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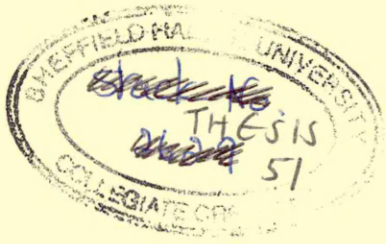

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Women and Alcohol: Contemporary Discourses Around Femininity and Leisure in the UK

Katy Day

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines discourses around femininity and drinking in the United Kingdom in the current historical context. The research was comprised of two major studies. The first, a media text study, involved collecting articles, commentaries and visual material pertaining to women and alcohol from a range of national newspapers over nearly a three year period (January 1998 – December 2000). The second research study entailed the conduction of focus group interviews with women from diverse social backgrounds from South and West Yorkshire around the subject area of femininity and drinking. All texts and data collected were then subjected, predominantly, to a Foucauldian style of discourse analysis (e.g. Burman & Parker, 1993).

The texts largely constructed drinking as problematic for women. Such meanings are informed by the construction of alcohol consumption as an essentially masculine activity (e.g. Kaminer & Dixon, 1995) and women as responsible carers who should not indulge in such male vices (e.g. Cooke & Allan, 1984). For example, drinking women are not only regarded as damaging their health but also as emasculating. The increasing presence of women within traditionally male domains (e.g. the pub) has also been met with moral panic and 'backlash' discourse (Faludi, 1992), particularly evident in recent media output. Further, drinking women were positioned as vulnerable and at risk from predatory and aggressive men (e.g. Lindqvist, 1991), but at the same time, partially responsible for any harm they may suffer by virtue of their 'unfeminine' conduct. This raises important issues around the attribution of responsibility for abusive male behaviour, which may be of concern to feminists, thus indicating such discourses as a site for intervention. Yet these operated alongside competing contemporary discourses which positioned drinking women in more powerful ways, for instance, as active sexual predators and aggressors, thus subverting a form of 'victim feminism' which has been heavily criticised in recent years (e.g. Roiphe, 1993; Paglia, 1992). Finally, the thesis further contributes to the postmodern deconstruction of the category 'women' as a unitary one (e.g. Wilkinson, 1996) by using alcohol consumption as a site for investigating the construction and negotiation of multiple forms of femininity. In sum, the thesis hopes to make a valuable contribution to feminist social psychological work around gender, as to date, analyses of women's drinking per se appear to be largely absent from this literature (Day *et al,* 2001a).

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I sincerely hope that all of the people mentioned here take pride in the thesis, as they have been so important in assisting me in it's production.

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PREFACE

My interests in exploring women and alcohol stemmed from a number of sources. Firstly, I was interested in the degree of 'moral panic', particularly noticeable in the media, surrounding current said patterns of women's alcohol consumption in Britain, and the often sexist backlash (Faludi, 1992) discourse evident in recent reportage. Secondly, social psychologists have produced some interesting critical analyses of men's drinking in recent years. This work has, amongst other things, highlighted talk around alcohol consumption as a useful site for exploring the construction and negotiation of contemporary masculinities and how this talk positions men within unequal relations of power with 'inferior' others such as women and gay men (e.g. Kaminer & Dixon, 1995; Gough & Edwards, 1998). Yet, and this leads me on the third point, there appeared to be little critical and feminist work on women's drinking per se, with the bulk of psychological literature surrounding this emanating from bio-medical and other mainstream scientific perspectives. This struck me as a significant omission, given that this topic seemed to be 'lending itself' to feminist analysis (for the reasons discussed) and since gender representations around eating, drinking or sex tend to draw upon conventional ideals around femininity (e.g. Hepworth & Griffin, 1995; Bordo, 1997; Gavey, 1988). As such, it was felt that a feminist social psychological analysis of women's drinking was warranted and would be analytically, socially and politically revealing.

As I began to review the existing literature around women and alcohol, I realised that much of this had problematic implications for drinking women, who were often cast as self-medicating neurotics (Wilsnack & Wilsnack, 1995; Schutte *et al.,* 1997) or

irresponsible women who were placing themselves at unnecessary risk from predatory males (e.g. Lindqvist, 1991). Notably absent from this literature was any kind of pleasure discourse surrounding women's drinking. Also, during everyday conversation, I became more sensitive and attuned towards the ways in which people spoke about women's alcohol use. This bore striking similarities to discourses evident in the psychological literature and the media, thus supporting the idea that such institutions, despite claiming 'privileged' access to the truth, often reflect 'common sense' and everyday views (Stainton-Rogers *et al,* 1995). For example, people (men and women) spoke about the 'shocking' ways in which women behaved today, and the detrimental consequences of trying to keep up with men in the drinking stakes. I was interested in investigating and interrogating such discourses by situating these within wider historical, socio-cultural and political contexts – from where do these originate? What interests are these serving? What are the consequences for women? Also, I was concerned to explore alternatives – what meanings do women themselves (whose voices are often unheard) attribute to their drinking? How are these negotiated through interaction?

Such observations and questions fed into the planning and conduction of the thesis's research studies. The noted amount of media output (and hysteria) surrounding women's alcohol use in recent years seemed to be lending itself to detailed analysis. As such, the first research study examines discourses surrounding women's alcohol use in the British national press (January, 1998 – December, 2000). In addition, an interest in women's own understandings of femininity and drinking, and a feminist concern to let women's voices be heard informed the conduction of focus group interviews with local

women (from West and South Yorkshire), this comprising the thesis's second major research study.

The thesis is a documentation of the entire research story. It is a feminist social constructionist exploration and interrogation of discourses surrounding femininity and women's alcohol use in Britain at the turn of the century. It addresses the questions asked above and examines how, despite the entry of women into conventionally male spaces such as the pub, and speculation about the contemporary feminisation of mass consumer culture (e.g. Squire, 1995), this continues to be resisted by 'backlash' practice (Faludi, 1992; Gough, 1998). For example, the thesis explores how the focus of concern can be seen to have shifted from the drinking behaviours of the working class to those women who are now regarded as the greatest invaders of such spaces and as such, pose the greatest threat to the preservation of certain domains as masculine ones: professional and middle class women. In addition, the thesis examines how women's drinking continues to be subjected to surveillance, control and regulation within public spaces. As such, it is argued that it is facile to presume that the mere presence of women within 'male' environments such as pubs reflects societal acceptance. In addition, the construction of drinking as an essentially masculine activity, one which is unorthodox ('unfeminine') for women (Robbins, 1989), has had a number of seen consequences. For one, this has fed into recent forms of language, evident in the media and everyday talk, which have been used to describe contemporary drinking practices amongst women and the forms of feminine identity which are taken as representative of these (e.g. 'laddism'; 'ladette culture'; 'geezer bird'). This male-centred vocabulary is criticised by the thesis as reinforcing 'plus male minus female' relations (Spender, 1982), producing lexical gaps within which women are without words to describe and

frame their behaviours and identities in non-masculine ways. This may be of concern for feminists, particularly as the assertion of female agency and the independence of feminine identities has been a major aim of feminist struggles (Moi, 1986). Further, such discourses operate alongside ones which construct drinking women as placing themselves at unnecessary risk from harm (e.g. Lindqvist, 1991) and which bring the sexuality of women who drink into question, such women often being regarded as 'sexually promiscuous' (George *et al,* 1988). This often results in a lack of social and perceived support for drinking women who suffer at the hands of men. The thesis also presents a critical discussion of mainstream psychology's tendency to focus upon the individual in analyses of women's 'problematic' alcohol consumption, pointing instead to the importance of understanding this within a wider social context, for example, in respect of women's occupation of social roles and positions (e.g. as mothers). A final major area of concern of the thesis is the use of alcohol consumption as a site for exploring the construction and negotiation of multiple and multi-faceted femininities and investment in these, with particular reference to contemporary 'masculinised' femininities and femininities as mediated by social class. For example, the thesis builds upon the work of authors such as Moore (1990), Burns, (1980), Tomsen (1997) and Canaan (1996) by examining the role of aggression and violence in the construction and 'playing out' of classed identities, situating this within the context of 'nights out'. However, such studies have concentrated upon men and masculinities, and so the focus here upon women and femininities is a new and refreshing one which is consistent with some feminist agendas (as is explored in chapter eight in particular). The role of aggression and violence in the construction and negotiation of such femininities is understood by the thesis in terms of the social meanings and networks operating in working class cultures and the positioning of working class women outside of a

normative, respectable femininity which has developed as a sign based upon upper and middle class ideals (Ware, 1992).

As the thesis demonstrates, there is no real 'correct' way for women to drink and be drinkers, and women's alcohol consumption continues to be an area of social and political significance. It is anticipated that the thesis will contribute to feminist psychological understandings of women's drinking, particularly as in-depth studies on this topic which address issues of power and identity are currently omitted from the literature.

CHAPTER 1 – WOMAN AND ALCOHOL: AN INTRODUCTION

1.1 Women and Alcohol: Overview and Theoretical Approach of the Thesis.

The bulk of existing literature around women's drinking focuses upon problematic consumption and it is remarkable that studies of women's everyday drinking, apart from a few exceptions, have until recently remained a largely unexplored area of social analysis (Ettorre, 1992, 1997; Thom, 1994; Waterson, 2000). This is particularly so given that leisure is now recognised as a legitimate topic of academic investigation (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994) and that studies of women's drinking have the potential to reveal much about (amongst other things) lifestyle and consumption patterns, gender identity, power relations and the social positioning of women. For example, social and economic changes across the world have been accompanied by evidence that women are more likely to drink (Cardenas, 1995; Kua, 1994; Medina-Mora, 1994), thus suggesting that female drinking is an important indicator of 'modernisation' or 'westernisation'. Yet despite this being taken as an index of women's emancipation, Morgan (1987) points out that societal views of alcohol and drinking practices serve to reproduce existing power imbalances between men and women. For example, studies by Fossey (1994) and Jahoda and Crammond (1972) found that people are more disapproving of women's drinking than men's. In addition, despite the claims of some commentators that women are now relatively free to enter and frequent pubs, clubs and other drinking places (Kua, 1994), many of these remain predominantly masculine arenas (Hunt & Satterlee, 1987) within which women are subject to ridicule, torment and 'humorous' jesting (Smart & Smart, 1978; Ettorre, 1997). In addition, drinking women are often

regarded as sexually available (Green *et al,* 1990), and are vulnerable to assault, sexual or otherwise, from partners, strangers and family members (Plant, 1997). As such, issues surrounding the safety of women who drink, particularly those who do so in public, prevail. Further, according to those such as Tomlinson (1990), alcohol consumption is an important expression of group identity in terms of (amongst others) gender, sexuality and social class. In recent years, this observation has been followed up by a number of researchers interested in masculinities. Such studies have examined how men's drink-related talk often serves to reproduce unequal relations of power between men and women (e.g. Kaminer & Dixon, 1995; Gough & Edwards, 1998) and has highlighted the importance of drinking and related practices as a site for the expression of masculinities mediated by class (e.g. Canaan, 1996; Burns, 1980; Tomsen, 1997) and ethnicity (e.g. Moore, 1990). However, detailed analyses of women's drinking which pay attention to such issues continue to be elusive. The current thesis goes some way towards addressing this niche in the literature.

The current investigation is a feminist social psychological one, the theoretical approach of which is that of feminist social constructionism or poststructuralism (Wilkinson, 1996; Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1987; Wetherell, 1986; Burman, 1991). This can be regarded as:

'A mode of knowledge production which use poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change.'

(Weedon, 1987: 40-41).

In brief, feminist social constructionism regards femininity as a method of description as opposed to an entity awaiting scientific discovery. It takes language as it's central focus, tracing out the power dynamics of different discourses of femininity, whilst openly questioning the formation of dominant discourses about women and pushing forward subordinated alternatives (Wetherell, 1995). The notion of a 'discourse' is a somewhat conceptually 'fuzzy' one, inferring different meanings when used in different contexts (Burr, 1995; Cousins & Hussain, 1984). The definition of discourse employed by the thesis is that presented by Parker (1992a) as *'a system of statements which constructs an object'* (p. 5). More specifically, the research analyses statements about and representations of women's drinking and drinking women themselves and how together these cohere around central meanings which tell a particular story about women and alcohol consumption. These are regarded, not as an individual's set of ideas about women and alcohol, but rather as the product of social factors and power relations (Hollway, 1983). As such, the research is concerned with over-arching systems of meaning surrounding women and alcohol and the power implications of these (Burman & Parker, 1993).

In order to understand the origins of women's relationship with alcohol and the meanings surrounding femininity and drinking in contemporary society, it is useful to consider women and alcohol over the ages. A comprehensive account of the history of women and alcohol is beyond the scope of the thesis. However, a discussion of the recent historical context of women's drinking is instructive.

1.2 Women, Drinking and Feminism: Recent Historical Context.

Over the ages, alcohol has been used in a rich and diverse set of contexts, the aim of it's use being celebratory, consolatory, medicinal, scholastic, sacramental and gastronomic, and it has formed an integral part of cultural development since classical Graeco-Roman times (Walton, 2001). For example, in England alone, drinking has a long history as being firmly fixed in social and cultural practices, from it's place at the formal dinner parties and ceremonies hosted by the upper classes to the public houses which became the centres of the social lives of the working classes (Shiman, 1988). Intoxication is, according to Walton (2001), a fundamental human right and an integral component of a life fully lived. However, as shall be explored in this section of the chapter, drinking in Britain has a troubled history. The discourse of politicians, health professionals and religious leaders around alcohol use has (and continues to be), for the most part, prohibitive and judgmental. The historical roots of such discourses are difficult to locate within an exact time frame, but seldom are these more apparent than in the nineteenth century when the problematisation of drinking began in earnest.

The industrial revolution was accompanied by the rapid growth of large cities, and the spread of disreputable drinking establishments (e.g. 'the city tavern') which became linked with heavy drinking, cruel sports and prostitution (Plant, 1997). At the same time, the Victorian era saw the medicalisation of alcohol consumption and the foundations were laid for the construction of 'alcoholism' as a disease (Walton, 2001). Drunkenness and the illicit practices associated with this became regarded not only as anti-social vices, but as the curse of Britain which was destroying individuals, families and the social structure of the country (Plant, 1997). In order to combat this evil, and in

step with a number of other movements aimed at transforming Britain into a more civilised and advanced society, a social reforming cause known as 'the temperance movement' was organised in 1829. The original purpose of this was to promote moderate drinking amongst the British, and later, total abstinence, and so became a crusade to set up an 'England free from drink' (Shiman, 1988).

From the beginning of temperance reformation in England, women were amongst it's most active advocates and workers (Shiman, 1988; Harrison, 1971; Roberts, 1984). Many prominent female figures of the temperance crusade in England such as Margaret Bright Lucas and Lady Henry Somerset, who were both acting presidents of the British Women's Temperance Association (B.W.T.A.) founded in 1876, were also active in the women's suffrage movement and a number of other women's groups campaigning for equality (Lender, 1981). Such leaders, in addition, encouraged members of their societies to also become active in a wide variety of social causes, including women's suffrage (Shiman, 1988), and so organisations such as the B.W.T.A. and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) founded in 1874 had a wide scope of social concerns which stretched beyond anti-drink matters (Giele, 1995). As shall be discussed, women had good reason to fear and loathe alcohol, or rather the consequences of drinking, and many of the problems encountered were exacerbated by the social inequalities which these women fought against. In addition, women's opposition towards alcohol, according to those such as Plant (1997), legitimised the female participation in national political life which those such as Margaret Bright Lucas and Lady Henry Somerset sought because, for example, defence of the home and family (against alcohol) was primarily considered a female duty. As such, feminism was one movement amongst others (e.g. anti-slavery and liberationism) with which the

temperance crusade became closely allied, and indeed, the very act of joining a teetotal society, according to the historian Brian Harrison (1971) *'involved a modest form of feminism'* (p. 175). The association between the women's movement and temperance is an important and significant one in history, because, as argued by those such as Giele (1995), the two movements together accomplished more than either one could have done alone.

