did very minimal amounts of housework, with most domestic tasks being done by their mothers (even where the mothers themselves were in paid work). The young women were expected to keep their own rooms tidy, and most helped out with chores such as washing up, or occasionally with ironing or cooking. The woman whose mother was a lone parent contributed rather more to day-to-day domestic routines, partly because she

herself was currently unemployed whereas her mother was not. The woman who lives in shared accommodation had a shared responsibility for housework. In the two latter cases a fairly relaxed attitude to housework prevailed, with no strict routines being adhered to. Rather, housework was fitted in as and when convenient.

In the survey, young single women reported that their leisure was seldom affected by unexpected events, but that if they were forced to change their leisure plans this was most likely to be because of the demands of paid employment, such as having to work late. However, the women interviewed did not regard their paid work as a constraint, and were more likely to see it as facilitating or enhancing their leisure:

> 'I'd say it improves it. I've made a lot more friends since I've been going out to work, met a lot more people.'

The four women in paid work all worked within environments where they were able to meet and mix with people their own age and with similar interests. They each saw at least some of their work colleagues socially outside work, either on a regular basis, or for special events and celebrations, such as birthdays. The woman who was a part-time college lecturer actually felt that if she were to work longer hours, her leisure would be improved. She was one of the few women in the entire study who felt that she might have too much time for leisure:

> 'I wish I worked longer hours. I think then I'd appreciate
> leisure a bit more. I seem to find, sometimes I get fed up
> and I think if I worked more I'd appreciate it as leisure,
> but I don't at the moment because I work such short hours
> anyway, nearly all my time's leisure.'

Each of the women had some disposable income for spending on

leisure, and whilst lack of money was sometimes mentioned as a

constraint, all of the interviewees spent at least £15 per week

on themselves. Most spending for the women in paid work was on

items such as clothes, cosmetics and on 'going-out' and holidays.

This supports the findings of other work on adolescents and young

women (Griffin 1985) which suggests that self-presentation and

'looking good' are important at this age, partly in relation to

peer group norms and partly in terms of competition to catch and

keep a male partner. One woman spoke about the way in which the

time and money which women put into self-presentation benefits

men:

> 'I might sound a bit sexist, or whatever, but if you're
> doing sport and taking care of your body, and even things
> like getting your hair done and that, it all seems to be for
> men [...] Women are more in competition with each other than
> men are, because if you like, you have more competition
> about your clothes and your hair and the way you look and
> everything, where men don't seem to bother as much.'

Those women with boyfriends in paid work were likely to have

their own leisure spending supplemented by their boyfriends'

paying for at least some joint activities. This could be set

against the amount of money which the women spent on making

themselves look attractive and fashionable.

Obviously the amount of money available for leisure was determined by the amount of board or rent the women were paying, but once this had been paid there were very few other financial obligations to meet. One woman had regular payments to make to a mail order company from which she had bought clothes, and one of the youngest women had such problems budgetting that her total wage was handed over to her mother, who then gave her a weekly allowance. She was paying off debts and so had to manage on a fixed amount, which broke down as follows:

> 'It's terrible, my mum keeps my money and she lets me have so much a week. But if I go out Friday I probably spend £5 or £6, if I go out on Saturday I'll spend £11 or £12, so I'll only have £4 for the rest of the week.'

With a weekly amount of £20 of pure disposable income, this woman was clearly much less constrained by lack of money than many other women in the study, despite her own feeling of deprivation. The woman who was on supplementary benefit spends her money on broadly similar things to the women in paid work, but had had to cut back her spending since she became unemployed. The range of items on which she spent her money remained the same (clothes, make-up, 'going-out'), but the amounts spent were lower than when she had a wage.

Whilst young single women are not subject to the same degree of normative constraints applied to women in other groups, such as perceptions about appropriate behaviour for mothers, this is not

to suggest that their leisure is entirely free from constraints of this kind. This group of women spent a comparatively high proportion of their leisure in venues such as pubs and nightclubs. Unwanted attention from men was something which they had all experienced. The assumption from men seems to be that simply being in such places implies a willingness or desire on women's part to be approached, 'chatted up' or even touched. One woman interviewed had in fact met her current boyfriend in a pub, and there was no doubt that the possibility of meeting a potential partner can be a considerable incentive for going out to these venues. But of course this is not the only motivation, nor are all women solely interested in meeting a potential male partner. However, the prevailing ideology is precisely that they are, and there is a widely held assumption that young women's leisure time is the time in which they set out to do so. Therefore it becomes acceptable for men to make approaches to any woman who is not evidently accompanied by another man (though still much less acceptable for women to take the sexual initiative). This happens to women when they are with other women, as well as when they are on their own, as women in this group had experienced:

> 'You do get pestered [by men]. I don't see why they should do it. It's just because you're on your own, they probably feel sorry for you or something and feel as though they have to talk to you...Or even when I'm out with my friends they sort of come up and put their arm round you and start

talking to you, or they start talking to you about what you're drinking, or whatever.'

'I was in a nightclub once, I were just dancing and this lad just kept touching me where I didn't want him to, and so I told him a couple of times, but he wouldn't stop, so I finished up slapping him across the face. Afterwards everyone said it were stupid because he could have walked outside [i.e. followed her or waited for her until she left] and all that, but at the time I weren't bothered.'

This recognised the threat which may be implicit in some male attention. Most of the women had devised various strategies for dealing with such situations, and would often try to treat them as humorous or simply walk away, rather than do anything which would be antagonistic. What was remarkable is the extent to which unwanted attention from men was so normal and commonplace that every interviewee had at least one first hand experience to cite. Only one woman said it 'doesn't bother' her, whilst the remainder shared a different view:

'You shouldn't be going out thinking you have to watch men, you know, watch out for men. You should just be able to go out. But I think a lot [of men] just take it for granted that they can do things like that.'

This kind of behaviour was generally felt to be annoying or irritating, but none of the women said it would prevent them from doing things which they wanted to, rather that it would spoil their enjoyment in a particular instance.

In addition to fielding unwanted attention when inside leisure venues, getting to and from such venues was an important

consideration for this group, who were those most likely to be travelling around the city late at night, or returning home in the early hours of the morning. All the women in the group felt anxious about walking around after dark:

> 'I'm nervous about it really, don't really like it. I usually run and then when I get in I think "Oh I'm alright really", but, it's never knowing who's round the corner.'

In common with other women in the study, they felt safer in some areas than in others, but in contrast with older women, who tended to feel safer in their own neighbourhoods, young single women preferred the city centre which is comparatively well lit and where there are likely to be large numbers of people around.

> 'Pond Street [in the city centre] doesn't bother me, it bothers my mum...I don't go down there, that might probably be why. I catch my bus at the High Street. There's not a lot of places what does bother me, just dark ones.'

> 'I don't mind it so much in town, because there are plenty of people about and it's well lit, but I mean obviously in other places you would worry more.'

> 'I think as long as you've got some main roads it's not so bad. It's when it's the little side roads and things that it's frightening.'

They tended to use the late night bus services out of the city centre, but may be faced with a fairly long walk from the bus stop to home:

> 'When I come home from a disco I catch the last bus home and I have to walk down a ginnel [i.e a narrow alley] and you know, I run down now because it's not very nice to walk down on your own.'

The alternative mode of transport would be to take a taxi if they could afford it, but the women expressed some anxieties about taking taxis alone, and one woman had personal experience of harassment from a taxi-driver:

> 'We got a taxi home on Friday and the taxi driver starts saying "Oh Maria, that's a lovely name" and going off like that and I thought "Oh shut up" sort of thing and I mean he could have gone anywhere...that made me think I might be safer on the bus.'

This highlighted women's vulnerability and the related anxiety which they felt. Recent media coverage of attacks on women passengers by male taxi drivers (one of whom reported that having sex with female passengers was regarded as a perk of the job) illustrates that this is a reasonable fear.

The final issue relating to access to leisure concerned the negotiations which women had with parents, boyfriends and friends, and this is discussed in some detail below.

6.5.4 Experiences Of Leisure

Young single women had the most distinctive leisure patterns found in the study. The survey indicated that, unlike the majority of women, this group had high levels of participation in leisure activities outside the home. A higher proportion did keep fit or played sport, went to the cinema, visited friends, went to pubs, clubs or winebars, to nightclubs or discos or went window shopping and browsing in shops. In terms of home based

leisure, they were also most likely to read magazines, watch videos, listen to music or spend time with friends. They were substantially less likely than the sample as a whole to do gardening or D.I.Y., to sew or knit. The most common reason for finding specific activities enjoyable was the opportunity for sociability which they offered. The favourite activities of this group, according to the survey, were going to pubs, clubs and wine bars.

To some extent these findings were corroborated by the experiences of the five interviewees. Although they did engage in a good deal of leisure outside the home, there was surprisingly little diversity of activity amongst the women. Four of the five did some kind of sporting activity, although all commented on the fact that they had been more involved in sport during their time at school. Lack of time, low motivation and shortage of facilities were given as reasons why sporting activities had been given up:

> 'I wanted to carry on playing hockey because I used to play hockey at school, but it just all petered out, you know.'

> 'I'd like to do more things, I'd like to do sport, I'd like to find time and like to make the effort to do things like that, to go swimming and play badminton, but I just don't seem to make the effort.'

For young single women, 'a good night out' was the preferred leisure activity. Three of the women defined this as a tour

around several city centre pubs with a group of friends, moving on to a night club at closing time. The other two women gave a visit to the cinema as their definition of a good night out. This group, more than any other, were influenced by the vagaries of fashion and by the need to earn the approval of peers. So certain pubs and nightclubs move in and out of fashion, and are at any one time identified with a particular group or lifestyle. Choosing the right places to go was very important in terms of presenting the right self image. Different venues were also chosen depending on the choice of companions:

> 'We go to the Dog and Partridge when I'm with Mary and drink
> Guinness, then when I'm with Simon we go to The Red Lion and
> The Mulberry and places like that where they've got music
> and juke boxes and things, because when I go out with Mary
> we just talk all the time, but when I go out with Simon
> sometimes it's a bit difficult because we've got different
> interests.'

These young single women are major users of commercial leisure provision, as their comments on favourite leisure activities indicated. Weekends seemed to follow a similar pattern for all the women interviewed in this group. Friday and Saturday were the 'big nights out':

> 'I can't stop in on Saturdays, it's against my religion.
> Q. So what do you generally do on a Saturday then?
> A. Well I meet Angela at half past seven, then we probably
> go in about eight or nine pubs because I don't like staying
> in one...er, we'll probably go to the Limit after, get
> thoroughly drunk and fall off your stool, and then try and
> find your way home from there.'

Even the women with regular boyfriends were likely to have a

'girls' night out' on one of these nights, although this largely seemed to depend on whether or not individual women's boyfriends adhered to the traditional pattern of Friday or Saturday nights out 'with the lads'. If they no longer did this then it was very unlikely that the women would continue to have nights out with their women friends, at least on the same scale and with the same degree of regularity. Saturdays were usually spent in town shopping or window shopping, and this was definitely regarded as leisure. Young single women expressed a preference for doing this alone rather than with anyone else, although sometimes it was done with either friends or female relatives. With the exception of one woman who said she could not afford to, all of the women said they would shop for treats to cheer themselves up if they were feeling down:

> 'If I go to town and I can't find anything I buy at least a lipstick just to think "Oh well, I got this anyway."'