As already indicated, the social well being of children and families was a major concern of the women's movement and those women campaigning for temperance (Giele, 1995). Harrison (1971) describes how on pay days in the nineteenth century, drinking establishments would be besieged by anxious women looking for their husbands, attempting to prevent them from spending the housekeeping money on beer. In addition, alcohol was heavily implicated in domestic violence. For instance, Musto (1996) describes how alcohol at this time was *'efficiently separating men from their paycheques and turning them into drunken menaces to their families'* (p. 67). As such, women at the time were seen as victims of the excesses of their husbands and fathers, the realities of which were all too often encountered by temperance women in the course of their missionary work (Walton, 2001). It is therefore understandable why women of the time had an ambivalent relationship with alcohol and their interests in supporting the temperance cause are all too apparent. For example, temperance women were determined to expose and deal with sensitive issues such as domestic violence and the consequences of men's drinking on family life and domestic economy, a common belief being that resources should be diverted away from male pleasures to expenditure which could benefit the whole family (Mattingly & Doern, 2000). This situation was

aggravated by women's lack of power and their legal, social and economic dependency on their husbands (Mattingly & Doern, 2000).

However, female intemperance and it's link with immoral and undesirable practices such as prostitution was also a major concern of the temperance crusaders, as exemplified by texts of the era such as *'Female Virtue: It's Enemies and Friends'* (Edgar, 1841). The link between drinking and sexual promiscuity or 'depravity' is one which features throughout the ages. For example, public drinking establishments have been clearly identified as the places to find women working in the sex industry since Roman times (Purcell, 1994) and in Victorian England, prostitutes were often found congregating in public houses (Harrison, 1971). It was believed by temperance reformers that these women could only endure such a 'depraved' existence by drugging their 'moral sense' with drink, and so the first glass of alcohol was regarded as the respectable woman's first step towards the brothels of London (Harrison, 1971). As such, the concern here was not so much with the sexual exploitation of women, as with the decaying morality of Victorian England which such fallen women were being partly held responsible for, the 'cult of respectability' being a central creed of the temperance reformers (Harrison, 1971).

Yet, increasing drunkenness amongst women in nineteenth century England was not just confined to certain groups in society such as sex workers and those from the 'lower classes'. For example, Rev. David Macrae described in his 'Temperance Catechism' how in one asylum for the victims of drink, more than 2000 of the applicants were *'rich men's daughters'* (1877: 9). One major reason for increasing drunkenness amongst women was the issuing of licences to grocers from 1861 onwards which permitted them

to sell alcohol. This was originally intended as a way of reducing men's attendance at public houses - often used as venues for working men's debating societies and trade union meetings - promoting instead the individualism and privacy of family life which temperance reformers held dear and thus discouraging men from articulating their grievances against social conditions in a public forum (Harrison, 1977). In addition, it was hoped that drinkers would substitute the potent beer on sale at licensed premises for the light French wines believed to be less intoxicating which could now be obtained at the grocer's store (Shiman, 1988). As well as leading to domestic upset and violence, drunkenness amongst working men also decreased their efficiency in industrialised Britain causing absenteeism and unreliability, and so drunkenness was inconducive to the capitalist model of the new individual (Shiman, 1988). Yet, there was an unintended consequence. Up until the sixteenth century, men and women both enjoyed considerable freedom as to where they might consume alcohol (Warner, 1997). However, many public drinking establishments (particularly pubs) had become masculine domains, ones in which men (particularly those from the working classes) could escape the impoverished and depressing surroundings of the home. As such, many women who had never entered a licensed premise as a patron could now purchase alcohol easily and discreetly, thus encouraging many women to begin their (often concealed) drinking careers (Shiman, 1988). For example, it was now possible for women to disguise a purchase of alcohol amongst a host of other grocery items, having this billed as such and thus going undetected by their husbands. This marks an important step towards the emergence of what Warner (1997) argues became two distinct and separate drinking cultures: one centred in the home and exclusive of men and one situated outside the home and exclusive of women. Indeed, Harrison describes how in the nineteenth

century, husbands occasionally came home to find that their wives *'had drunk away the furniture'* (1971: 47).

Although temperance efforts were directed at both men and women, Warner (1997) argues that men's right to drink was never really challenged to the same degree as women's. In support of Warner's argument, Walton (2001) describes how the Habitual Inebriates Act of 1898 was used disproportionately against women, such double standards in the legal treatment of men and women outraging members of the women's movement and women's temperance organisations such as the W.C.T.U. One example is the law on prostitution which provided for penalties against women that were not equitably applied to their male customers (Walton, 2001). There are a number of possible reasons why drinking women suffered harsher penalties, perhaps the central one being that temperance was essentially regarded as a 'feminine' virtue, one which was a necessity more than a choice for women (Warner, 1997). In addition, women were regarded as being more susceptible to physical dependency because this was believed to be the result of wills weakened by nervous debilities (what was known as 'neurasthenia'), something which women, who were presumed genetically weak-willed to begin with, were more likely to be inflicted with (Valverde, 1998). As such, the descent into ruin and decay was believed to occur more quickly where women were concerned. Then there were the 'domestic responsibilities of women', this constituting a major theme of temperance speeches delivered in the nineteenth century (Mattingley & Doern, 2000). Women who indulged were often categorised as neglectful mothers – that is, neglectful of their children or the duty to bear children for the propagation of the Empire - under the 1898 Act. Walton (2001) describes how a popular image of the nineteenth century was that of the contemptible scullery-maid whose babe in arms was

innocently suckling the polluted milk of a beer-swilling mother. A final and closely related reason is that of forbidden female pleasures. Ideological portrayals of women as self-denying and nurturing of men and offspring (Abbott & Sapsford, 1987; Kaplan, 1992; Smart, 1992) clearly conflict with notions of independent self-indulgence (Curlee, 1970). Berridge and Edwards (1981) note that historically, social concern about potentially addictive and harmful substances has increased when these have been used specifically for the purpose of female pleasure. Many temperance reformers distinguished between the use of alcohol as a recreational beverage and the use of this for medicinal purposes (Barr, 1995) and interestingly, alcohol was more likely to be prescribed for ailments and forms of suffering which were seen as particularly 'female', such as hysteria and labour pains (Plant, 1997; Abel, 1981). This acted as a loophole to some temperance organisations. For example, in Birmingham in 1836, one female temperance society stated that it agreed to abstain from all intoxicating liquors, except for medicinal purposes and in religious ordinances (Roberts, 1984).

Despite the temperance crusaders' failure to establish an 'England free from drink', many concerns regarding alcohol and it's effects on society which troubled reformers in the 1800s continued into the next century. For example, during the First World War, the issue of drunkenness amongst women was again noted, although a certain degree of leniency (for example, on the part of the police) is argued to have been shown, particularly towards the drunken wives of servicemen, because of the troubled times and because a conviction for drunkenness might imperil a women's separation allowance (Carter, 1919). However, times and attitudes changed. As more and more women were entering into the labour market (7.5 million by the mid 1900s), thus female drinking continued to expand (Harkin *et al,* 1995). At the same time, there was an increase in

mortality from alcohol-related causes, and more importantly, an increase in infant mortality which was believed to be the result of 'maternal drunkenness' (Plant, 1997). As such, we can see that this image of the drinking woman being that of one who neglects and damages her children as she pursues her own selfish gratification (Gutzke, 1984) has been a dominant one throughout the ages. Abel (1986) notes that since 1970, one topic above all others has dominated the literature on women and alcohol: the effects of alcohol on pregnancy. The hysteria generated around female drinking and the effects on unborn children, particularly on the part of the medical professions, seems strange given that until approximately 20 years ago, alcohol continued to be used for pain relief during childbirth and for preventing pre-term labour (Waterson, 2000; Abel, 1981). Further, popular obstetric texts have encouraged the use of alcohol in pregnancy until fairly recently (Llewellyn-Jones, 1978). Taking this into account, it appears necessary to seek explanations for this focus other than professional concern with physical well-being, which Walton (2001) argues has never been the sole motivation of campaigns against alcohol, from the temperance crusade up to the present day. Gomberg (1979) argues that it is no coincidence that the focus upon this was increased after the rise of the women's movement in the late 1960s and 1970s on both sides of the Atlantic, a time when academic literature on women's drinking began to appear in earnest and when there was great mass media concern about female drinking in the U.S. (Wilsnack & Wilsnack, 1995). As well as being an irresponsible mother, other images of the drinking woman which were pervasive at this time (e.g. in the academic literature) were that she was likely to be divorced or separated, depressed, sexually depraved and had a poorer prognosis than the drinking man (Waterson, 2000). According to Gomberg (1979), this had become a locus of expression of projective rage and disapprobation towards women in North America and Britain, reflecting

predominantly male anxieties and uncertainties about changing female roles and identities, and hence, their own identity and place in contemporary society (Curlee, 1969). In short, increased female drinking and the negative consequences of this became reflected back to women as the price of their emancipation (Waterson, 2000).

In contemporary times, as illustrated by the thesis, immoderate consumption of alcohol on the part of women and issues surrounding female drinking continue to be of public concern, as chapter six in particular notes in relation to recent media reportage on women and alcohol demonstrates. For example, recent evidence has indicated a rise in the amount of alcohol consumed by British women (e.g. 1994 British General Household Survey). What is interesting is that if we examine women and alcohol over the ages, it is apparent that a number of themes are recurring, not least, that of the problematisation of women's drinking and the image of the 'fallen woman':

'When angels fall, they fall disturbingly far...A woman known to be abusing alcohol is seen as degraded and is regarded as an irresponsible woman. Such a woman brings shame not only on herself, but on her entire family, so much so that children will at all times carry this shame into adulthood and will be stigmatised as being "children of an irresponsible woman".'
(Mphi, 1994: 946).

As the above comments demonstrate, femininity continues to measured by and equated with motherhood, despite the efforts of feminist scholars and the women's movement to dilute this notion (Abbott & Wallace, 1996). Such constructions of femininity are a central reason why women's drinking has been subject to scrutiny and moral panic over

the ages. Other interrelated recurring themes include double standards surrounding the drinking of men and women; the link between drinking and political movements and agendas (both for and against women); alcohol and domestic violence; and drinking, sexual abandonment, exploitation and abuse (the boundaries around which are blurred).

1.3 Aims of the Research.

In discussing the aims of the research project, it seems useful to clarify what the research does *not* aim to achieve. The research does not aim to 'uncover' the causes of alcohol abuse or misuse amongst women or measure rates of consumption amongst women in Britain. Hands *et al* (1995) argue that there is a need to fill the present gap between clinical literature on the one hand and large scale population surveys on the other in the field of alcohol studies, an invitation which is being taken up by the current research project. Nor is the intention of the thesis to warn women about the risks of drinking or make them feel guilty for doing this. Rather, the aims of the research are as follows:

- The identification of contemporary discourses around femininity and alcohol in Britain at the turn of the century;
- To consider the ideological functions of these, for example, the subject positions that these create for women and how these are situated within unequal relations of power, and the forms of social action that are invited and discouraged by the discourses identified;
- To examine how these discourses are reproduced, negotiated and subverted by women during social interaction;

- To examine how these discourses inform the construction and negotiation of feminine identities in the current socio-cultural and historical context;
- To create what Code (1995) calls a 'rhetorical space' for women's voices which have often been ignored or distorted;
- To explore alcohol consumption as a site of women's resistance.

For example, major questions which the research intends to address are: 'What interests are discourses around femininity and alcohol serving?' 'What are the ideological and practical implications and consequences of these for women?' 'What meanings do women themselves attribute to their drinking and how do these differ from dominant and institutionalised discourses?' and 'What are the implications for official and interventionary responses?' It is anticipated that by exploring such issues, the thesis will make a contribution to the existing academic literature on women and alcohol by approaching this in a way which has largely not been done to date. The following section of the chapter represents a guide to the content of the thesis chapters.

1.4 Content of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. The following three chapters review a range of literature (particularly psychological and feminist) on gender, femininity and alcohol use. In particular, the early chapters pitch the theoretical approach of the thesis against a range of alternatives (e.g. mainstream approaches), highlighting the problems with and limitations of these and justifying the approach adopted. For example, chapter two critically reviews approaches which draw upon biological and essentialist discourse (e.g. bio-psychological and socio-biological) in their understandings of gender and alcohol use. This chapter highlights a range of problems with this literature, exposing it

(despite it's claims of objectivity) as politically interested and problematic for women. The third chapter has a similar approach, but turns it's attentions to arguably more socially-based analyses of gender which have been produced by sociologists and social psychologists (e.g.. sex role theories and social cognitive perspectives), and how concepts such as 'sex roles' and 'sex role orientation' have been applied to analyses of women and alcohol. However, as is explored in this chapter, the extent to which these approaches can be regarded as a significant turn away from reductionist biological explanation, and the extent to which these can be read as more 'genuinely' social, is debatable. Further, the chapter discusses how analyses of power, conflict, investment and multiplicity are largely omitted from such traditional sociological and social psychological accounts, this leading into a discussion of approaches which arguably do address such issues, in chapter four. This chapter discusses feminist approaches, presenting an overview of key feminist theories that inform the research and examining work on femininity and sexuality, gender and class and sexual violence. The chapter then moves on to discuss contemporary feminist social psychology, with particular reference to feminist poststructuralism, outlining what the potential benefits of such an approach to understanding gender are for an analysis of women and alcohol, as well as identifying some tensions in the field and potential limitations. Following from this, chapter five then moves on to discuss the methodological approach of the research, for example, one which is characterised as qualitative, reflexive and discursive. In particular, this chapter introduces the reader to the methodological decisions taken with regards to the research studies and the reasoning behind these. Additionally, this chapter provides details pertaining to the analytic approach and procedure adopted, that is, one which predominantly uses a poststructuralist or Foucauldian style of discourse analysis set within a feminist framework (e.g. Willott & Griffin, 1997). The following three

chapters are then based upon the two research studies conducted. The first, a media text study which examines discourses around women and alcohol in the British national press (January 1998 – December 2000), is the focus of chapter six. This begins by providing further detail pertaining to the methodological procedures involved in this study (e.g. sampling decisions, collection of texts, problems encountered, reading of the texts) and then moves into a discussion of the research findings. This is based around a number of developed themes (informed by the original in-vivo themes identified during analysis) including the feminisation of space; male violence; sex; shifting meanings surrounding gender and drinking and shifting focuses surrounding class and alcohol consumption. The following two chapters (chapters seven and eight) are then based upon the second research study, which involved the conduction of focus group discussions with women from South and West Yorkshire. Two chapters are devoted to this study due to the sheer volume of data collected and richness of the analysis. Chapter seven, once again, begins by detailing the methodological processes involved (e.g. collection of preliminary data, identification of participants, recruitment of participants and information pertaining to the women who took part in the study). The discussion of findings in this chapter focuses upon the participants' negotiated experiences and understandings of drinking and space, and again is structured around a number of themes, which include public patriarchy; the pathologisation of women's alcohol consumption; sex and aggression and violence. Chapter eight then focuses more closely upon identity and investment, deconstructing the category 'women' as a unitary and coherent one by examining femininities as multiple, multi-faceted and contradictory. In particular, this chapter examines investments in different forms of femininity (e.g. 'traditional' versus 'contemporary') and femininities as mediated by social class, examining how meanings surrounding femininity and drinking feed into these. Finally,

chapter nine presents a summary of the thesis's main findings, focusing mostly upon the major findings of the research studies, but also including discussion of recurring discourses identified in the existing literature around women and alcohol. The chapter then embarks on a reflexive journey into the entire research story, by further examining motivations for conducting the research, exploring the methodological processes involved in this ('functional reflexivity' – Wilkinson, 1988), for example, what could have been done differently, and critically considering possible consequences of the readings presented. This chapter draws to a close by reviewing the key discourses on femininity, women and alcohol identified in the research analysis.

CHAPTER 2 - BIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIO-BIOLOGICAL DISCOURSE AROUND GENDER, FEMININITY AND ALCOHOL USE

Introduction

This chapter presents a critical review of traditional and mainstream psychological approaches to understanding gender which draw upon biological and essentialist discourse. It includes discussion of analyses of gender and alcohol which can be pitched within these areas of work such as bio-medical research, the bulk of psychological literature around this topic appearing to emanate from this perspective.

The chapter begins by examining the wave of sex-difference research which has a long-standing history in psychology, then explores feminist critiques of this work. Supposed psychological and behavioural differences between men and women have been located in a number of sources (e.g. sex roles, psychic structures), which are explored by the thesis in it's earlier chapters. However, a particular focus is placed here upon those accounts which have located such differences in the different biological make-up of men and women. The discussion then moves on to focus more closely upon two 'gendered' behaviours which have and still are often linked with alcohol consumption: aggression and sexual 'promiscuity'. As shall be argued, the link between alcohol consumption and such 'masculine' behaviours can be understood as a major reason why historically, women's drinking has been problematised, and the discussion considers what the implications and consequences of biological understandings are for drinking women, given this link. The chapter concludes that much of this work, as well as failing

to consider femininity and women's alcohol use within a wider historical and socio-cultural framework, is often deeply problematic for women and detrimental to feminist struggles.