> 'Clothes, always...if I go a week without thinking "Oh I'll have to buy something" I've done really well. So clothes, I always buy clothes.'

Sundays were used for catching up on sleep or chores, perhaps spending some time with their families, or they are spent with boyfriends.

In terms of leisure companions, three of the five women spent the major part of their leisure time with boyfriends. McRobbie (1978), Griffin (1985) and Griffiths (1988) have all documented

the pressure to get a boyfriend which young women experience. Most of the women had first become interested in boys when they were fourteen or fifteeen years old. This meant that they started to take more care with their appearance, and that they tended to spend more time in places where they were likely to meet boys. All of them were aware that starting to have more serious relationships could lead to a loss of female friends:

> 'You don't mean to, but I suppose you cut your friends off a bit, don't see them as much. Instead of going out with your friends you make arrangements with your boyfriend first and then just fit your friends in around that.'

None of the women were entirely happy about this, and all felt it was important to maintain female friendships, but this was not always easy given the demands placed upon them by their boyfriends and the restrictions imposed by being a couple:

> 'I think really, though, it becomes a problem when you're just together all the time, because even though you might both want to do things separate, you daren't say...because you're scared of hurting the other person.'

One of the interviewees spoke retrospectively of the problems she had had with her previous longstanding boyfriend, when she felt that her own interests had been absorbed by his, with the consequence that she missed out on valuable opportunities:

> 'I missed a lot of parties and things that were happening at college, and some times I couldn't work late on Friday nights at college because I had to get home, so that was a bit restricting.'

Whilst the women in this group exhibited an interesting range of

attitudes towards coupledom and joint leisure, all strongly
disapproved of possessive behaviour on the part of boyfriends,
and of 'old fashioned' attitudes in general. One woman spoke
about how she had previously ended her relationship with her
current boyfriend because of his attitude to her independent
leisure. She had only agreed to resume it on the understanding
that he reform his attitudes:

> 'We understand each other more than what we did. He used to
> get a right face on if I did anything. He were old
> fashioned then!'

Like the women in Griffiths' study (op. cit.), most of the women
were hanging on to at least some independent leisure. Only one
woman had almost no social life apart from her boyfriend, and she
clearly perceived this to be a problem:

> 'You tend to stifle each other a bit.'

She felt they have become so routinised in their leisure that it
was difficult for her to negotiate independent leisure. This was
exacerbated by the fact that her boyfriend was happy to spend all
his spare time with her and apparently failed to understand why
she might want to spend time with alternative companions. In the
past she had given in to his wishes, but had recently become more
assertive, which she regarded as a positive step.

Aside from time spent with boyfriends, most leisure time was
spent with friends, who were either old school friends or friends
from work, and who were almost exclusively female. All of the

women placed a high value on these friendships:

> 'I've always enjoyed being with my friends. I mean we don't drink that much, I just get excited that I'm out with my friends, especially if I've not seen them for a while. I just get really giggly, and it's only because I can chat to them, you know.'

Time spent with women friends included evenings out, but also includes less organised activities such as visiting each other, meeting up in town for coffee or a drink, and so on. Some negotiations over how time is spent were necessary, especially over major decisions such as the choice of a holiday destination:

> 'Oh it's got to be a joint decision I think, especially when more than a couple of you are going. Got to try and decide on something that everybody wants.'

Decisions seem to be easily reached, with most parties being willing to compromise. For example, when one of the interviewees started a part-time job as a barmaid on Friday evenings, which had traditionally been reserved for 'girls' night out', her friends changed their routines to enable this to be switched to Saturday instead.

One significant factor which set this group aside from many other women in the study was the comparatively small amount of time they spend with relatives, despite the fact that four of them still live in the family home. Certainly they rarely engaged in any family based leisure activites, apart from watching television on the evenings when they stayed in, which tended to be few and far between:

'I only stop in two nights a week and that's just to get a good night's sleep.'

Some of the women recognised that their parents would have liked to spend more time with them:

> Q. How much of your spare time do you spend with your family, with your mum and dad?
> A. Not as much as they'd like, I don't think. No, I don't spend a right lot of time in. I go out quite a lot.

The only relatives with whom this group of women were likely to spend much time were sisters or mothers. The one woman who had recently left home told how she was much more appreciative of her parents now that she no longer lived with them, and how she visited them on a regular basis.

The high level of leisure time spent outside the home and in commercial leisure venues such as pubs and clubs means that drinking formed an important part of the leisure lifestyles of these women, even if individual women themselves were not necessarily heavy drinkers of alcohol. Whilst they did enjoy drinking, this was principally seen as a social activity. So drinking at home was rare, unless for a special occasion. Similarly, these women did not entertain at home, presumably because all except one lived in their parents' home but also because this is an activity associated with a different stage in the lifecycle and a more home oriented lifestyle.

One interesting consideration in relation to this group was that despite the frequency with which they go to pubs, they shared

some of the perceptions of the majority of women in the study:

> 'It's not as acceptable for a woman to walk in a pub on her own as it is for a man. A woman's really got to have someone to go with.'

> 'There are very few pubs that I'd go in, I can think of about two that I dare go in on my own, and that's only because I know the people well enough inside, I know that I could talk to someone. But other than that I don't think I would go anywhere.[...] Because men would think you're trying to pick someone up.'