2.1 Sex Difference and Bio-Psychological Research

There is a long-standing tradition of research within psychology which is based on the essentialist premise that men and women represent two fundamentally distinct categories of personhood. This wave of 'sex difference' research, which has been conducted by scientific investigators since the late 1890s, has set out to measure and investigate the extent to which men and women differ on a variety of skills, behaviours, traits, attitudes and characteristics. For example, supposed differences between men and women which have been investigated quite extensively include: dependency-related traits, social orientation, emotionality, self-concept, verbal skills, mathematical skills, spatial skills, cognitive styles and so on. Such research has investigated the beliefs that women are more passive, dependent and more easily influenced than men (e.g. Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), are more socially orientated than men (e.g. Oetzel, 1966), are more emotional than men (e.g. Bronson, 1970), have less self-confidence than men (e.g. Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), have superior verbal skills to men (e.g. Maccoby, 1966), have poorer mathematical skills (e.g. Oetzel, 1966), spatial skills (Tyler, 1965) and that the two sexes generally have different cognitive styles. A theme running through this sex-difference research appears to be that women are generally cast as inferior, thus reproducing 'plus male minus female' discourse (Spender, 1982). Where women are theorised as having superior skills to men, it appears that these are consistent with their roles in society as carers and mothers (e.g. women as more socially orientated

than men). As such, it is perhaps not surprising that feminist psychologists are among those who have produced some of the most powerful critiques of sex-difference research (e.g. Crawford, 1989; Bleier, 1987; Crawford & Marecek, 1989; Wilkinson, 1996). This first sub-section of the chapter focuses in on some particularly popular and controversial areas of sex-difference research, examining the implications, consequences and feminist critiques of such work.

Aggression

Of all the supposed sex differences which have been discussed by psychologists and other social scientists (e.g. visual-spatial skills, intelligence, verbal skills), by far the strongest evidence appears to surround the notion that men are significantly more aggressive than women (Frieze *et al*, 1978). For example, this is an argument which has long been presented by those working within socio-biological and evolutionary fields (as shall be discussed in further detail in the next section of the chapter) and over the years, various studies conducted from other quarters have reported to have found support for this notion (e.g. Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Rohner, 1976; Whiting & Edwards, 1973; Ember, 1981). In more recent years, a controversial claim has been made that scientists have identified the gene responsible for aggression (as well as homosexuality and shyness), therefore specifically advocating a biological basis to this behaviour or trait (e.g. Morel, 1993).

Pointing to biological structures such as genes, as explanations for certain kinds of social behaviour, is severely limited. For one, the aggression gene was located as a defect which is so rare, the value of this explanation in accounting for or attempting to understand 'everyday' aggression is extremely questionable (Carey, 1993). The

determinism inherent in such accounts, for example, the assumption that a person is either aggressive or they are not, and that a particular situation can only serve to trigger an existing pre-disposition, also severely underplays the complexity of human behaviour, reducing us down to machines who simply respond thoughtlessly (see Stainton-Rogers *et al,* 1995). Consequently, such theories deny the possibility for personal change (there can be no such thing as a reformed character) and so in this sense presents a pessimistic view of human behaviour. There are also a number of inconsistencies in such genetic explanations. For example, if aggression were a trait located in men more often than women, then it would seem logical that the aggression gene must be carried on the Y chromosome. Yet, geneticists have argued that this is unlikely as this carries few functional genes, and so it is more likely that this is carried on the X chromosome. Further, there is an assumption here is that there is a straightforward one-to-one relationship between a specific gene and a specific form of social behaviour, despite the fact that geneticists have found that some of the most simple physical features such as eye and hair colour are determined by a number of genes.

However, despite such flaws, the link which has been drawn between 'male' aggression and genetic make-up appears to have been assigned credibility. Edley and Wetherell (1995) argue that the idea of an aggression gene is appealing for three reasons. Firstly, it is a simple straightforward notion that is easy to grasp (it does not contain the complexities of certain social explanations). Secondly, this theory can explain why some families are more aggressive than others. For example, the gene was supposedly discovered as a result of a study which involved a family with a history of violent men folk (Morel, 1993). Finally (and most mischievously), as the aggression gene may be

carried on the X chromosome given to men by their mothers, then this theory sees the problem of male aggression as 'given' by women, thus detracting responsibility and blame away from men.

This leads on to next point here, which is that it is not just the inconsistencies and the limitations of such explanations which have concerned critics of such research – such accounts also have problematic political implications and consequences. For example, the assertion that men are more aggressive than women has been used in order to justify asymmetrical power relations between men and women in society. Goldberg (1973) proposed that men's 'in built' aggressiveness or 'dominance tendency' leads to the inevitability of patriarchal societies. For instance, it is proposed that such male characteristics render men more suited to roles and domains of life imbued with power, where 'traits' such as competitiveness and assertiveness (traits associated with aggression) are valued (see Wilkinson, 1996). In contrast, the non-aggressive, caring nature of women is believed to render them more naturally suited to caring roles (e.g. as wives and mothers), positioning them within domestic spheres, whilst excluding them (and at the same justifying their exclusion) from public domains (Bjorkqvist & Niemela, 1992; Richardson, *et al* 1979). As such, it is clear to how such 'knowledge' is often used to strengthen or support political motives and maintain the status quo.

The chapter shall return to a discussion of the masculinisation of aggression in the following sub-section of the chapter. However, this shall now address another particularly controversial area of sex-difference research: intelligence.

Intelligence

In the nineteenth century, some anthropologists were concerned with differences in the size and structure of men and women's brains, and consequently, their intellectual capacities, as a close link here was assumed (see Rose *et al*, 1984, for a literature review). It was argued that men have larger (and as such), more powerful brains and superior mental abilities to women. For example, Allan (1869) compared the female skull to that of children and moreover, the 'lower races'. It is not difficult to imagine the 'lower races' that are being referred to here – in short, it is very likely that these were non-white. Indeed, much experimental work around this time set out to investigate similar hypotheses, generally finding that women's brains were on average, 142g (5oz) lighter than those of men (Rose *et al*, 1984).

As with 'evidence' showing that aggression was a male trait, these findings were drawn upon to support arguments that men naturally represent the superior sex. For example, feminist writers such as Bohan (1992) and Wilkinson (1996) argue that such work, conceptualising women has having inferior mental abilities to men, was used to support the arguments of early psychologists drawing on evolutionary science, that women should be excluded from high academic rank and professional organisations. It was only until some time later that attention was brought to the fact that these findings were due to overall body size – those of women being smaller, and so we can see the naivety of such early gender research. However, discrimination against women in the professions today is still justified sometimes with reference to psychological 'findings' and scare quotes around 'male' hormones. For example, Wilson (1994) argued that the reason why the vast majority of high status professional positions are occupied by men (e.g. company director, university professor) is because, once again, men are inherently more

competitive and dominant (a characteristic determined by male hormones according to Wilson). As such, we can see a pattern emerging here in that such discourse is often drawn upon in order to justify asymmetrical power relations between genders and races, by presenting this as the 'natural' order of things.

Alcohol Consumption

Indeed, much research into gender and alcohol has continued in this 'sex difference' tradition by focusing on cross-gender difference (i.e. assuming that men and women's drinking patterns, behaviours and motivations will differ) and/or by drawing upon sex difference discourse. For example, surveys universally indicate that females are more likely to abstain from drinking than males, and when they do drink, they generally consume less than males (for a literature review see Plant, 1997). Wilsnack and Wilsnack (1995) have also summarised a considerable body of evidence in this field. Amongst their conclusions were that the two strongest predictors of drinking behaviour are gender and age, that men consistently drink more than women, that women are less likely than men to drink, to drink frequently or heavily and to report drink-related problems. Further, researchers have drawn upon ideas such as that women are more proficient at communicating their emotions than men, in their accounts of gender and alcohol use. For example Moir & Jessell (1989) explained this gender difference, again, through reference to the differences in men and women's brains. They argued that the male brain is more compartmentalised than the female brain, thus making it more difficult for the various parts of the male brain to communicate with one another. Thus, if the emotion and language centres could communicate more efficiently, men would be able to 'open up' more. The authors suggest that this could happen through the usage of alcohol. Similarly, Burda & Vaux (1987) found that men are more communicative with

other men when drinking socially. As such, there is a suggestion in this literature that men may use alcohol in order to compensate for this gendered characteristic.

This idea of drinking as 'functional' has also been applied to women's alcohol use, but with a more vigorous and near exclusive focus upon the abnormal or dysfunctional. For example, despite Wilsnack and Wilsnack's (1995) conclusion that women are less likely than men to report drink-related problems, it also appears, from reviewing the literature in this area, that women are more frequently than men constructed as drinking in order to relieve or self-medicate some medical or psychological problem. Such problems include sexual dysfunction (e.g. Wilsnack & Wilsnack, 1995), relationship difficulties (e.g. Wilsnack, 1984) negative mood (Olenick & Chalmers, 1991; Grover & Thomas, 1993; Rubonis *et al,* 1994), gynaecological problems such as infertility and the menopause (e.g. Wilsnack, 1984; Schaefer *et al,* 1985; Wilsnack & Wilsnack, 1995) and sex-role conflict (Scida & Vannicelli, 1979). Yet, perhaps the strongest link which has been drawn by such literature is that between alcohol consumption and depressive symptoms (e.g. Garvey & Beach, 1991; Bedi & Halikas, 1985; Kelley & Hollister, 1985), with some studies claiming that a stronger relationship exists between drinking and depression for women than for men (e.g. Bedi & Halikas, 1985; Midanik, 1983). In other words, it is theorised that women who drink are more likely than men to be drinking to self-medicate depression or related symptoms (Schutte *et al,* 1997). The use of alcohol as self-medication is not a new concept, but one which has been a feature throughout history (Plant, 1997; see chapter one). For instance, when writing about the experiences of British women living in India in the 1800s, Mrs Ashmore (1840s) wrote that the ladies drank in an effort, she thought:

'To remove the extreme depression and lassitude which are induced by the climate' (MacMillan, 1988: 88).

However, the recent evidence to support the notion that women drink to self-medicate depressive symptoms is inconclusive. For one, it has not been clearly identified whether such so-called depressive symptoms are an antecedent or a consequence of drinking behaviour, as a primary physiological effect of alcohol is depression of the nervous system (Helzer & Pryzbeck, 1988). Also, other research has actually found that a more direct relationship between depression and drinking exists where the drinking behaviour of men is concerned (Pierce *et al,* 1994).

What becomes apparent from reviewing this literature is that a pleasure discourse surrounding women's alcohol consumption is largely absent, with the focus been placed upon women as misusers or abusers[1] of alcohol who indulge for the 'wrong' reasons (i.e. to self-medicate medical and psychological problems) and a relentless search for cause. Cooke and Allan (1984) argue that this is because there is a view in our society that there is a need for 'special' explanation of women's drinking, particularly where this is viewed as excessive, due to the construction of women as carers and mothers who should not indulge in such vices. The result is that discourses which construct women as neurotic are reproduced and women's drinking is pathologised, thus supporting arguments presented by feminist psychologists that psychology has a pre-occupation with feminine abnormality (e.g. Wilkinson, 1996).

[1] The majority of participants who take part in such studies are "self-confessed" alcoholics who are seeking or receiving treatment at the time of the investigation.

In summary, sex-difference and bio-psychological research, both around gender more generally, and gender and alcohol more specifically, is often limited and deeply problematic. For one, writers have pointed out time and again that sex-difference claims are largely unsubstantiated or cannot be sustained (Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Frodi *et al,* 1977; Hyde & Linn, 1986; White, 1983). For example, commentators have noted evidence there are as many within-group as there are between-group differences in a range of so-called traits and behaviours such as aggression (e.g. Archer *et al,* 1988), and that sex differences have been systematically exaggerated, whilst any similarities between the two sexes minimised (Segal, 1990). For example, Segal (1990) argues that no consistent sex differences have been found in traits such as achievement, sociability, self-esteem and cognitive styles, and only small (yet well established) differences in verbal (see also Hyde, 1981) and spatial ability, mathematical reasoning and of course aggression. Segal (1990) speculates that there are a number of reasons why such differences have been subject to exaggeration.

Firstly, there is a tendency for scientists to publish 'positive' results (in other words where their hypotheses have been supported and when statistical significances have been found), and also, there is a misconception that a 'highly statistically significant' sex difference implies a large universal sex difference. Further, the discourse and rhetoric of such traditional psychological work gives the findings of such research the stamp of 'truth', and so the researcher's particular version of events is assigned credibility, and therefore given voice. As such, the very way in which such research (including that surrounding women and alcohol) is presented to academic audiences and the general public can be misleading. However, it has been argued by those such as

Eagly (1983) in defence of sex difference research, that the conceptual and methodological problems associated with this serve not to exaggerate, but largely conceal differences. She also argues that although it is true that a highly statistically significant finding may refer only to a small difference, this is not always the case, as there are a number of examples from research where the sex difference has proved to be quite substantial (e.g. Eagly & Carli, 1981; Hall, 1984). It is apparent that debates surrounding the existence of psychological and behavioural sex differences and their origins are still very much in progress and will continue for some time in the future.

The final reason which Segal (1990) cites as one why sex differences have been subject to exaggeration is underlying political motives, for example, the justification and maintenance of asymmetrical power relations between men and women (as previously discussed). Indeed, those such as Woolley (1910) have argued that sex difference research represents one of the most politically transparent areas of scientific investigation. Even if one accepts Eagly's (1983) argument that some said sex-differences have been proved by research to be quite substantial ones (yet, we must retain a sense of context here – they have often been demonstrated as such within a discrete, unnatural experimental condition), it still remains that this research is often problematic for women. This initial sub-section of the chapter has provided examples from and discussed some of most politically problematic areas of sex difference research, in order to illustrate how supposedly 'apolitical' scientific research is in fact politically loaded. For example, as discussed, this is often based upon and is reproductive of 'stereotypical' beliefs about men and women, which have important implications and consequences for the kinds of tasks and lifestyles men and women are perceived to be suited to. As outlined, women are generally believed to be more socially

oriented, nurturant and emotional (as opposed to rational, aggressive, instrumental etc.), and therefore are more suited to domains of life which involve caring for others (e.g. family life) and less suited to roles which involve important decision making (e.g. management).

A further problem with sex-difference research is that this fails to consider femininity and feminine psychology in it's own right, positioning women as the (lesser) 'other' to the male ideal/norm, a criticism which has often been levelled at traditional and mainstream psychological approaches (e.g. Griffin, 1986). Indeed, much psychological literature around gender and alcohol which has continued within the tradition of cross-gender comparison (as discussed) can also be accused of this, of implying that women's drinking is only meaningful in comparison to men's (see Bernard, 1973). Further than this, as argued, women's drinking is more likely to be construed as problematic than men's drinking.

In addition, there are a host of problems associated with the analytic reliance on biological categories. Although few people would dispute the obvious physical differences between men and women, such as different reproductive organs, feminists and social constructionists have questioned why such physical differences have been accredited so much importance that whole categories of personhood have been built upon them (e.g. Burr, 1995). Indeed, there is a certain amount of evidence which challenges the notion that there are only two, irreducible biological sexes in the first instance. Returning the subject of genes, we are all said to possess forty-six chromosomes arranged into pairs (twenty-three pairs). If these take the form XX, then the biological sex assigned is female, and male if they take the form XY. However,

there are exceptions to this rule, for example, the arrangements XXX, XYY and X (sometimes donated XO) have also been known to exist. These are generally regarded as chromosomal abnormalities (e.g. XO = 'Turner's Syndrome', XXY = 'Klinefelter's Syndrome'). Although such instances are extremely rare, it could be argued that these represent a third and fourth kind of sex (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). This is certainly a controversial notion, but nevertheless, one which challenges the assumptions on which sex difference research is based, therefore causing it to rock on it's foundations. Also, there have been cases where a new-born baby has had all of the external signs of being female, despite almost every cell in her body featuring XY chromosomes, and so this raises the question of which of the two sex categories the child will be assigned to. Once again, this demonstrates that sex is not always clear-cut, even in biological terms, and that not everyone fits neatly and unproblematically into one category or the other (as the experiences of transsexuals testifies).

Finally, there are a number of problems with level of analysis here. For example, the individualistic focus on women's 'problematic' alcohol consumption (i.e. the relation of this to individual problems at a bio-medical level) detracts focus away from a wider socio-cultural context which may give meaning to problematic drinking patterns amongst women. This kind of individualism (which is characteristic of many mainstream psychological approaches) has been criticised heavily by feminist and critical psychologists (e.g. Wilkinson, 1991, 1996; Weisstein, 1993; Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997), and once again, this can be argued to serve political interests. For example, Fox and Prilleltensky (1997) argue that such an individualistic focus serves to detract attention (and responsibility) away from wider social practices and institutions. In a similar vein, Kitzinger and Perkins (1993) point to the ways in which such

psychological knowledge feeds into therapeutic practice, arguing that this often encourages women to take personal responsibility for their problems rather than placing blame for their distress where it should often be placed: patriarchal society (this echoes Foucault's 1978 contention that there is a strong relationship between politics and medicine). It is not difficult to see how such arguments can be related to psychological knowledge surrounding women's alcohol consumption and related interventory and therapeutic practices.

The chapter shall now turn to examine an influential school of thought in the social sciences which has attempted to explain the emergence of some so-called sex-differences by drawing upon evolutionary scientific discourse: socio-biology.

2.2 Socio-biology: The Biological and Evolutionary Origins of 'Male' Aggression and Sexual Promiscuity

Socio-biology can be understood as the systematic study of the biological bases of social behaviour (Wilson, 1975). The underlying belief here is that men and women have evolved different functional ways of thinking and acting in accordance with the demands of their surrounding environment, treating human beings as basically, just another species of animal. As we can see, this approach adopts the principles of Darwin's theory of evolution, applying these to the study of society (and as such, is often known as 'Social Darwinism'). Indeed, many of the founding fathers of psychology around the turn of the century (e.g. Cattell, Hall, Thorndike, Titchener) drew on the new science of evolution (Wilkinson, 1996). In summary, like those sex-difference accounts previously discussed, this approach views the two sexes as being

essentially distinct, biologically, behaviourally and psychologically, and attempts to account for why the two sexes have evolved as such.

It must be noted that socio-biologists range from those who stress biological factors to the exclusion of all other forms of explanation at one extremity, to those who simply believe that evolution has a part to play in determining human behaviour, along with social and cultural factors at the other. As such, socio-biology does not necessarily represent a unified school of thought, with it's proponents disagreeing as to how far social and cultural factors are involved. However, we can see the pervasiveness of biological discourse within socio-biology and as such, the reasons why it has been included in this chapter.

Two of the most prominent behavioural differences which have been discussed by socio-biologists are, once again, aggression, and also sexual promiscuity, which according to those such as Wilson (1975) are male traits. Wilson (1975) argued that aggression and sexual promiscuity have developed as such due to the differential investments that men and women have in their young. For example, men are said to adopt a sexual strategy based on infidelity and philandering in contrast to women's sexual hesitation, because they are less 'committed' to their existing young. He argues that females know that the young are theirs as they are the ones who have given birth, whereas the male cannot be so sure. Also, whereas the duty of the female is to nurse her young, the male is more interested in passing on as many copies of his genes as is possible in order to ensure the continuation of his species. Similarly, socio-biologists have argued that men have evolved to develop in-built aggressive tendencies because in the past, the aggressive tasks such as hunting have been left to the men, whereas the

women have been busy caring for the young. Here, Wilson is drawing on the behaviour of animals in order to explain the behaviour of humans in a somewhat crude account of gender-related behaviour.

Similar analyses have been presented in more recent years. For example, in 1992, Thornhill and Thornhill published an article entitled *'The evolutionary psychology of men's coercive sexuality'*, in which they presented the 'Rape-Adaption Hypothesis'. According to this, women are more selective about their 'mates', and often delay copulation so that they have time to evaluate whether they would make good fathers for their children. So in order to gain 'access' (have sex with them), men often have to break through the feminine barriers of hesitation and resistance, the result being that men have developed an evolutionary pre-disposition towards rape.

As one can imagine, such theories have been heavily criticised on a number of different grounds. One such criticism is that socio-biological theory can be drawn upon to account for just about any kind of event, in other words, can just as easily be used to account for a hypothetical situation (e.g. women are more aggressive than men) as it can for an 'actual' one. But of greater concern here, once again, is the obvious negative political implications of such literature, and how this can affect the everyday lives of women, especially as such knowledge often reflects and filters down into everyday discourse. For example, Hollway (1984) demonstrated how pervasive such discourse is and how this positions men and women within unequal relations of power. Through interviews with men and women, she uncovered a 'male-sexual drive' discourse which constructs men's sexuality as produced by a biological drive which exists to propagate the species. Women are seen as objects which precipitate men's natural sexual urges,

and so may be perceived as having the power to 'trap' men using their sexual attraction. There are clear similarities here between this discourse and the socio-biological theories regarding men and women's sexuality, indicating how widespread such ideas are in our culture. This is alarming, especially as such discourses may be used to legitimate behaviour by men in our culture such as infidelity and rape, as these can be constructed, by drawing upon such discourse, as 'natural' male tendencies.

Importantly here, there is a long-established link between these two so-called behavioural differences (sexual promiscuity and aggression) and alcohol consumption, which is why these have been highlighted. For example, alcohol consumption has long been theorised as increasing the likelihood that both kinds of behaviour will be engaged in or displayed (e.g. Bergman & Brismar, 1994; Spacarelli *et al,* 1994; Pernanen, 1991; Turnure & Young, 1994; also see Plant, 1997). These links, as well as the construction of aggression and sexual promiscuity as male traits, could and have had a number of important consequences for drinking women and the way in which women's alcohol consumption is viewed.

For one, such ideas appear to have fed into discourses which position drinking women as victims or potential victims of male (sexual) aggression. For example, Burr (1995) points out how such knowledge can have implications for women who drink alone in bars, as such women could be seen as placing themselves at risk from men's 'natural' sexual urges. Similarly, note the comments made in a report by the World Health Organisation (1994) which concluded that women might be at increased risk during drinking situations because of:

'Complex gender and power dynamics at play in social and sexual contacts. Males may assume that female intoxication is associated with sexual promiscuity and that drinking makes females more vulnerable.' (p. 16)

Moreover, researchers have highlighted evidence suggesting that women who drink (especially those who drink heavily) are at increased risk from violence (often regarded as a behavioural manifestation of aggression), including sexual assault and abuse (e.g. Lindqvist, 1991). Although this draws attention to very serious social problems and dangers, such accounts may concern feminists such as Paglia (1992) and Rophie (1993) who are concerned to move away from representations of women as victims. Indeed, one can imagine some of the consequences here. For example, such discourses could contribute to the climate of fear amongst women that feminists such as White and Kowalski (1994) have discussed, 'warning' women out of public drinking spaces and thus preserving these as masculinised ones, positioning women back within private domains.

However, the construction of drinking women as victims here is not an undisturbed one. For example, the idea that drinking women are *placing themselves* at *unnecessary* or *increased risk*, as well as constructions of men as naturally (sexually) aggressive (thus taking this as given), or orientated towards sex, means that responsibility may be detracted away from men and placed onto women, thus disrupting the positioning of women as victims. For example, there is a body of research literature which focuses upon the sexual practices of drinking women constructing these as 'irresponsible'. Graves and Hines (1997) argued that women are less likely than men to practice safe sex with a casual partner following alcohol consumption, and Piombo and Piles (1996)

argued that when women 'binge drink'[2] they are more likely to engage in 'risky' sexual intercourse, that is, engage in unprotected sex and/or have sex with someone who they otherwise would not. Those such as Piombo and Piles (1996) and Klassen & Wilsnack (1986) suggest that women may use alcohol in order to become less inhibited sexually, but this often results in promiscuous and/or unsafe sex, due to the effects of alcohol, which Piombo and Piles (1996) point out is metabolised more slowly by women's bodies (thus again, we can see a backdrop of biological understanding here).

Once again, although such literature draws attention to important issues surrounding women's drinking and their sexual health, this is subject to a number of criticisms and does raise a number of concerns. For one, such research often begins with hypotheses which mirror the findings of the study. For instance, one of Piombo and Piles (1996) main hypotheses was that binge-drinking women are more likely to engage in riskier sexual behaviours than non-binge drinking women, and so the authors of the study had (as with many such quantitative studies) seemingly drawn conclusions before the research had even begun. Further, we can detect a pattern emerging here in that the literature around women and alcohol tends to cast women's drinking in a negative light, highlighting associated problems, omitting any kind of pleasure discourse and contributing to the pathologisation of women's leisure. The focus of attention on women's irresponsibility in situations of 'risky' sexual intercourse or casual sex means that men are let off the hook. After all, these women don't have sex on their own. I would argue here that the scrutinising focus on women's sexuality (note also comments made by World Health Organisation above) is not accidental, yet is informed by discourses which normalise male sexual promiscuity (as discussed), yet construct this as

[2] 'Binge drinking' is defined by Piombo & Piles (1996) as the consumption of four or more alcohol drinks in a row.

deviant female behaviour (see Lees, 1997). For example, note the following comments made by Ridlon (1988) in a paragraph entitled *'Sexual promiscuity: the drunken slut'*:

'From the beginning of civilisation, there has been a connection between drinking and involvement with sex. Wine drinking by women was punishable by death in early Rome because it was believed to be linked directly with adultery. It was feared that if a woman opened herself to one male vice: drinking alcohol, she might open herself to another: sexual promiscuity.' (pp. 27-8)

Here we can see a discourse which not only masculinises sexual promiscuity, but also alcohol consumption itself, thus supporting arguments presented by Cooke and Allan (1984) that there is a view in our society that women should not indulge in such 'male' vices. Such discourses (constructing sexual promiscuity as deviant for women) which serve to police and control female sexuality (see Lees, 1997) could be one explanation why, as proposed by Piombo and Piles (1996) and Klassen & Wilsnack (1986), women may drink to become more free sexually. Yet the authors largely fail to present any socially meaningful analysis of this, and it would seem that further accounts are needed which comment on the social significance of the links between drinking and such practices (see Tomsen, 1997). Although women's alcohol consumption is no longer punishable by death, it appears that such discourses are still in circulation and further, that these still have possible detrimental consequences for drinking women. For example, George *et al,* (1988) found evidence that drinking women are often assumed to be sexually promiscuous. Further than this, it has been found more recently that such constructions of drinking women have served to bolster 'rape supportive attitudes' (these being ones which rationalise or justify rape) in cases where the female victim

(often presented as a fictional character in vignettes) has been drinking (see Abbey and Harnish, 1995).

In sum, this section of the chapter has demonstrated how essentialist discourse which has a backdrop of biological understanding has fed into negative constructions of, and has negative implications for, women who drink. For example, such discourse may and has been shown to operate to control and constrain women's practices, for example, sexual practices (Lees, 1997). However, it is argued here that these may also regulate women's leisure (e.g. drinking), for example, by warning women of the potential dangers and negative consequences of this, and constructing drinking and related behaviours (e.g. sexual practices) as ones which women should not engage in. Further, as argued, such discourse can serve to 'warn' women out of public drinking spaces, positioning them back within domestic and private spheres. Yet more then this, drinking women who suffer harm may be less likely to receive support because of constructions of them, for example, as irresponsible and sexually deviant. Once again, this demonstrates how so-called apolitical scientific research in actual fact has far reaching political implications and consequences, and so appears to lend itself to feminist deconstruction.

2.3 Biological Discourse and Feminism

So far, the chapter has highlighted the problematic implications of biological and essentialist discourses for women, and further, women who drink. Indeed, feminists have long challenged the basing of understandings of sexual difference on biology (e.g. liberal, Marxist and social constructionist feminists) for many of the reasons outlined in

this chapter, asserting instead the primacy of social factors (such forms of feminism shall be dealt with in greater depth in forthcoming chapters). Yet, it would be mistaken to assume that all feminists reject biological understandings, and it is important to contextualise feminist accounts which do draw upon biological discourse here.

For example, many radical feminists (e.g. Firestone, 1974) argue that it is not society but rather biology which divides men and women. There are some points of agreement between radical feminists and anti-feminist biological determinists, for example, the argument that male dominance is the effect of male aggression which is ultimately determined by male hormones (see Holliday, 1978). However, there are also some important points of difference. For one, radical feminists link biological 'facts' such as men's greater capacity for aggression and violence and women's reproductive capacities (which confine women to the domestic sphere) as the primary cause of women's subordinate status and their oppression (Redstockings, 1969; Millett, 1971; Atkinson, 1970; Holliday, 1978; Firestone, 1979), rather than treating male dominance unproblematically, as sociobiologists can be seen to do. In addition, this situation is not one which is regarded as inevitable. For example, some radical feminists have suggested addressing or even altering such biological facts and/or the problems arising from these using a variety of techniques and strategies. These include techniques affecting the biochemistry of aggression, such as biofeedback, living in less polluted environments and even vegetarianism (Holliday, 1978), and technologies such as artificial reproduction (Firestone, 1979). In addition, many radical feminists (e.g. Mary Daly) have drawn upon the essentialist thesis that biology has endowed women with certain feminine traits in order to celebrate 'women's culture', arguing that these should be valued equally with, if not more than, men's specific traits (e.g. Daly, 1978; Dunbar,

1970). There is some variation as to how far such differences are regarded as resulting directly from biology. For example, Dubar (1970) argues that women's capacity for reproduction has led to women's dependence on men, but also the development of certain feminine character traits such as caring for others, whereas Gina (1974) claims that differences between the sexes are cortically determined (thus again locating such differences within the brain). Yet, many such commentators are united in their agreement that greater value should be attached to women's essential femininity. In addition, those such Daly argue that it is men's envy of such feminine qualities, for example, women's creative abilities and energies (e.g. the ability the have children) which has led men to control and subordinate women (e.g. Rich, 1977).

However, there are a number of problems with such feminist accounts, and indeed, many of the criticisms which have been directed towards socio-biology can also be applied to radical and essentialist forms of feminism. For one, those such as Holliday (1978) and Firestone (1974) argue that the biological facts of male aggression and women's reproductive capacities have determined male dominance and women's economic dependency on men from the earliest times. However, there is evidence which suggests that the earliest forms of social organisation were not based on male dominance (e.g. Leacock, 1975) and in addition, such biological facts have not always made women dependent on men and need not do so in future, particularly given changes to the economy, modes of production and the roles of women (Sayers, 1982). As such, these analyses are flawed by their lack of historical context and assumptions about the stability of patterns of male dominance. Secondly, the idea that women's liberation may be achieved by placing a higher valuation on essential 'feminine' characteristics and consequently women's roles (e.g. within the home) is, according to those such as Sayers

(1982), a utopian and untenable one. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the evidence to suggest that women do demonstrate many stereotypically feminine traits is weak and contentious and such traits continue to be taken as evidence of women's inferiority, as reviews of the sex difference and socio-biological literature demonstrate. In addition, even if this vision were to be achieved, this does not necessary mean that there would be a significant change to the realities of many women's lives (Mitchell, 1973; Guettel, 1974). For example, this would not challenge the confinement of men and women to different spheres (women in private, domestic spheres; men in public, employment spheres), only reinforce this. In addition, it has been argued that such confinement is largely unworkable and impossible in contemporary society anyway, due to, for example, economic changes (Sayers, 1982).

Although such forms of radical feminism do have many strengths, for example, by drawing attention to the link between reproduction and economic dependency on men (which, despite the criticisms highlighted here, has been a major reason for such dependence), it is difficult to envisage how an analysis of women's alcohol consumption employing such a conceptual framework would avoid or challenge many of the problems highlighted in this chapter. For example, despite a celebration of 'feminine' traits such as caring and nurtance and normative feminine roles, these are, as discussed in the present and previous chapter, regarded as anti-thetical to alcohol consumption, thus reinforcing the idea that this an essentially unfeminine activity and pathologising women's drinking. In addition, a belief in the biological basis of men's aggression, although this is not presented unproblematically and ways of addressing this have been suggested (e.g. biofeedback), this may still serve to scare women out of masculinised public spaces such drinking establishments. Although it is not being

argued here that feminists do this as such, it is difficult to see how such ideas can lead to anything else. Finally, as the previous and following chapter demonstrate, it is essential to locate women's drinking and their relationship with alcohol in an historical context in order to develop an understanding of the generation of meanings surrounding this and how these are related to, for example, the changing roles of women (e.g. the problematisation of women's drinking as a backlash response to women's so-called increased emancipation – see previous chapter). For these reasons, the following chapters shall turn to arguably more socially-based feminist understandings considering what these have to offer a contemporary analysis of women and alcohol.