> 'I'm O.K. if I'm meeting somebody in there and I can sit for about half an hour if I've got a book or something. I'll sit for about half an hour and wait for them, but I don't like being...I couldn't go in a pub and sort of just sit there all night on my own if I didn't know anybody in there.'

Having a book or something to read made being alone in a pub more tolerable because:

> '...you can hide behind it...and it doesn't look as though you would want to be picked up or anybody's going to come over and talk to you. You're not staring around at anybody, you're just sort of minding your own business, sat there with a book or paper, and you think because you're not bothering anybody, nobody's going to bother you.'

Social norms about respectability were remarkably prevalent and persistent, even for this apparently liberated group. When asked what they felt would change attitudes about women using pubs, the consensus was that this would be a slow process, and would only come about through increasing numbers of women going into pubs unescorted. Given the discomfort in doing this which these women had in common with the vast majority of the women in the study, the status quo seems unlikely to change in the foreseeable

future.

The survey indicated that 74% of single women had been away on holiday for one week or more in the preceding twelve months. This figure was slightly above average for the sample as a whole. In addition, they were more likely than average to have stayed in an hotel or in a self catering house or apartment, rather than in a caravan, camping or with friends or relatives. Each of the interviewees had been on holiday abroad in the recent past. Two had gone with friends, two with their boyfriends. Holiday destinations were the popular tourist resorts in Spain, Greece and the Canary Islands. Holidays with friends were planned jointly, whereas holidays with boyfriends were largely planned by the women themselves. The oldest of the women had been on holiday on her own, to Italy for two weeks, and had found this a very positive experience. She was already planning her next holiday, which would be her second in a year.

6.5.6 Summary

Young single women emerged as a distinctive group within the study, with greater levels of access to leisure and autonomy than women in the other groups. Notions of autonomy and enjoyment were central to their definitions of leisure, and they placed key emphasis on sociability. They were conscious of gender divisions in leisure, in relation to both the amount of time available for

leisure, and the range of activities available. Although their own time was structured by paid employment, they were not constrained in terms of the total time available for leisure, and tended to see all time outside paid work as potentially available for leisure. They had very few domestic obligations and therefore there were few competing demands for this time. None of the women were high earners, so lack of money was a minor problem, though not usually prohibitive of their chosen activities. These women had high levels of participation in commercial and out of the home leisure. Self presentation was important, and a considerable proportion of their income was spent on clothes, cosmetics and so on. Most leisure time was spent with friends or boyfriends, and friendships were very important to this group. However, those single women with 'steady' boyfriends were beginning to experience restrictions on their leisure as a consequence of being a couple. Because of their particular leisure lifestyles, these had more direct experience of male social control of public spaces than other women in the study. They also expressed some anxiety about travelling around the city to leisure venues after dark, being so reliant on public transport. However, they do this when faced with little alternative other than to forego activities. However, despite these constrainsts, young single women emerged as distinctively privileged in their access to and experiences of

6.6 Conclusion

The detailed in-depth interview data provide evidence of the impact upon women's lives of different configurations of circumstance. One of the most useful conclusions which can be drawn from this data is the fact that women do not exist as an homogenous group: in relation to leisure there are very real divisions between the relatively privileged, such as young single women, and the quite severely circumscribed, such as mothers with young children. Even amongst women who share apparently similar material conditions, for example the presence of an unemployed partner, there are differences in their experiences according to age, the kind of support networks which women have available to them, and women's perceptions of their own entitlement to leisure.

Women in the different groups did have broadly similar definitions of leisure, seeing the most crucial component of it as being the ability to please oneself. This definition exists as an ideal rather than as actuality for most of the women interviewed, whose leisure was likely to involve some degree of compromise. This was true even of the least materially constrained women. Even so, all of the women who were interviewed felt that they did have access to some time when they were relatively free to do as they pleased, even if this time was fragmented and required a great deal of negotiation or forward

planning to secure. So whilst women did have an 'ideal' for leisure, they were realistic about the unattainability of such perfection within the context of their own lives. They were very aware of the constraints upon their leisure, some of which were related to their gender.

Clearly certain structural factors are more pertinent to some women than to others. They may be more or less affected by considerations such as lack of time or income. However, there is an extent to which there is a degree of commonality between women which is based in definitions of femininity and what it means to be female. Amongst the women who were interviewed, their sense of themselves was largely centred around their roles as carers and with specific regard to leisure, around their roles as facilitators of others' leisure. This caused some dissatisfaction, but was largely accepted as something to which women had become reconciled. Feelings about appropriate behaviour, and feelings of guilt or insecurity about transgressing the limits of such behaviour, were effective constraints upon women's autonomy, whatever their material circumstances.

CHAPTER 7: <u>CONCLUSION</u>

7.1 Reflections on the research

Mainstream theoretical and empirical studies of leisure have largely failed to take account of the different experiences of men and women. This study has attempted to pull together existing empirical work which offers insights into the women's leisure and to combine this with original empirical data. A survey of 700 women, conducted as part of the Sheffield Leisure and Gender Project, provided a considerable body of quantitative data about women's leisure experiences in the context of the structure of their everyday lives. This formed a useful starting point for this qualitative study, and directly informed the selection of five groups of women, all participants in the original survey, who were interviewed in depth about their perceptions and experiences of leisure.