2.3 Final Remarks

A central aim of this final section of the second chapter is to establish a position in relation to the work which has been reviewed here. Overall, the position adopted here is one which is critical of traditional psychological and social scientific work which has drawn heavily upon essentialist and biological discourse, a stance which is shared by many feminist psychologists (see Wilkinson, 1986). For one, the individualistic focus in such work has often meant that femininity and women's alcohol use has not been understood meaningfully within context, for example, in terms of the discursive practices and gender relations which give rise to certain forms of knowledge, ways of being and practices such as alcohol consumption. Also, within such literature, there has been a common failure to study femininity and women's alcohol consumption in it's own right, not just in comparison to men and male 'norms', possibly because, as suggested by Bernard (1973), if comparisons with men are not made, then the research is regarded as incomplete. Again, this is a criticism which has been made of much

traditional work in psychology (e.g. Griffin, 1986). It is the intention of the current research to address these failings. Further, a trend running through this literature is not only the construction of masculinity and femininity as opposites, but further, femininity as inferior to masculinity. This is particularly apparent if we examine sex difference discourse. Although this has been challenged by feminists (e.g. radical feminists) who assert the value of femininity against a backdrop of essentialist and biological understanding, the thesis contends that such a view will offer little to feminists who are concerned to challenge the status quo and invoke social change (see Percy, 1998).

In addition, much of this discourse which contributes to the matrix of constructions of drinking women can be seen have negative implications. For example, the second section of the chapter has discussed how socio-biological discourse which masculinises aggression and sexual promiscuity can be regarded as contributing to a climate of fear amongst women. Also, because this normalises such behaviours and practices on the part of men, whilst positioning women outside of these (e.g. sexual promiscuity as deviant for women), drinking women who are regarded as indulging in 'male' vices such as alcohol consumption and sexual promiscuity are likely to be subject to scrutiny and criticism. More than this, drinking women who suffer at the hands of men are often likely to be held partly responsible and receive a lack of support. As such, it is argued here that scientists' claims to produce objective and apolitical accounts is a perpetuated myth (see Bernard, 1983; Reinharz, 1983; Griffin, 1986). Finally, a related theme running through the literature around gender and alcohol is the pathologisation of women's drinking, thus continuing in psychology's trend of constructing women and their behaviour in negative ways. As discussed, this is generally either cast as self-medication for medical and psychological problems, or as a practice which is risky and

dangerous for women (e.g. makes them more vulnerable to abuse or more likely to engage in 'risky' sex). As argued, this could have a regulatory effect on women's drinking and associated practices (e.g. sexual) through subtle forms of control. This can also include self-regulation (humans bestowed with rights and responsibilities) which Foucault (1977) argued is often the most powerful form of social control.

The thesis's critique of traditional and mainstream accounts of gender in the social sciences and a consideration of ways in which the current research can address existing niches and problems shall be extended in the next chapter which turns it's attention to traditional sociological and mainstream social psychological accounts of gender (and alcohol).

CHAPTER 3 - FROM SEX ROLES TO COGNITION: TRADITIONAL SOCIOLOGICAL AND MAINSTREAM SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL ACCOUNTS OF FEMININITY

Introduction

Chapter two critically addressed traditional psychological approaches to understanding gender (and alcohol use) which are more explicitly concerned with innate or biological origins of gendered identities, behaviours and characteristics. This third chapter shall now turn to more socially-based analyses of gender socialisation and the acquisition of gendered identities from within sociology and social psychology. In keeping with the context and aims of the earlier chapters, the focus here is upon traditional sociological and social psychological approaches, although there is some discussion around feminist developments within the latter field. In addition, as with chapter two, this includes research around gender and alcohol which can be regarded as being informed by such approaches and ideas, and/or can be located generally within such areas of work.

More specifically, this chapter critically reviews the development of the concept of the 'sex role' within sociology (e.g. Parsons & Bales, 1953), moving on to examine how social psychologists have drawn variably upon this idea. For instance, the earlier sections of the chapter examine social psychological accounts (e.g. Social Learning Theory - Mischel, 1966, 1970; Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Walters, 1963), which have directly embraced this concept. The chapter then progresses to a discussion of attempts to deconstruct and move away from the idea of the sex role, marking a turn in

psychology back towards analyses of internal phenomenon, most notably, social-cognitive approaches such as Gender Schema Theory (e.g. Bem, 1981, 1985, 1987), Social Identity Theory (e.g. Tajfel, 1978, 1981; Turner, 1982, 1985) and Cognitive-Developmental Theory (e.g. Piaget, 1928, 1955; Kohlberg, 1966). The chapter assesses how far such accounts have progressed from the more explicitly biological theories addressed in chapter two, and further, considers what such analyses have and can offer understandings of femininity and women's alcohol use. The end of the chapter then summarises the developments in gender theorising that such perspectives have made, along with some problems and limitations, considering how these can be built upon by future analyses.

3.1 Femininity as a 'Sex Role'.

Role Theory is an established social scientific perspective of which the origins are difficult to ascertain, but appear to emanate from a number of disparate areas which go along way back into the history of social science (e.g. the work of Emile Durkheim in the late nineteenth century). Briddle and Thomas (1966) argue that the main foundations of a coherent theory of social roles were established in the 1930s by the sociologist George Herbert Mead (1934) and the anthropologist Ralph Linton (1936). However, it is the sociologist Talcott Parsons, writing in the 1940s and 1950s who is most commonly associated with developing the concept of the 'sex role'. Parsons, who belonged to the functionalist school of sociology, viewed the functioning of society as being analogous to that of a living organism. He believed that like these, societies have basic needs, and in the same way that the parts of an organism need to work together in order to satisfy these needs, so do the various parts of society. As such he believed that

the two sex roles have developed along these lines, and so are functional, contributing to the eco-balance of the system. For example, Parsons and Bales (1953) argued that societies basically require two types of social activity: 'instrumental' and 'expressive'. Men, they argued, tend to be more instrumentally orientated, for example, they are more proficient at making decisions and getting things done. On the other hand, women tend to be superior at facilitating social interaction and caring for others, and so are described as being more 'expressive'. Parsons and Bales (1953) argued that the two sex roles compliment each other, and should be taken up by the respective sexes.

Parsons also drew upon psychoanalytic concepts in his account of sex-role socialisation. For example, he used Freud's notions of the Oedipus and Electra Complexes, times in a child's development when young boys and girls come to identify with the same sex parent to account for the child's internalisation of sex-appropriate attributes. Further, Parsons used this to explain how sex roles are transmitted from one generation to the next. As such, Parson's account is commended for attempting to combine psychological and sociological perspectives, thus representing a rich socio-psychological explanation.

Before moving on to consider more recent accounts which have incorporated the notion of the 'sex role', a number of points have already presented themselves and so shall be addressed now (although it must be noted that such criticisms will also apply to theories discussed later on in the chapter). Firstly, this account of sex roles is loaded with the kinds of stereotypical beliefs about men and women found in the sex difference, bio-psychological and socio-biological work discussed in chapter two. Further, this prescribes certain kinds of behaviours and ways of life to men and women, and so once again, we can see how such traditional social scientific accounts of gender have

questionable political ramifications (see chapter two; also see Wilkinson, 1996 for fuller discussions). A further similarity concerns the kind of language and discourse used, this being saturated with biological references. For example, analogies are drawn between societies and living organisms, sex roles are described as developing in an evolutionary manner, and most notably, the term 'sex' is used rather than the term 'gender' (the former more directly denoting biological characteristics and difference). Indeed, the two sex role orientations discussed by Parsons and Bales (1953) are very much equated with biological sex, 'expressive' being equated with the female gender, 'instrumental' with males. As such, a reliance on biological categories very much remains (Connell, 1987; Brittan, 1989). This undermines claims that Parsons and Bales (1953) produced a genuinely social analysis of gender. Indeed, it appears that this would have fitted quite neatly into the section on socio-biological accounts featured in chapter two.

Moreover, the concept of 'sex role' is one which is rather vague and confusing. For example, note the following extract taken from a rather lengthy definition:

'When people occupy social positions their behaviour is determined mainly by what is expected of that position rather than by their own individual characteristics – roles are the bundles of socially defined attributes and expectations associated with social positions.'

(Abercrombie *et al,* 1994: 360).

It appears that such descriptions can leave theorists to puzzle over what this actually represents. For instance, this definition points to the ways in which people normally behave (i.e. in accordance with role expectations) *and* those expectations themselves

(i.e. the ways in which society expects men and women to behave which is normative or ideal). Therefore, when theorists such as Parsons and Bales (1953) refer to 'sex roles', it is difficult to ascertain whether they are referring to societal norms, actual gendered behaviour or a combination of both. Such confusion over the two meanings, according to Edley and Wetherell (1995), has had a number of consequences. For example, this has encouraged views of behaviour which is at variance with norms as deviant and/or the result of improper socialisation, which has resulted in a stigmatisation of those being viewed as 'abnormal', such as gays and lesbians (see Terman & Miles, 1936). Similarly, those such as Kitzinger (1987) and Burman (1990) have argued that the establishment of gender 'norms' has lead and contributed to the marginalisation of women who do not fit these, which can be seen to have far reaching consequences. For instance, Stanko (1985), on conducting research into the judicial systems in the United Kingdom and United States, found that women who were perceived as leading 'unorthodox lives', who do not appear to obey codes of 'suitable behaviour' (do not conform to normative gender roles) are sometimes seen as deserving a violent response from their male 'protectors'. This could include women who drink. Indeed, we can tie such arguments and findings in with some of the literature around women and alcohol discussed in chapter two, such as Abbey and Harnish's (1995) observations that discourses constructing drinking women as deviant (e.g. sexually - George *et al,* 1988) are often used to bolster 'rape supportive attitudes' in cases where the rape victim has been drinking (see chapter two).

Yet, at the same time, those such as Caplan (1991) have pointed out that when women *do* conform to normative feminine roles, again, they are likely to be labelled as pathological. For example, she points to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual's (DSM)

diagnostic criteria for 'Self-defeating Personality Disorder' (this being predominantly applied to women), which includes descriptions such as 'engages in excessive self-sacrifice' (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). This particular description could be regarded as an important characteristic of taking seriously one's prescribed role as 'responsible carer'. However, there is no parallel disorder which labels as pathological the man who conforms to masculine sex roles ('Delusional Dominating Personality Disorder' – see Caplan, 1991). What we can infer from this (other than that male biases and power operate within the mental health system) is that the establishment of normative feminine roles is not helpful for women.

Despite such criticisms, the development of the concepts of social and sex roles and norms have been important and significant in the social sciences, providing many theorists with a base on which to build interesting and rich accounts of masculinity and femininity. Indeed, this concept has been drawn upon cross-culturally by many social scientists (most notably, sociologists and anthropologists) interested in the relationship of gender role expectations and the social positioning of women to their drinking patterns and habits (e.g. Moore, 1995; Fillmore, 1987). For example, Fillmore (1987) argued that women are less likely to experience alcohol-related problems than men due to their occupation of 'subordinate' social roles such as housewife and mother, which are non-conducive to drinking. She argues:

'In sum, this series of explanations have suggested that women have had to swim against a tide of social norms which prevent excessive drinking'. (p. 809)

Further, changes in feminine sex role expectations have been highlighted as bearing a close relationship to apparent changes in the drinking patterns and behaviours of women (e.g. Moore, 1995; Cardenas, 1995; Kua, 1994; Medina-Mora, 1994; McCrady & Sand, 1985; Makela *et al,* 1981). For instance, in discussion of such changes, Makela *et al* (1981) argue:

'The increase in female drinking is less important in it's implications for alcohol problems among women than as an indication of change in both the social position of women and drinking, particularly in cultures where drinking used to be a male prerogative' (cited in Moore, 1995: 310).

As such, we can see how such concepts have instigated more socially relevant analyses of women and alcohol, placing this issue within wider societal structures and arrangements, and moving away (particularly notable in Makela *et al's* quotation) from psychological obsessions with alcohol abuse in women.

Indeed the concept of social roles and norms has not just remained an interest of sociologists and anthropologists. For example, since the concept of the 'sex role' was originally developed by those such as Parsons, this approach became increasingly popular within the social sciences, particularly in the psychological study of gender socialisation. Such social psychological approaches became a said point of intersection between psychology and sociology, offering different accounts as to what is the driving force behind this socialisation. It is to these approaches that the discussion shall now turn.

Drawing on the sociological concept of the 'sex role', Social Learning Theory (e.g. Mischel, 1966, 1970; Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Walters, 1963) became the dominant approach to theorising gender socialisation in social psychology in the 1960s and 1970s. A turn here on the part of social learning theorists and the like towards sex roles had certain important consequences for the psychological study of gender. Namely, this resulted in the abandonment of concerns with any internal events or phenomena to focus instead on observable behaviour. It is no accident that this became the dominant approach during this period, as sociologists and psychologists were becoming increasingly concerned to produce 'scientific' theory (that is, theories which met criteria set by the natural sciences). The focus on observable behaviours was much more attuned to this agenda, than, for example, psychoanalytic[3] concerns with unseen psychical events, which pervaded isolation and measurement.

Social learning theorists (e.g. Mischel, 1966, 1970; Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Walters, 1963) discuss the roles of rewards and punishments issued by parents and other socialisation agents in the acquisition of sex-typed behaviour, based upon but reworking ideas offered earlier by behaviourists such as Watson (1924) and Skinner (1953). They argue that it is through such reinforcement, along with the observation and imitation of behaviours exhibited by same sex socialisation agents and role models, that children learn to behave in sex-appropriate ways (to be masculine or feminine according to biological sex).

[3] Although there was a rejection of psychoanalysis within social psychology during this period, social learning theorists did draw upon psychoanalytic ideas. For instance, identification with same sex parent was cited as important in the acquisition of sex-appropriate attributes and behaviours.

Social learning theorists can be commended for attempting to move beyond a theorisation of the existence of sex roles to explain how these are actually recognised and taken up by people. Further, Social Learning Theory accounts do appear to appeal on a 'common-sensical' level, as most of us can remember, as children in particular, times when we have been reprimanded for behaving in 'unmasculine' or 'unfeminine' ways. More importantly from an academic point of view, there is a considerable amount of research evidence to support the idea that we learn to be masculine or feminine as children by observing, imitating, and receiving rewards and punishments from those around us (e.g. Fagot, 1974; Renzetti & Curran, 1992), as social learning theorists propose. Moreover, such role theories appear to move away from essentialist biological accounts (as discussed in chapter two) towards a more social understanding of gendered identities and behaviours. Social Learning Theory appears to open up possibilities for analyses of how behaviours and characteristics associated with femininity can be seen to be encouraged and promoted in girls and women because these are valued in society as normative feminine attributes, rather than viewing these as innate or occurring naturally. For example, a social learning account suggesting, for example, that women tend to drink less than men because they have been socialised into viewing excessive alcohol consumption and loss of control as an unfeminine activity does seem to have 'face validity', and offers a socially meaningful understanding of this said gender difference in drinking behaviour (see chapter two). Taking such a perspective can also offer critical potential, in that if traits or behaviours traditionally associated with femininity (e.g. nurturing tendencies, limited interest in technology) can be thought of as a product of the social (socialisation), then notions of inevitability are undermined, as this opens up the possibility for social change. For instance, changes in socialisation practices (e.g.

parenting) and mediums (e.g. media representations of gender) can also result in changes or challenges to traditional gender roles. Connell (1987) argues that it is this kind of reasoning which has brought about the development of, for example, non-sexist school curricula, and so we can see the positive political implications of such changes in theorising around gender.

Yet the extent to which Social Learning Theory offers such potential is limited. Socialisation does appear to be portrayed here as a relatively smooth and harmonious process, whereby men and women largely unproblematically learn to adopt those characteristics and behaviours 'naturally' associated with their biological sex. Once again we can see a strong equation here of gender roles to biological sex, and the kind of functionalism promoted by Parsons and his colleagues. One result is that this account appears to overlook or inadequately address conflict and problems experienced by people in learning to adopt appropriate sex roles, and so fails to incorporate the kind of gender identity conflict often discussed, for example, by psychoanalysts (e.g. Freud, 1933, Dinnerstein, 1976). Further, social learning theorists deny or at least underplay people's agency and active resistance. People can and do resist traditional forms of femininity (and masculinity), despite their biological sex and socialisation practices aimed at coercing them to conform to these. Yet, there appears to be little accounting in Social Learning Theory for this kind of resistance, and further, of more organised power struggles such as feminism.