The essentially exploratory nature of the research and the complexity of leisure as an area of study has necessitated an interdisciplinary approach, drawing together work from a diversity of strands of sociology, together with studies within leisure and cultural studies. Leisure studies at present occupies a rather uneasy position between disciplines, and has no consistent theoretical framework, relying instead on the rather eclectic approach which is to some extent replicated in this

study. Neither sociology, nor cultural studies, nor geography,it may be any or all of these things depending on the perspective of the researcher. However, with regard to epistemology and methodology this particular piece of research was influenced by theoretical work in the field of cultural studies and by feminist research in the social sciences. The research is feminist in intention and approach, and makes no claims to be 'objective' in the sense of value free. However, it fits in with much other research on women's lives conducted from a feminist perspective, which improves its reliability. The research had a specifically political ambition, notably to understand and represent women's experiences in their own terms.

The adoption of an historical perspective provided a useful starting point for the research for a number of reasons. Firstly, this facilitated an awareness of the genesis of current commonsense definitions of leisure as the antithesis of paid work. Alongside this it was possible to trace the historical development of gender divisions within leisure. Finally, it re-inforced the need to take an holistic approach to the study of women's leisure, whereby leisure is seen in relation to the broader fabric of women's lives and the social, economic and ideological considerations through which they are structured, rather than being seen as wholly discrete and autonomous.

This approach was fundamental to the empirical work within this

study. This explored the material and ideological constraints

upon women, and specifically related them to women's perceptions

and experiences of leisure. The data yielded by this approach

has not only indicated the extent to which leisure is structured

by gender, but has also demonstrated that traditional definitions

of leisure are not relevant to women's lives. It substantiates

earlier feminist research which had indicated that few women

experience leisure as discrete periods of time free from

obligation. More than this, it has indicated that 'leisure' is

not a conceptual category which enjoys any currency amongst

women.   When women talked about the structure of their lives

and the ways in which they spend their time, few of them

spontaneously used leisure as a way of describing their

experiences, and when they did, leisure was sometimes assumed to

be synonymous with sport and usually with 'activities'. This is

noteworthy not least because all the women who participated in

the research were aware that this was a study about 'leisure',

even though few questions specifically mentioned it.   The fact

that women chose not to use this term, even when their awareness

of it as a label was presumably heightened, is a telling

indication of its irrelevance. The most typical response when

women were asked to participate in the study was 'women's

leisure? what leisure?'.

This raises a substantive question about the social relations of

research.   Throughout this study, leisure has been used as a means of describing certain collected experience and behaviour. The emphasis has largely been upon determining the ways in which women subjectively define and experience leisure. Given that what has emerged is that leisure is a meaningless or redundant concept for most women in terms of how they see their lives, then this calls into question the validity of the sustained use of this term when providing accounts or analyses of women's lives. When the aim of research is to offer a space for the promotion of women's own accounts of reality, it may be a fundamental flaw to continue framing such accounts in a language which is meaningful to the researcher as an analytic tool, but not to the subjects of the research. With hindsight, there seems to be something contradictory in keeping questions about 'leisure' to a minimum in the interview schedule, only to reintroduce it as the framework for analysis and writing up.

At best, the term 'leisure' provides a useful shorthand for a complex set of social activities and relations.   There may however be strategic reasons for its continued usage within sociological enquiry: defining an area of investigation and academic pursuit as 'the sociology of leisure' gives it an identity which may be useful in terms of recognition within institutions and which may be helpful in releasing funding.

7.2 Reflections on the methodology

The methodology which was adopted was successful in drawing women out and was sufficiently open ended to make possible the mapping out of the complexity of women's daily lives. Essentially the interview transcripts are about the subjective reality of the research participants' everyday lives, rather than about their leisure. The use of male and female interviewers had distinct advantages in so far as the transcripts indicate the extent to which interviewees framed their responses in the context of an assumed shared knowledge based on gender. Whilst there were some logistical drawbacks to arranging simultaneous interviews of the women and their partners, these were outweighed by the richness of the data which resulted.

Two things seem to suggest themselves with regard to methodological changes which could have improved the quality of the data. Firstly, it would have been useful to have had more than one visit to each interviewee. Ideally, two or three shorter visits, each dealing with particular sections of the interview schedule would have enabled a relationship to be built up between the researcher and the interviewee, and would have made it possible to go back over particular areas for clarification or in greater detail as they emerged as significant. Clearly this raises logistical issues about the amount of time which both the

researcher and the interviewees might have available for participating in the interviews, and about the amount of data which would be generated. It also assumes a way of life predicated upon temporal regularity and the possibility of forward planning and freedom from interruptions. As has been noted elsewhere in the study, some of the women who participated had many and conflicting demands upon their time and it would have been difficult to persuade them to commit themselves to more than one interview. Nevertheless, the length of the interview schedule and the range of subjects to be covered in some depth meant that some of the interviews were very long indeed and subject to interruption. Two women were visited twice in order to finish the interview and the quality of the data which resulted from this, together with my subsequent experience of interviewing over a number of visits during a community study, convinces me that this would have been a positive change to the methodology.

It would also have facilitated the second change, which concerns both the content of the interview schedule and its use. Although issues relating to sexuality and social control emerged as key within the study, these are difficult and sensitive areas about which to elicit information. As a virtual stranger to the interviewees I was reluctant to probe very deeply if I perceived that a question was causing any discomfort, and in some cases I may have been over cautious. Repeat visits and the establishment

of trust may have made it easier to ask about these intimate, highly personal areas.

7.3 Suggestions for future research

The study of women's leisure is such a chronically underesearched area that it is difficult to think of a single aspect which would not benefit from future research. The Sheffield survey which formed the starting point for this study had a limited sample base and was restricted to one geographical location. It is also now several years out of date. We need more survey data of this nature, informed by a feminist perspective such that the design of questionnaires, their implementation and the analysis of the data generated are sensitive to women's experiences and to their needs.

This study has concentrated in some detail on five specific groups of women, and has highlighted the commonality amongst and differences between them. Many of the findings support those of other researchers who have explored the experiences of particular kinds of women - elderly women or mothers with young children for example. But still the number of these studies is very small, and some groups of women are almost entirely missing from the published work which is available, including black women, lesbians and women with disabilities. Much of the supporting material for this thesis has had to be gleaned indirectly from

studies which take other sociological topics as their focus. There still seems to be a reluctance on the part of feminist academics to recognise leisure as an important site of struggle and an important subject for research. Social scientists still tend to concentrate on the family and employment, whilst cultural analysts are predominantly interested in women's readings of specific media texts, rather than the contexts in which they are read. This means that much of the fabric of women's everyday lives is being missed, is largely going unrecorded and unanalysed. Leisure is a site where issues of gender identity, work, sexuality, money, the domestic division of labour and more all converge. That it has received such scant attention seems remarkable. What is needed are more studies which attempt to explore women's lives in a holistic way, analysing the interrelationships between, for example, work and domestic life. This reluctance to investigate leisure is compounded by the current funding climate. There is no research council in this country which accepts either leisure studies or women's studies as its responsibility. The Sports Council and commercial leisure agencies have largely pragmatic research objectives, as do regional agencies such as the Regional Arts Boards and local authorities. Added to this is the more general difficulty in obtaining funding for applied research, particularly feminist work.

However, to be optimistic, there are some quite specific studies which would, funders willing, significantly enhance our understandings of women's experiences of leisure. A small number of existing and perhaps out of date pieces of research are constantly being drawn upon by feminists working in the field, such as Diana Leonard's study of courtship and marriage, or Ann Whitehead's study of sexual antagonism in a rural area. Much more work could usefully be done on current patterns of and strategies for male control of public spaces - something which this study has identified as being of crucial importance, but could only touch upon. This study has also noted the importance of women's friendships and social networks, about which very little has been published.

Some work in the field of cultural studies has provided interesting and quite detailed analyses of the adolescent culture of femininity, but little research exists which explores how this changes over time and with age. These studies are themselves now somewhat out of date. Similarly, the historical work on women's lives which does exist is patchy, and in particular there is very little material available which chronicles women's leisure from the 1950s to the present. There is little doubt that a wealth of information could quite easily be collated from existing material such as women's diaries and letters, as has been illustrated by some available material which deals with earlier historical

periods.

Alongside of all of this essentially empirical work, there is a need to continue the theoretical project which concerns the problem of 'leisure', namely the relationship between leisure as a descriptive category used in an academic or policy oriented context, and leisure as experienced in everyday life. This study has not attempted to provide a definition of leisure, but rather to explore how relevant some existing assumptions about leisure are when applied to women's experiences. The lack of fit between these two calls into question how useful it is to keep on using leisure and attempting to modify the concept to incorporate women's experience. Maybe a more productive route would be to move away from this essentially class and gender bound concept, and work on developing new terminololgy and new analytic frameworks which properly reflect the complexity of women's - and men's - daily lives.

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Appendix 1

CLASSIFICATION OF WOMEN'S SOCIAL CLASS POSITION (1)

The collection of statistical information about the members of household units has, by convention, deemed women who were wives or daughters to derive their class position from a male head of the household. As Parkin (1972, quoted in Crompton and Mann, eds., 1986), for example put it:

> 'This is because for the great majority of women the allocation of social and economic rewards is determined primarily by the position of their families and, in particular, that of the male head.'

This assumption has recently been subjected to sustained criticism as a basis for determining the class membership of women in households.

Married women who are in paid work have a direct relationship to the labour market but, as in the case of married men, it is inappropriate to suggest that this class position encompasses all family members. The direct relationship between waged labourer and the labour market is an individual one based upon the wage contract, although the contribution of unwaged domestic labour should also be considered, despite its indirect contribution to surplus value. Having said that, class position allocated on the basis of an individual's relationship to the labour market alone is not enough when considering the social class position of families in general and women in particular. In the words of Dale et al. (1985):

> 'A second dimension, relating to style of life as reflected by the consumption of goods, services and property, must also be considered. Class positions on this second dimension can only be allocated to family units as a whole. For those who are not involved directly in the labour market, occupation is not an appropriate basis for the allocation of class position.'

Although we have some reservations about the position developed by the above theorists, they quite correctly (and with important implications) stress the inadequacy of allocating social class only on the basis of occupation or in the case of married women, husband's occupation. In addition, women working part-time cannot be classified in the same way as men and women working

full-time, due to large differences in terms of levels of pay, job security, and promotional prospects, within what is apparently the same occupational position. This highlights a linked problem related to using the Registrar General's classification of social classes in survey data. Recent work in the area (Murgatroyd 1977) suggests that the differences within occupational titles are minimised (for example between full- and part-time workers). Inequalities of income, career prospects and ultimately power are therefore neglected. However, bearing such limitations in mind, such survey data are nonetheless valuable in constructing representaive data on social class differences and their effects on women's leisure. The development of a stratification system which is both theoretically grounded and also separates out occupation, gender and family patterns of consumption begins to address the widespread inequalities of access to money and resources within family units (Finch and Groves 1983, Pahl 1983). However, as Walby argues (in Crompton and Mann 1986) any stratification system which deals adequately with women and social class must go beyond merely producing rankings of life-style and prestige which include women as well as men, based on the documentation of material inequalities. It must also deal with political issues, including gender politics and the nature of patriarchal domination in the workplace, the home and wider society. All of these issues have important implications for women's leisure patterns.