In failing to account for gender definitions and ideologies as a contested area, some writers have argued that contrary to the apparent strength of such sex role theories as being able to incorporate social change (as discussed) these are actually quite ahistorical

and static. This is because social change is not generally understood by sex role theorists as arising from such conflicts and struggles, but rather is viewed as something which simply happens to sex roles, in an almost evolutionary manner (e.g. Connell, 1987; Carrigan *et al,* 1987; Kimmel, 1987), this being most clearly evident in the work of Parsons. As such, sex-roles are treated by accounts such as Social Learning Theory as simply given, with little attention being paid to the political origins or historical specificity of these.

However, it must be noted that this criticism appears to apply more directly to social psychological accounts of sex roles, which have generally treated the political and historical origins of these as the province of other disciplines such as sociology. Referring back to the studies relating changes in sex roles to changes in the drinking habits and patterns of women mentioned earlier in the chapter, it does appear that many of these do attempt to explain such changes by locating these within a wider cultural framework. For example, Moore's (1995) ethnographic study of drinking patterns and behaviours in a Greek tourist town (Arachova) pointed to changes in the local environment and economy as leading to changes in feminine roles, and subsequently, women's drinking patterns. Similarly, other theorists, cross-culturally, have noted that recent social, economic and educational changes have been accompanied by evidence that women within that particular cultural context have become more likely to drink, due to changing sex roles. For instance, such changes have been noted in countries in Africa, Central and South America, Asia and Chile (Cardenas, 1995) China (Kua, 1994) and Mexico (Medina-Mora, 1994). As such, it does appear that many theorists working with the concept of sex roles do attempt to locate and explain changes to these, rather than taking them as simply given. However, it is unclear as to whether such writers

conceive such structural changes as arising from conflict and struggle, or whether these are viewed as a 'natural' progression, and so elements of this criticism could still apply here.

A further problem or weakness of Social Learning Theory, which is related to this argument around agency and resistance, is a failure to account for motivation. For example, what motivates parents and other socialisation agents to attempt to coerce children into conformity to traditional gender stereotypes? It appears that Social Learning Theorists fail to consider why many parents, being aware of the damaging and limiting effects that conformity to traditional feminine sex roles can have on women, would wish to reproduce or encourage this in their children. One explanation could be that parents are afraid that non-conformity will result in the social disapproval and marginalisation of their children. As those such as Elliott (1994) have pointed out, parenting is not an isolated event, but rather takes place within a wider cultural matrix of discursive practices and power relations, for instance, those between men and women. Yet once again, such issues are not adequately explored by social learning theorists, rendering their accounts over-simplistic, one-dimensional and without real socially meaningful analysis.

In sum, many of the criticisms made earlier of Parson's functionalist account of sex roles also appear to apply to Social Learning Theory. Firstly, there remains a strong equation of two rigid gender roles with biological sex. This undermines the claims of role theorists to have produced more genuinely socially-orientated analyses. Further, this rigid conception of two sex roles is over-simplistic, particularly as those such as Pleck (1987) have pointed out that cultures often contain more than one version of a

particular role. For instance, Pleck (1987) described how contemporary America has two different and competing models of fatherhood. Also, it has been suggested that various social grouping (e.g. racial, ethnic, class) have their own particular versions of sex roles. Secondly, sex role socialisation is presented as being unproblematic, with little analysis of conflict, resistance, and wider power relations and discursive practices. This presents a picture of men and women as being rather like robots, simply conforming to what is expected of them, and thus prevents any real political analysis.

Such problems with the rigid conception of sex-roles and their equation with biological sex have been addressed by social psychologists who have attempted to deconstruct these, presenting more fluid and sophisticated analyses of masculinity and femininity. The chapter shall now assess the contribution that some such accounts have made to feminism and the social psychological study of gender.

3.3 Accounting for Agency: Sex Role Orientation

As just suggested, some psychologists recognised that masculinity and femininity did not necessarily have to equate with biological sex. In particular, such ideas have characterised the work of liberal feminists in psychology, whose practices have been aimed at enabling women to pursue their rights unhindered by biological sex. A key figure here is Sandra Bem (1974, 1981, 1985, 1987). Liberal feminists such as Bem have argued that differences between the sexes are by no means inevitable, but rather, the result of gender socialisation and the ways in which boys and girls learn to become typically feminine or masculine (Burr, 1998). However, Bem's analysis is one which can be regarded as incorporating the notion of fluidity and agency to a greater extent

than some of the approaches discussed so far. For example, although Bem regarded masculinity and femininity as two independent dimensions, she suggested that individuals can and will differ according to the extent to which they organise/categorise and process information from the surrounding world by drawing upon these two dimensions (e.g. through the formation and usage of gender schemas - Bem, 1985; 1987). Further, Bem argued that 'androgynous' people (who described themselves using characteristics associated with both masculinity and femininity in an approximately equal proportion) were psychologically healthier than those who appeared to conform to traditional gender roles (Bem, 1974). However, the idea that masculinity and femininity do not necessarily map neatly onto biological sex has a longer-standing history and so was not one 'given birth' to by 1970s feminists such as Bem. For example, Stainton-Rogers and Stainton-Rogers (2001) point out that such ideas date at least as far back as Greek mythology (Heilbrun, 1978) and indeed, have characterised the ideas of earlier researchers in the social sciences such as Terman & Miles (1936) who actually regarded masculinity and femininity as existing along the same continuum or dimension. Such psychologists attempted to put their theories into practice by developing early psychological measurements of gender, such as Bem's Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI - Bem, 1974) and Terman and Miles' Masculinity-Femininity (M/F) Scale (1936).

Indeed, scales based on these original versions are still commonly used by psychologists investigating gender and alcohol use. For instance, work on sex-role orientation and conflict (a discrepancy between ideal and perceived sex role orientation) in alcoholics has been one area of investigation, as role conflict is believed to be a factor contributing to the onset and maintenance alcohol abuse (e.g. McCrady & Sand, 1985; Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Beckman, 1978). For example, McCrady and Sand (1985) measured

participants with a said addiction to alcohol on Masculinity (M) and Femininity (F) scales. These included characteristics thought to be desirable for both sexes, but which males or females are believed to possess to a greater degree. The participants were also measured on a Masculinity-Femininity (M-F) scale, which described characteristics whereby social desirability varies according to sex.

McCrady and Sand's (1985) research was based on the previous work of those such as Wilsnack and Wilsnack (1978) who related heavier drinking in younger women with a sex-role orientation disfavouring traditional forms of femininity. In contrast, Wilsnack and Wilsnack (1979) reported that the literature regarding older female alcoholics suggests that this group more overtly subscribe to a more traditional feminine sex-role orientation. Similarly, McCrady and Sand (1985) found that the older female participants in their study (35+) scored lower on measures of masculinity and higher on measures of femininity than the younger participants (18-30). McCrady and Sand (1985) suggest that one explanation for these findings may be that the younger women in the studies are maturing in a historical era where it has become more socially acceptable or normative for women to display traditionally masculine behaviours. As such, these women are subscribing more to masculine sex-role orientations and associated behaviours, such as (excessive) alcohol consumption.

The ideas of those such as Bem (1974) and Terman and Miles (1936) can be commended on a number of different grounds. For one, such accounts appear to have a degree of explanatory power which some of the other approaches previously discussed by the thesis lack. For one, the rigid equation of masculinity and femininity with biological sex (which, as argued, such approaches deconstruct) is a troubled one,

especially as anthropological studies have long demonstrated the cultural specificity of these (e.g. Mead, 1935). It would seem that such cross-cultural findings do not pose as much of a problem for such accounts as those discussed earlier. In addition, such accounts are better equipped to explain difference amongst members of the same gender group and similarities between genders than some of the more deterministic approaches previously addressed. Surely, if gender roles were equated so strongly with biological sex, and were as discrete as theorists have suggested, then members of the same gender group would largely exhibit the same characteristics, and ones markedly different from members of the opposite sex. Yet everyday experience and research findings disconfirm this notion. For instance, as argued in the previous chapter, research into gender differences has largely failed to offer convincing evidence, whether the so-called differences are believed to be due to biological or socialisation factors, or a combination of both. As such, the rather more sophisticated analyses of masculinity and femininity offered by those such as Bem opened up new possibilities for gender theorising in the social sciences, not least because these encouraged a move away from biologically deterministic theories. Further, as discussed, such ideas and the research methodologies which these have fed into (i.e. masculinity-femininity scales) have been employed in studies seeking to explain alcohol abuse amongst women.

In addition, the work of those such as Sandra Bem is appealing and has made an important contribution to feminist psychology. This challenges the essentialism and determinism which characterises many of the traditional social scientific approaches discussed, disrupting, for example, ideas surrounding the essential qualities of being male or female, what should count as 'normal' gender identity, and ideas around the inevitability of subscription to roles (the problems of which have been dealt with). Yet,

further than this, this avoids the essentialism and determinism which characterises many other *feminist* approaches. For example, chapter two pointed to this as a problem with feminist accounts drawing upon biological discourse. In turn, this presents a greater challenge to the notion that patriarchy is inevitable and offers greater potential for social change (e.g. by pointing to child rearing and educational practices aimed at encouraging conformity to existing normative gender roles as sites for intervention). Indeed, liberal feminist approaches have invoked changes in Western Europe and the U.S. relating to, for example, sex discrimination, equal pay and childcare provision (Percy, 1998). Further, the incorporation of the notion of human agency at an individual level - that is, the possibility that people have a certain amount of freedom and personal choice with respect to how they act and so don't just adopt a set of sex-appropriate behaviours in accordance with their biological sex - is appealing. For example, this challenges the notion that women are wholly controlled and that conformity to normative feminine roles is determined either by their biology (e.g. essentialist feminism) or social structures (e.g. Marxist feminism), an approach which can be regarded as empowering for women. Finally, Bem's work provided an interesting and rich psychological angle to feminist critiques of patriarchy and normative sex roles by arguing that these are not just simply unjust, but moreover, psychologically unhealthy (Percy, 1998).

However, there are also a number of problems with such analyses. One of the most common criticism which has made of such liberal-humanist approaches concerns the inherent individualism which is both typical of mainstream psychology and on a wider scale, Western thought (Kitzinger, 1991; Mednick, 1989). For example, despite ideas around human agency here being appealing and positive (as discussed), Bem's analysis appears to overlook important issues of constraint, power and ideology. As Smith

(1977) points out, the experiences of many women are that their daily lives are largely determined and ordered externally to them, which it would appear, such liberal-humanist feminist analyses largely fail to account for. Also, the extent to which women do have agency in understanding and orientating themselves in respect of existing feminine gender roles and stereotypes is somewhat debatable, considering, for example, the social consequences of non-conformity, such as disapproval and marginalisation (see Skeggs, 1997). Further, unlike other influential feminisms such as socialist feminism and postmodern feminism (see following chapter), Bem's analysis ignores the importance of race, sexuality and class in the construction of gender (e.g. Davis, 1994), and the constraints that these place upon the access that different women have to forms of femininity. For example, Skeggs (1997) argues that working class women are positioned as 'other' in respect to traditional, respectable forms of (middle-class) femininity, due to social constructions of their sexuality as deviant etc. As such, it would appear that not all women have equal access to the same feminine orientations and constructs (for an extended discussion, see following chapter). Similarly, normative masculinity is more highly valued in our culture than femininity (Burman, 1995; Gilligan, 1982; Walkerdine, 1988), which could explain the motivations of many men and women to subscribe to such an orientation, and so the two do not exist as equivalents as Bem appears to imply. In sum, Bem can be accused of presenting an account of gender which is simplistic, overlooking the complexities of oppression.

A number of further criticisms of such accounts of gender socialisation and sex role orientation and the methodologies which have been used by theorists espousing them have been made. For example, feminists have argued that these are too firmly based on *'models which embod(y) the values and power divisions of sexist society'* (Stanley &

Wise, 1983:96), and that the masculinity-femininity scales which these have given rise to are 'scientific reinforcement' of sex role stereotypes (Eichler, 1980). For example, items such as 'caring' are classified by such scales as 'feminine', whereas those such as 'competitive' are (predictably) mapped on to 'masculinity'. Also, Bem promoted androgyny in women which (it would seem) would involve the adoption of typically masculine behaviours. As argued, these are more highly valued in our culture, a status which Bem could be accused of reinforcing. Although Bem did also argue that the adoption of feminine characteristics is psychologically healthy for men, this criticism appears to be given more weight if we look at the arguments of other writers who appear to have been influenced by her ideas. For example, Lubinski *et al* (1981) suggested that the exhibition of masculine behaviours is important for both men and women precisely because these are more highly valued, a contention which promotes this view rather than challenges it.

Also, as Connell (1987) points out, when participants are completing masculinity-femininity tests, they may often respond in ways which they believe to be appropriate (i.e. respond in accordance with gender stereotypes). As such, the results of such tests may not only be reflective, but also reproductive of society's ideals regarding how the two sexes ought to behave, conduct themselves etc., rather than the actual personalities[4] (or sex-role orientations) of the men and women who have participated in the study. Yet the extent to which this criticism applies to research instances where such tests have been utilised is questionable, particularly if we look at some of the reported findings. For instance, Terman and Miles (1936) did report variants from the two traditional sex roles, such as the 'effeminate man' and 'masculine woman'. As such, it appears that the

[4] This concept is used variably by role theorists. Whereas some see the notion of personality as an illusion created by frequency of social performance, others embrace the idea of a 'true self' (e.g. Nichols, 1975).

participants here did not respond in sex-appropriate ways. Also, McCrady and Sand (1985) did attempt to differentiate between perceived and ideal sex role orientation in the test that they used (ideal being more likely to be conflated with idealistic stereotypes) and so did appear to acknowledge a discrepancy between the two. However, drawing upon arguments presented earlier, it would seem that assuming that the two can be separated easily is naïve, and represents a false dichotomy. So it would seem that claims on the part of psychologists employing such measures to have uncovered or identified a person's 'actual' sex role orientation, rather than to have simply instigated a reproduction of gender stereotypes is bold to say the least.

Continuing on the subject here of variants from normative gender roles (e.g. the 'effeminate man' and 'masculine woman'), it appears that the criticism of role theories made earlier – that these contribute to the pathologisation of 'abnormal types' – can also be made to studies which have made use of masculinity-femininity scales. For instance, in their discussions of the effeminate man and masculine woman, Terman and Miles (1936) imply abnormality by suggesting that such 'deviants' are often only capable of romantic attachment to members of their own sex. In addition, research into women and alcohol which has applied ideas of sex-role orientation can be seen, once again, to stigmatise women whose behaviour is viewed as 'abnormal', at odds with traditional femininity and therefore in need of explanation.

A further problem here is related to the issue of time and space. For example, there appears to be an assumption by the researchers using such tests that normative gender roles are rather fixed and static, thus failing to incorporate (and account for) changes. For example, referring back to McCrady and Sand's (1985) study discussed earlier, the

authors contented that women have become more orientated toward masculinity due to changing role expectations. However, the authors fail to adequately speculate as to why such changes have occurred (again, taking such changes as given without interrogating these) and further, fail to consider that this may be because, in fact, normative roles have changed and become less discrete, and so the definition of masculinity which they utilised in their research may represent an outdated view. Similarly, such tests appear to be based on an assumption that sex role orientation is somewhat fixed, that the results describe some stable behavioural pattern or essence within the person[5]. It is likely that a person's orientation or behaviour will vary according to the context that they are in and over time, and of course, will be related to the issues of social desirability and acceptability with regards to gendered characteristics and behaviours at that historical point (as argued by Connell, 1987). Such tests therefore appear to be reductionist and static, and as such, the usefulness of their application in researching topics related to gender and alcohol is thrown into question.

To summarise here, it does appear that this turn in social psychological and feminist theorising around sex roles (i.e. one which advocated a social basis and incorporated the notion of agency), was a progressive one for a number of reasons. Perhaps most importantly, this saw a marked turn away from biological categories, instigated speculation about the social basis of masculinity and femininity and provided greater scope for social change. Indeed, as argued, the work of Sandra Bem can be regarded as making a highly important contribution to feminist psychology. Yet, some of the problems with and limitations of such liberal-humanist feminist accounts which have been highlighted here include an individualistic focus which limits analyses of

[5] It is important to note that although masculinity-femininity scales are often employed in an attempt to identify gendered traits and characteristics, Bem's original approach was intended as an information

organised, systematic gender oppression; a failure to acknowledge the importance of race, ethnicity, sexuality and class; and the reproduction of gender stereotypes. Despite this, Bem's information processing approach (e.g. 'Gender Schema Theory' - Bem, 1985; 1987) retained popularity during the cognitive revolution in social psychology which ensued in full force over the coming twenty years.