A study of women's leisure clearly requires careful planning on how to determine women's social class position. As, from the outset of the project, it seemed likely that class would have a major bearing on women's leisure experiences, it was vital to use appropriate criteria for allocating women to a social class category, taking account of the criticisms of traditional stratification measures. On the other hand, any radical departure from these conventional systems, based on a person's paid occupation or that of their 'head of the household', would prevent the study's findings being compared with most of the relevant quantitative data from official sources, research studies and other publications. It was eventually decided, in consultation with N.O.P., to collect information from the survey respondents about a range of criteria related to social class, leaving it open for us to employ various categorisations in analysing the results. (Since the women interviewed in depth were selected from the pool of survey respondents, these points apply equally to that phase of the project.) This information included details of their marital status; their own current employment status and job, or former job if not currently employed; the same details for male partners; women's terminal

education age and level; their personal and household income; housing tenure; and car ownership.

This level of detailed information permits women respondents' social class to be categorised in various ways, alongside the conventional 'partner social class' categorisation for those women who had a male partner. It was eventually decided to analyse the survey data using both 'respondent social class' (where women were currently employed) and 'partner social class' (where women had resident male partners), as well as presenting results broken down by such criteria as household and personal income, terminal education age and car ownership. However, whilst it is possible to allocate each respondent separately to an appropriate social class category by taking all these criteria into account, in practice this would have been a complex task, and would involve subjective judgements.

Accordingly, where reference to 'social class' is made in this report it refers either to 'respondent social class (based on the 433 respondents in paid employment) or to 'partner social class' (for the 491 women with male partners). Unfortunately this categorisation excludes some women respondents who fall into neither group, such as single women students or non-employed lone mothers, widows and divorcees. It also includes an unknown number of women in both groups, but without further detailed analysis it is impossible to determine the consistency or variation of their class position between the two forms of analysis. These are fascinating issues, but one which could not be adequately addressed in the context of this current project.

The social class grading system used by N.O.P. is the standard system used by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising for various kinds of survey and market research (see below). This is a six category grading system broadly corresponding to the Registrar General's system in its upper reaches, but with the Registrar General's three manual workers' groups reduced to two, leaving the lowest category for those dependent on state benefits for their income.

GRADE		SOCIAL STATUS	HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD OCCUPATION
N O N	A	Upper middle class	Higher managerial administrative or professional
M A N U A L	B	Middle class	Intermediate mangerial, administrative or professional
	C1	Lower middle class	Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional
M A N U A L	C2	Skilled working class	Skilled manual workers
	D	Working class	Semi and unskilled manual workers
MANUAL AND NON- MANUAL	E	Those at lowest levels of subsistence	State pensioners or widows (with no other earner) and casual workers

Use of this systenm does enable comparisons to be made between the survey results and other studies, but it does little to meet the criticisms levelled by feminists at conventional social stratification measures. Indeed, as N.O.P.'s Classification and Social Grading for interviewers notes, in its section on how to identify the head of household:

> 'Note that if the person is a named women whose husband is also a member of the household he, not she, is the head of the household [...] (Equality of the sexes has not yet penetrated Market Research social grading!) The only exception to this would be in the rare case of a full-time working wife who had assumed the entire financial responsibility because her husband was, for example, an invalid.'

The separate analysis of women's survey answers by the other criteria (apart from own and partner's occupation), such as income and educational level, does go some way towards compensating for the defects of this grading system, and helps to indicate the power of these various dimensions of a person's social class position in influencing women's leisure experiences. However, with the benefit of hindsight and more time for thought at the stage of planning how to analyse the data, we feel that a better way could have been devised of constructing social class categories. This would, ideally, have provided a means of classifying many more, if not all of the women respondents, and would have been a broader measure than occupation alone.

(1) Reproduced from Green, Hebron and Woodward 1987. Original draft by Diana Woodward.

WOMEN'S INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Check: Name
        Age
        Marital status
        Number and ages of children
        Employment status
        Partner's employment status

2. SCHOOL

At what age did you leave school?

Can we go back to your last few years at school -
  i) how did you spend your spare time then?
 ii) who was most of this time spent with?
iii) who used to decide what to do?
 iv) friends - were they similar types of people to you?
              - were they mostly female, male or mixed?
              - would you say that girls were generally treated
                differently then by a) adults b) boys?
      If yes - in what ways?
             - how did this affect their leisure?

3. PERSONAL LIFE

How old were you when you first started to be interested in boys?

How did becoming interested in boys/having a boyfriend affect your leisure time?

Thinking about any serious relationships with boys/men, in what ways did they affect a) the way you spent your spare time?
                          b) the way your boyfriend spent his spare time?

3. DAILY ROUTINES

If Employed

Organisation of work: length of hours , journey to work, convenience?

Workmates: few/many   M/F Age group

What would you say are your main reasons for going to work?

What do you think you get out of having a job?

Arrangements for childcare?

What do you have to do before you leave the house?

Could you describe a typical working day?

You said that you do most of housework yourself/share the housework with X - do you have a regular routine for housework?

How easy/difficult is it for you to 'fit in' doing the housework?

Do you ever get the chance to have a chat or a laugh with other people at work (prompt: at meal times, breaks etc.)

How important is this?

Do you see any of your workmates outside work?

Do you think going out to work improves your social life, or does it interfere with/restrict it?

How does your husband/partner feel about you going out to work?

What kinds of things do you usually spend your wages on?

If a housewife

You said that you're a housewife at the moment and that you stopped work _____ ago.

What are the best and worst things about being a housewife?

How important was your work to you?

Is there anything you miss about not being at work?

Would you say there are positive things about not being at work?

Could you describe what you would do on a normal weekday?

Do you have a regular routine for housework/shopping etc.?

Do you plan to go back to work at some stage?

If you were to go back to work, what do you think would be the benefits a) for you personally?
          b) for your family?

What about any drawbacks?

Do you have any money of your own to spend on leisure?

If no - why not?

If yes - where from? who decides how much, how it is spent etc.?

If unemployed

How long have you been unemployed?

What did you used to work as?

What would you say are the worst things about being unemployed?

Any positive aspects?

How does being unemployed affect your leisure/social life?

Are most of your friends employed or unemployed?

Do you have any kind of regular daily routines?

Could you describe a typical weekday?

What kinds of things do you spend your unemployment benefit/social security on?

If partner employed

What does your partner do at work?

Does he get much chance to socialise at work?

Does he ever see his workmates socially outside work?

Does he ever go to social events connected with work?

How do you feel about this? (prompt for details: does he go alone?)

What kinds of things are your partner's wages spent on?

What housework/childcare does he do?

If partner unemployed

How long has he been unemployed?

What are the worst/best things about him being unemployed?

If previously employed - has he kept up contact with former workmates?

How has being unemployed affected - his social life?
                                  - your social life together?

Do you think the amount of housework or childcare he does has changed since he hasn't been going out to work?

What kinds of things is his unemployment benefit/social security spent on?

5. ATTITUDES TO LEISURE

What do you mean by leisure?

How does leisure differ from work?

How important do you think leisure is
a) for you personally?
b) for people in general?

What do you think people get out of leisure?

Do some people need leisure more than others?

Who would you say has the most free time - women or men?

Thinking about the kinds of things people do in their spare time, would you say men have more choice than women or not?

6. INFLUENCE OF SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Check if currently in a relationship

If yes - how many years have you been married/living together/going out together?

Who would you say you spend most of your free time with? (probe - amount of leisure time spent with friends/partner/children)

How do you decide what to do in your spare time?

When you first met your husband/partner/boyfriend what kinds of things did you used to do together?

Did you have activities that you did separately from each other at that time?

Did your leisure time change when you
                      a) started going steady (in your present relationship)?
If living together - b) got married/started living together?

If yes - why?

If living together - do you still see friends you had before your present relationship started?
                              does your husband/partner?

If no - why not?

Do you ever have disagreements with your husband/boyfriend/partner about the kinds of things you do in your spare time, either together or separately?

If living together   -   do you ever go out socially without each other?
                     -   if yes - how often? where to? who with?
                     -   how does your husband/partner feel about you doing this?
                     -   has he ever objected to you doing this?

                     -   how do you feel about your husband's nights out?
                     -   have you ever raised any objections or been unhappy about something he's wanted to do?

                     -   if you weren't happy about him going do you think he would still go?

                     -   if he was not happy about you going would you still go?

                     -   do you always tell your husband/partner where you're going?

                     -   does he always tell you?

                     -   if not, why not? did you ever do this?

7. CHILDREN

If no children

Have you ever thought about having children?

What would you say would be the main changes in your life if you had children? (promt - specific changes relating to leisure)

If children

What would you say were the main changes in you life that having a child/children brought?

Specific changes relating to leisure?

Did becoming a mother make you think of yourself any differently?

Some women have told us that they sometimes need to have time for themselves, a break from the children. What's your opinion of this?

Do you ever have someone who looks after your children so that you can go out or have a break?

If yes - is this a regular arrangement?

If no - would you do this if someone was around to look after your children?

How do you think your life might be different if you didn't have children?

If a daughter (or 'if you did have a daughter...')

Do you think your daughter's life will be the same as or different from your own?

Would you like to think her life would be similar to yours?

8. LEISURE ACTIVITIES/HIGHLIGHTS

What are your favourite leisure activities?

What are your husband's/boyfriend's/partner's activities?

What do you usually do at the weekends?

What would you count as a good night out? Is this different from when you were younger?

What does your husband/boyfriend/partner count as a good night out?

When did you last have a good night out?

Do you have special celebrations for birthdays, anniversaries etc.?

If yes - how important do you think this is a) for you? b) for your husband/boyfriend/partner?

Do you think of shopping for clothes, make-up etc. as leisure?

Do you do this alone or with other people? who with?

Do you ever shop for treats or to cheer yourself up?

If yes - what kinds of things do you buy? does it work?

Do you (and your husband/boyfriend/partner) ever invite people round for a drink or meal?

If yes - how do you view this? Is it leisure a) for you? b) for your husband/boyfriend/partner?
(probe - who does the preparation?)

- how safe do/would you feel about doing this?
- would you feel safer in some areas than others?

Do you think that women have to be more careful than men about where they go and what they do? Why do you think that?

11. LEISURE PROVISION

How long have you lived in this area?

What do you know about the kinds of leisure facilities which are available in this area?

Do you use any of the facilities yourself? Which?

Do your family/friends?

How easy do you think it is for women to use them? And you personally?

How could provision be improved?

How far would you travel to
a) use a facility such as a sports centre or swimming pool?
b) to go to a pub or club for a drink?

12. HOLIDAYS

When did you last have a holiday?

Will you be going on holiday this year?

Who usually plans holidays?

Given unlimited time and money, what would your ideal holiday be like?

13. CARS

Can you drive?

Can your husband drive?

If both drive - who uses the car(s) most and for what? (probe for details, explanations).

14. SATISFACTION

How satisfied would you say you are with your life in general?

If you could change your life is there anything you would change

or do differently?

15. <u>CONCLUSION</u>

Those are all the areas I wanted to ask you about. Is there
anything which I haven't mentioned that you'd like to add?