3.4 A Turn Away from the Concept of Role: Femininity and Cognition

As outlined, those such as Bem (1974) had turned away from traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity by deconstructing their necessary relationship to biological sex. The rise of the cognitive revolution within social psychology saw a further abandonment of the concept of role in favour of a focus on cognition in the formation of masculine and feminine identities. Indeed, it must be noted that although cognitive psychologies are now regarded as 'mainstream' by their critics (e.g. critical social psychologists) these were, at this time, viewed as radical alternatives, for example, to behaviourism (Sedgwick, 1974; Shallice, 1984)[6]. However, it must be noted that early cognitive accounts of gender, which influenced later social cognitive perspectives, do appear to have much in common with some of the role theories previously discussed. For example, the proponents of Cognitive-Developmental Theory (Piaget, 1928, 1955; Kohlberg, 1966) theorise that once a child becomes aware of their gender status, the cognitive impetus for acting accordingly is in place. We can see here that such theorists did appear to draw on ideas relating to the concept of the sex role (e.g. behaviours considered appropriate for ones biological sex), and once again, related this to biological categories.

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processing approach, rather than a trait approach.

[6] This demonstrates how that which is regarded as 'critical' is time bound.

However, in contrast to role theories such as Social Learning Theory, it is argued here that a child does not need to be conditioned or coerced into behaving in accordance with appropriate sex roles, as there is a natural tendency to ascribe to these. The motivation therefore is inherent. Further, whereas sex role theorists explicitly focus on overt behaviour, those adhering to social-cognition perspectives are concerned with internal phenomena also. However, unlike psychoanalysts, this concern does not take the form of unconscious events. Rather, the focus here is on thought processes and mental representations which it is believed are identifiable and measurable, and so these perspectives are in keeping with the pursuit in social psychology of scientific discovery.

Yet Bem's ideas (as previously discussed) influenced a move in social-cognition away from the idea that men and women necessarily ascibe to societal expectations in accordance with their biological sex. Her ideas were given an explicit cognitive twist in the form of her 'Gender Schema Theory' (1985, 1987), however, many of Bem's core ideas can be found throughout much of her writing (e.g. an emphasis on personal choice such as individuals variably ascribing to masculine and feminine constructs in their self and social perceptions). However, one idea which Bem elaborated here is that a host of activities and inanimate objects can be conceived cognitively as being masculine or feminine, this echoing the writings of existential feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir (1974) who argued that humans tend to polarise the world into masculine and feminine. This is an interesting concept with regards to gender and alcohol consumption, as certain beverages, for example, are often regarded in such terms. For example, Moore (1995) reported that bitter tasting drinks such as many spirits are strongly associated with masculinity, whereas sweeter, brightly coloured liquors are conversely associated

with femininity. Moore's study did not have a cognitive focus, yet this does demonstrate, as argued by those such as Bem, that masculine and feminine constructs are extremely pervasive in our conceptions of the world.

The problems associated with Bem's work such as it's individualistic focus and the notion of 'personal choice' (as discussed in the previous section of the chapter) are highlighted if we look at the work of researchers who have attempted wider socio-cultural understandings of gender stereotypes and how these place constraints upon women. For example, Moore (1995), Damer (1988), Gefou-Madianou (1992), Cowan (1991) and Papataxiarchis (1991) argue that patterns of drinking such as the consumption of certain beverages on the part of men and women are a significant reflection of wider gender relations and ideologies. In other words, men and women's drinking behaviour can be seen to be in accordance with gender expectations in that cultural context. For example, Moore found that 'excessive' alcohol consumption and subsequent loss of control remains a male prerogative in parts of Greece, and as such, the principle of moderation is carefully observed by the local women (although other researchers have demonstrated that this is not exclusive to these cultural contexts[7]). Morgan (1987) argues that this is often the case due to two ideological underpinnings: i) the belief that alcohol causes disinhibition, and ii) the belief that women should not behave in a disinhibited manner. The consumption of certain beverages can be seen to be part of this matrix of shared meanings, in that stronger drinks, which more quickly result in intoxication, are constructed as male. Such research therefore demonstrates the socio-cultural basis of the categorisation of certain objects and activities as masculine and feminine (this being largely overlooked by social-cognitive perspectives) and

[7] Gomberg (1982) argues that cross-culturally, women's excessive drinking in public is far more likely to be stigmatised that men's.

undermines the notion of personal choice in light of prevailing and pervasive ideologies surrounding gender and drinking.

However, this individualism within social cognition has been addressed by other theorists within this tradition who have attempted to place cognition and ensuing gender identities within the context of social groups and categories. For example, the work of Tajfel (1978, 1981) and Turner (1982, 1985) has contributed to the perspective known as 'Social Identity Theory'. The common assumption between approaches often discussed under this label is that membership of social groups (e.g. 'men'; 'women') influences self-perception and behaviour, through cognitive processes of categorisation (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). For instance, it is proposed that such self-categorisation will result in the maximisation of similarities within a category (e.g. 'all women are the same') and differences between categories (e.g. 'men and women are different'). Further, members of a social group will place an emphasis on the positive qualities of those groups to which they belong ('ingroups'), whilst highlighting negative features and undermining positive qualities of groups to which they do not belong ('outgroups'), the consequences being that self-esteem is enhanced.

Social Identity Theory therefore (variably) places gender identities more directly within a social arena, thus acknowledging the social construction of these. This strength particularly applies to the work of Tajfel, which pitched identities more directly at an intergroup level (Turner appeared to be more interested in 'intra-individual' phenomenon). Social Identity Theory is also arguably well equipped to account for the persistence of gender stereotypes and sexist attitudes, due to it's account, for example, of how people cognitively maximise similarities and minimise differences within social

'outgroups', and emphasise negative features, whilst downplaying positive attributes associated with these.

One major problem with Social Identity Theory concerns the question of the emotional investments which people make in particular social categories. It seems to be assumed that because an individual can be seen to belong to a particular social category or grouping (e.g. 'women'; 'black'; 'working class') that that individual will automatically perceive themselves as such, and that that category will become salient to their social identity. This is an over-simplistic analysis. Arguably, some social categories are more visible than others (e.g. it could be argued that being a woman is more visible than being working class) and thus are more difficult to disassociate from. Yet, it appears that people from a said social category will have differential investments in that category, and as such, the extent to which this constructs their (social) identities will be at variance. For example, Chodorow (1996) demonstrated how for female psychoanalysts, the less visible category of 'psychoanalyst' was often more salient for the women than the category 'woman'. Also, the popular Asian comedy television series 'Goodness Gracious Me' features clips of two Asian couples who actively attempt to disidentify themselves as being Indian, alternatively constructing and negotiating 'exaggerated' traditionally British identities. Although this latter example is a fictional one, it is illustrative of the argument being presented here. Further, it is assumed that members of a particular social grouping will perceive that category to which they belong and other categories or 'outgroups' in much the same way, due to similar underlying cognitive processes and capacities. Again, this is over-simplistic, failing to account for variance and conflict, and thus presenting a misleading homogeneity within social groups (e.g. Gough & McFadden, 2001). Social Identity

Theory also rather negatively, naively and patronisingly constructs people as unable to cognitively comprehend variation within a social grouping, this leading to the inevitability of prejudice and bigotry. As such, the scope for challenging stereotypes and accounting for social change here is rather limited.

In sum, we can see a turn in social psychological theorising around gender here back towards internal phenomena. Such social-cognitive accounts do appear to acknowledge the reductionism of role theories (as discussed) but produced a different kind of reductionism, viewing people as passive information processors who share the same basic, limited cognitive capacities. Further, although such accounts do appear to have explanatory strength (e.g. in accounting for the persistence of gender stereotypes) much of the analysis here is pitched on an individualistic level, with a general failure to account for wider social practices and change.

3.5 Final Remarks

To conclude here, although such traditional sociological and mainstream social psychological literature has often drawn attention to the social bases of femininity (and alcohol use), it appears that this is still fraught with many of the problems associated with the bio-psychological literature discussed in chapter two. Such accounts of gender are still often of an essentialist nature. Men and women have often been depicted by such accounts (most notably, role theories) as being essentially different, and processes have been cited as 'giving rise' to femininity in deterministic and universal fashion (whether these be socialisation or cognitive processes). The level at which such accounts have been pitched is variably social (as discussed). Yet there appears to be a

general failure to place femininity within wider socio-cultural and historical frameworks, accounting, for example, for power relations, discursive practices, historical and cultural specificity, and finally, social change.

It appears from the discussion here that there are a number of issues which need to be addressed in analyses of femininity. Firstly, the concept of the feminine 'sex role' needs to be reworked in order to account for multiplicity. A reductionist reliance on biological categories will not facilitate this, and so should be abandoned. Feminine identities do not stand in isolation from other social identities, rather, a number of these can come into play at any one time in order to produce distinct and historically specific forms of femininity. The multiplicity of such roles has been demonstrated by theorists such as Pleck (1987), and those such as Bem (1974) have demonstrated that women can variably draw upon feminine constructs. Taking such analyses into account, it appears that it is time to move on from traditional role theory perspectives. Secondly, femininity, or rather femininities, need to be placed within a wider social framework than has been attempted by mainstream social psychologists (and many sociologists). Doing so will facilitate more socially meaningful analyses which can account for wider practices and power relations. Again, this will not be achieved by focusing on socialisation and cognitive processes. Finally, human agency needs to be accounted for, but in a way that retains acknowledgement of forms of social control. Women do not simply and unproblematically adopt those behaviours and characteristics normatively associated with their biological sex, and so we need to move beyond deterministic analyses suggesting that they do. However, on the other hand, it is simplistic to suggest (as those such as Bem appear to do) that women are relatively free to orient themselves with regards to existing constructs of femininity, as gender relations and practices in

society are often very powerful in encouraging ascription to traditional forms of femininity. As argued by Foucault (1977), this social regulation is all the more powerful when we are unaware that this is what is happening, and when subject positions are taken up willingly (even pleasurably).

It is argued here that the theoretical approach adopted by the thesis (feminist social constructionist) is one which allows for more adequate address of these issues, ones which social psychologists working with mainstream perspectives have ritually overlooked or ignored. Of course, placing femininity and women's alcohol use within such frameworks raises further issues and problems, which shall be addressed. Yet, it appears that doing so will allow analyses of women and alcohol presented here to progress considerably from many of those currently available. The following chapter shall turn towards those perspectives and frameworks the thesis is working within.

CHAPTER 4 - ACCOUNTING FOR SUBJECTIVITY, MULTIPLICITY AND POWER: PLACING WOMEN AND ALCOHOL WITHIN A FEMINIST POSTSTRUCTURALIST FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The discussion presented up to this point by the thesis is one which is calling for an analysis of femininity and women's alcohol use which i) treats this as socially meaningful, placing and understanding this within a wider socio-cultural framework, ii) accounts for the multiplicity of femininities, avoiding over-simplistic, unitary analyses and iii) allows for the notions of human agency, resistance and negotiation, whilst not underplaying the importance of power relations, ideologies and social control. The aim of this chapter is to now progress from this standpoint to address feminist theories of gender which inform the research and the political themes of contemporary feminism, concentrating upon work around femininity and sexuality, sexual violence and social class. As has been discussed in the previous chapters of the thesis, such themes are pertinent to understandings of women's relationship with alcohol and the ways in which women's drinking has been represented. The chapter then moves on to examine how this work has shaped contemporary feminist understandings of gender within social psychology, with a particular focus upon feminist poststructuralism or social constructionism. The chapter will explore how such an approach addresses many problems and limitations of the approaches discussed so far, and what this has to offer the study of femininity and women's alcohol use, for example, how this can facilitate the thesis in achieving it's aims. In addition, the chapter considers contemporary discursive analyses of gender (and drinking) which have been informed by such ideas.

The chapter concludes by adopting a theoretical position reflected here in the title: a feminist poststructuralist or social constructionist one. However, it must be noted that this position, although shall be defended, is not taken on without any reservations, and indeed, the problems with this are explored. For example, the chapter discusses the issues, problems and limitations associated with attempts to accommodate poststructuralism and feminism within a single project, along with possible responses to and ways of addressing such problems.

4.1 Feminist Understandings: Theoretical Background

In Britain, feminism, as a group of political and social movements, dates from the seventeenth century, although this is said to have a considerably more long-standing existence as a body of answers to questions about women (Humm, 1992). 'First wave' feminism (1700s - mid 1900s) was a long-lasting and diverse movement, although this is often characterised as being principally concerned with legal, educational and economic reforms which would grant more equal rights for women, including equal pay, laws on child assault and the widening of the electorate to include women (see chapter one). Yet 'second wave' feminism (the emergence of which is said to have been marked by de Beauvoir's 1949 text *The Second Sex*) in many ways has been more expansive, including an increased impetus to specify and give voice to women's experiences and needs, placing women at the centre of knowledge, as 'knowers' of inquiry and not objects (Humm, 1992).

The reader has been introduced to feminism previously in the thesis. For example, chapter one discussed the relationship between early feminism, the temperance

movement and drinking in order to trace women's relationship with alcohol and how an increased focus upon and the pathologisation of women's drinking can be understood as a backlash response to the Women's Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, chapters two and three discussed some forms of radical and liberal feminism in particular. However, as outlined in the introduction for the current chapter, the focus here will be placed more specifically upon important themes, issues and theories in feminism which are pertinent to the thesis and a contemporary understanding of women and alcohol.

Femininity and Sexuality

De Beauvoir (1949) argued that men have defined women as 'sex'. Similarly, MacKinnon (1982) points out that every element of the female gender stereotype is sexually charged. For example, 'softness', a gender trait associated with women, can be regarded as making reference to the female genitals and the pregnability of these by something hard. Consequently, many feminists have argued that a woman's identity is closely bound up with her sexuality, and indeed, Dworkin (1981) contends that a woman's sexuality *is* her (whole) identity. In addition, feminist writers have argued that the most vital and validated goods and services which women have provided in patriarchal, capitalist societies have been sexual in nature (Tong, 1989). As such, gender and sexuality have been regarded as closely bound within feminist theory (for an alternative approach, see Rubin, 1984[8]). In addition, both first and second wave feminists have recognised that the oppression of women is strongly tied to their sexuality (Humm, 1992). For example, a point which has long been emphasised within feminist theory is that although sexuality is often regarded as something which is

[8] Rubin (1984) argues that it is essential to separate gender and sexuality analytically in order do justice to their separate social existence.

private and which is 'owned' by the individual, women are often not in control of their sexuality, that this is something which is 'taken away' from them. As such, a major contribution which feminist theories have made here is a deconstruction of the idea that sexuality is a simple, private and 'natural' experience of men and women, taking this out of the private realm and highlighting sexuality as thoroughly political and socially constructed or mediated (see Vance, 1984; Millett, 1971).

For example, many feminist writers have pointed to the ways in which sexuality is mediated and controlled by social institutions and constructions of 'normative' sexuality and sexual expression (e.g. Rich, 1980). Indeed, the social control of female sexuality has characterised many debates within feminism (Gatlin, 1987). Sherfey (1976) highlights female sexuality as historically located and changing in her account of how (what she describes as) 'sexual freedom' on the part of women (i.e. free expression of sexual drives) was a feature of 'precivilization', and that it was not until a later point in history that such sexual drives were brought under control and regulation, which, according to Sherfey (1976), was done in the interests of the linchpin of modern patriarchal and capitalist orders: the family. A key concept here is reproduction or more specifically, the capacities of women to produce children. For example, French (1985) argues that over time, there has been an increasing desire on the part of men to control nature and because of their reproductive functions, women have come associated with this. But according to Rich (1977), women's reproduction and sexuality have become controlled primarily by making the family the main reproductive institution (others institutions such as the legal system, health care and organised religion in turn supporting the situating of normative sexuality and reproduction within the institutions of marriage and the family). This is in part illustrated by, for example, the writings of

those such as Rousseau in the eighteenth century, which explicitly advocated the family and women's maternal role within this as essential and appropriate constraints on the destructive force of female sexuality, which, according to Rousseau, would cause no end of evil (Rousseau, 1762). Rousseau (1762) regarded female sexuality as a potential threat to the new political and social order. Similarly, those such as Anderson (1974) and Harper (1982) discuss the social control of female sexuality, arguing that this has occurred as an attempt to minimise conflicts between a desire for sexual excitement and pleasure and the demands of normative femininity, marriage and family life. In addition, Rich (1977) argues that the patriarchal organisation of societies and the conception of childbirth as production has undercut pregnancy and birth as part of the entire process of female sexual experience (which includes a woman's growing sense of her own bodily sensations and orgasmic experience). Rich (1977) discusses how pregnancy and childbirth are deeply tied to sexuality and eroticism because the capacity for sexual tension and orgasm increases during pregnancy and women experience erotic sensations whilst giving birth. The central point which Rich (1977) is making is that there are strong cultural forces at work here which desexualise women and which lead to a denial of or guilt surrounding such feelings. In sum, the conception that bearing children is the singular most important productive function of women has led to an undermining and control of female pleasures (e.g. sexual pleasures of key concern here, but also other pleasures such as substance use – see chapter one).

Similarly, Rossi (1973) argues that '*the more male dominance characterises a Western society, the greater is the dissociation between sexuality and maternalism*' (p. 145). Rossi (1973) argues that the normalisation of heterosexual coitus and the restriction of women's sexual gratification to this (as a result, for example, of the institutionalisation

of the family) works to men's sexual advantage. For one, as argued by Rich (1977), men are threatened by relationships between women, and so the construction of a sexual connection between women as one which is 'abnormal' works in the service of patriarchy. In addition, according to Rossi (1973), the validation of penile penetration is the validation of a form of sexual activity which gratifies men, yet not necessarily women. This is an issue which has also been explored by Sherfey (1976) who argues that there is a gap between society's account of women's sexuality and women's own experiences of sexuality. This underlines the importance, as argued by feminist academics who contributed to what has become known as 'second wave feminism' (Humm, 1992), of exploring women's own experiences in ways which might problematise male defined sexuality and transform notions of female psychology, for example, by highlighting the idea that penile penetration may not be the most productive option in terms of women's pleasure (Donovan, 1985). Yet rather than this necessary leading to a re-evaluation of sexuality, as pointed out by Koedt (1973), this gap has often led to the labeling and pathologisation of women who fail to achieve sexual gratification through penile penetration as 'frigid' or 'sexually deviant', the problem being located by the medical, 'psy' and health professions as an individual one on the part of the woman, for example, as a failure to adjust to one's normative role in society as a woman.

However, the reproductive roles of women have contributed to their oppression in wider and often more direct ways than their desexualisation and the restriction of their sexual gratification to validated practices such as heterosexual penile penetration. It is due to this that an understanding of the relationship between women's reproductive roles and their physical and psychological oppression became a key aim of second wave feminism

(Humm, 1992). For example, Firestone (whose work *The Dialectic of Sex,* 1970, is cited as a major text of second wave feminism) argued that reproduction is quite simply the universal answer to the question of why women are dominated by men. She argues that the institutionalisation of women's reproduction has restricted opportunities for women to enter into the sphere of production and has defined their place within the home, thus determining their social inferiority and lack of economic status. Despite changes to women's roles (see previous chapter), what is regarded as the 'biological fate' of women still determines many young women's responses to their future roles and encourages their entry into part-time and low-paid work (see Griffin, 1985). In addition, Petchesky (1986) argues that women are treated as passive vessels which incubate and deliver children, yet points to hypocrisy of such Christian, patriarchal views in that simultaneously, women are held morally responsible for fetuses and children. For example, chapter one discussed how the most despised kinds of drinking women are those who drink whilst pregnant and those who have young children in their care, precisely because of this moral responsibility. According to Firestone (1970), women need to seize control of their own bodies and of reproduction (e.g. through artificial reproduction). However, those such as Rich (1977) argue that the problem is not reproduction *per se* and that the answer is not necessarily to control reproduction via technology (as Firestone argues). Rather, according to Rich (1977), motherhood can be an important source of great power and pleasure for women (e.g. the power to bear and nourish human life) - the problem lies in the social control and institutionalisation of mothering and reproduction, for example, men's possession of women's reproductive capacities as a means by which they make themselves immortal by producing 'heirs' and the 'illegitimacy' of a child born outside wedlock.

Perhaps the most prolific analyses of sexuality and its relationship to the oppression of women have come from the radical feminist school. The discussion has already addressed the desexualisation of women (e.g. as mothers). However, radical feminists also draw attention to the sexual objectification or the notion of women as objects of desire, which, according to those such as MacKinnon (1982), is at the core of women's oppression. For example, according to Dworkin (1981), there is an ideology of male sexual domination and male power (e.g. the power of owning) which posits that men are superior to women by virtue of their penises (this echoing Freudian conceptions of gender), that sex is about the conquest and possession of the female body and that this possession is a natural right of men. In addition, those such as Light (1990) who have examined constructions of femininity and sexuality within texts such as classic literature, have discussed how resistance on the part of women to have their bodies owned by men in this way are often punished, as illustrated for example by the murder of 'Rebecca' by her husband in Du Maurier's 1938 novel of the same name. Light (1990) argues that in the novel, Rebecca's murder is not only endorsed, it is celebrated. Within radical feminist accounts (e.g. those presented by Dworkin and MacKinnon), the institution of heterosexuality is characterised by relations of dominance and subordination between men and women, and as such, is regarded as deeply problematic for women. Suggestions range from the transformation of the institution of heterosexuality so that neither men nor women play a dominant role, to rejecting heterosexuality altogether in favour of lesbianism, celibacy or autoeroticism (Tong, 1989). For example, Bunch (1986) and Johnston (1973) have argued that women cannot be free of patriarchal control as long as they are sexually involved with men. In sum, from a radical feminist position, female sexuality is often regarded as virtuous between

women, but degrading in a heterosexual context, thus challenging normative sexual ideology (see Kaplan, 1990).

One problem here is that images of dominance and subordination have not only characterised heterosexuality. For example, many lesbians have embraced sadomasochistic practices, and indeed, there are a number of lesbian sadomasochistic organisations (e.g. Samois). However, groups such as Samois have been harshly criticised by members of the radical feminist community for mimicking heterosexual ideologies of male dominance and female powerlessness (Linden *et al,* 1982). In addition, within such radical feminist accounts, women are positioned as relatively powerless and one argument is that little room is left here for the notions of female desire, free will and personal choice. For example, by portraying sexuality as the site par excellence in which women are controlled and dominated, radical feminists risk a disavowal of any concept of heterosexuality (which feminism has regarded as problematic from the start - see Light, 1990), that allows for the pleasure, agency, and self-definition of women (Vance, 1984). For example, critics of radical feminism such as the socialist feminist Jaggar (1983) have argued that women do have the power to resist such relations of subordination and dominance as exemplified by the existence of feminism itself (a point also made by Cocks, 1984). But, according to Jaggar (1983), it is not just the ability to say 'no', but also to say 'yes', to engage in nonexploitative heterosexual relations. Jaggar (1983) criticises some radical feminists for dismissing the idea that heterosexual relationships can be characterised as such because of a belief that men are incapable of being anything other than exploitative.

In addition, many feminist writers have been concerned to present analyses of female sexuality which concentrate upon the potential power of this as opposed to focusing upon sexuality as a site of subordination. For example, like Rousseau (1762), feminists such as Jacobus (1979) regard female sexuality as potentially disruptive, for example, of dominant gender ideologies, but rather than advocating the control of this potentially disruptive force (as Rousseau advocates), celebrate this. Similarly, Lorde (1984) argues that female eroticism is a source of great power, creativity and pleasure for women. Like those such as Rich (1977), she discusses how female pleasure and desire have become culturally repressed through, for example, the opposing of the erotic to rationality in modern society (thus bearing similarities to Rich's argument that this has resulted through a desire on the part of men to control nature or those things which are diametrically opposed to rationality). As such, according to Lorde (1984), this source of power has gone unrecognised and unused by women. She argues that the perpetuation of oppression is partly dependent upon the corruption or distortion of such sources of power which can provide the potential for change. For example, Lorde (1984) argues that female sexuality has been presented to women as a sign of their inferiority and so women have been fooled into believing that it is through the suppression or control of this that they will achieve strength and power, which, according to Lorde (1984), is an illusion which has been fashioned within the context of male models of power. Consequently, she advocates a return to such repressed desires. However, how women are supposed to achieve this, particularly within a cultural context that aims to suppress the expression of such desires, and what precisely the nature or form and source of these are is unclear in her account. In addition, those such as Wollstonescraft (1975) have argued that the construction of women as sensual and erotic, as sexual beings (which she ascribes firmly to culture rather than nature) reinforce an already dominant and

enslaving sexual norm which, she believed, stifles the independence and potential (e.g. intellectual potential) of women. She regards 'female desire' as a projection of male lust which ensnares women to become dependent creatures and who at the same time have the illusion that they have acted independently. As such, sexuality and desire for Wollstonecraft (1975) are very much male centered constructions as opposed to anything natural, ones which produce an illusion of free will and which corrupt and degrade women. Cott (1978) points out that this position, one which denies that women are innately sexual, was adopted by many feminists during this period. What we have then is a number of tensions. Firstly, we have a tension between the idea that women possess some form of innate or 'real' sexuality which is potentially disruptive of social norms, and that sexuality is a social construction which serves to subordinate women. Secondly, we have a tension between the use of the notion of 'asexual' femininity (as Kaplan, 1990 puts it) as a radical sexual ideology (as used by feminists such as Wollstonecraft) and conservative sexual ideology (e.g. the desexualisation of mothers, as discussed earlier). Feminists such as Wollstonecraft (1975) could be accused of failing to shake off the moral and libidinal economies of the Enlightenment (Kaplan, 1990) and of reproducing the idea that sexuality is a sign of women's oppression, and so should be suppressed (which Lorde attacks). On the other hand, Lorde (1984) could be accused of reproducing the kinds of discourses which sexualise women which those such as Wollstonecraft (1975) are deeply critical of.

To summarise, major contributions that feminist theories have made to understandings of sexuality are a challenging of the notion that female sexuality and reproduction are merely biological, natural and unchanging, highlighting these, rather, as historical, social and political, and drawing attention to sexuality as a site of women's oppression

and subordination. For example, such theories draw attention to social mediations of femininity and sexuality and the larger contexts (e.g. patriarchal and capitalist) from which these arise. For instance, second wave and contemporary feminist theorists have been concerned with constructions of normative sexuality in ways which position men and women within unequal relations of power. Such instances include constructions of men as sexually active and initiating and women as passive and responsive, and the validation of penile penetration as the 'correct' and natural way to have sex, restricting the gratification of female sexual desires to this source (Koedt, 1973). In addition, feminists have highlighted how women are permitted to be sexual only at a certain time of life (Rich, 1977), specifically, before they become mothers. The result, according to Rich (1977) is that women cannot be both: mothers and sexual. Feminist writers have suggested a number of ways forward which include a rejection of heterosexuality, the seizure and control on the part of women of their own bodies and reproductive capacities (e.g. through artificial reproduction) and a transformation of normative understandings of female sexuality. One way in which the latter may be achieved is by deconstructing normative, dominant discourses around this, pushing forward alternatives meanings surrounding issues such as sexuality, intimacy and motherhood which position women in ways which allow them greater autonomy and power. In this way, according to Rich (1977), thinking around sexuality itself will become transformed. Other feminist writers have argued for the erotic empowerment of women through the rediscovery of their own sexual desires and needs, and further, the potential subversive power of their sexuality (e.g. Gatlin, 1987; Lorde, 1984). To some extent, the latter arguments can be regarded as essentialist in part as these appear to conceive of a 'true' sexuality which is emotional, physical or psychic (Lorde, 1984), as something which exists independently of how this is constructed in society. However, these

differential suggestions about ways forward are not necessarily incompatible. For example, Tong (1989) discusses how the socially constructed nature of sexuality and reproduction makes it difficult for women to identify with their own sexual desires and needs, and so in this sense, the rediscovery of ones 'true' sexuality and the deconstruction of restrictive and distorting constructions may inform and support one another. Radical feminists have argued that transformations in the ways in which we view sexuality is crucial if changes are to occur in other contexts (e.g. economic) because as long as male dominance and female submission is the norm in something as fundamental as sexuality, this will be the norm in other contexts as well (Tong, 1989).

Sexual Violence

This sexual objectification of women by men is tied to women's vulnerability to male aggression and violence. Violence against women, including battery and sexual violence (the startling discovery of the extent of this being a major characteristic of second wave feminism), according to those such as Brownmiller (1975) and Dworkin (1981), represents an institution of men's control over women and has become a major theme of contemporary feminist politics. Brownmiller (1975) points in particular to rape and the threat of rape, arguing that it this which enables men to control women, rather than women's reproductive functions and lack of control over these (as Firestone, 1970, contends). Brownmiller's (1975) grounds for presenting this as a form of universal oppression is that it is the *threat* of rape in particular which subordinates all women and therefore benefits all men implicitly. She argues that *'the male ideology of rape (is a) conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear'* (pp. 14-15). For those such as Brownmiller (1975), rape is not a crime of irrational, impulsive, uncontrollable lust, but rather a deliberate hostile and violent act of

degradation and possession designed to intimate and invoke terror. Similarly, Shafer and Frye (1986) argue that the aim of rape is to violate and destroy the victim's personal identity and the 'person-properties' which make this up (e.g. the ability to make choices and reason) and to inflict maximum harm upon them. Rape, according to Shafer and Frye (1986), makes a woman less of person by depriving her of her bodily autonomy and taking her sexuality from her. Such accounts challenge the idea that rape is about sex, presenting this instead as an act of power, degradation, destruction and violence. Those such as Griffin (1981) argue that the reason why the female body must be humiliated and controlled in such a way is because this is feared and hated by men because of it's power to inspire desire, need and vulnerability (from the infant who needs to mother's breast for nourishment to the arousal of sexual desire), and explains global violence as being connected to men's fear of rejection by women.

However, Elshtain (1981) has attacked such accounts of sexual violence, focusing in particular on the work of Brownmiller. She argues that Brownmiller's work can be read as suggesting that rape or the potential to rape is part of masculine identity, and that men who have not yet raped women or who fight against sexual violence are not being true to their identity. As such, this power over women defines men; it is the essence of manhood. Elshtain (1981) is thus concerned that such an essentialist analysis offers little in terms of potential for change, and argues that essentialism in any form has no place in the complex world in which we live. However, the extent to which Brownmiller's account can be regarded as such is debatable. For example, Brownmiller (1975) discusses the *ideology* of rape and how the threat of rape creates an atmosphere of fear amongst women. In addition, she discusses how sexual violence is legitimised legally and socially by a failure to define the rapist as an 'abnormal type' by, for example,

regarding this as an example of biologically male-constructed aggression (see chapter two). As such, Elshtain's (1981) accusations appear to be at least partially, an over-simplistic analysis of Brownmiller's (1975) work, as it is not clear that Brownmiller (1975) does conceive of sexual violence as an inherent and necessary part of masculine subjectivity *per se*. However, Brownmiller (1975) does conceive of rape as benefiting all men. Elshtain (1981) and Segal (1990) point out that such universalising accounts (e.g. all men as having similar vested interests) is problematic because if men are seen as a homogeneous gender group with similar vested interests in patriarchy, then the suggestions for change are pessimistic. In addition, such accounts which position all women as victims or potential victims of sexual violence can be regarded as attributing power to men whilst denying this to women and contributing to or reproducing the very climate of fear amongst women which these describe (e.g. White & Kowalski, 1994).

For those such as Brownmiller (1975), Dworkin (1981) and MacKinnon (1982), the problem of sexual violence is not confined to acts of physical force. According to Brownmiller (1975), this constitutes a grey area which includes activities and mediums which, quite often, are not recognised as sexually violent. In addition to rape, other forms of sexual violence include, for example, African female circumcision, Western gynecology, prostitution, sexual harassment and pornography (see Daly, 1978; MacKinnon, 1982). For example, Dworkin (1981) argues that the sexual degradation of and violence towards women has been supported through channels such as pornography and it is only through the designation of such sites as criminal or illegal that significant social changes can really begin to occur. Indeed, radical feminists have argued that because of the anti-female tone of pornography and the intentional degradation of women within this, this can be regarded as a form of sexual violence itself (Dworkin,

1981). For example, Tong (1989) highlights how pornography promotes the sexual harassment, rape and battery of women. However, it is not merely 'hard-core' pornography which presents images of the degradation of women. For example, Millett (1971) discusses how influential authors and intellectuals of the twentieth century such as D.H. Lawrence and Henry Miller wrote about and represented heterosexual eroticism in ways in which women are sexually humiliated and abused by men. Such constructions of heterosexuality, according to Millett (1971), were particularly powerful because of the reverence towards such authors and came to be taken as prescriptive rather than descriptive. As such, feminists have argued that such textual representations of gender and sexuality should be regarded as existing along the same continuum.

However, not all feminists are anti-pornography. The feminist case against censoring pornography is largely (though not exclusively) a liberal feminist case (Tong, 1989). For example, many adhering to liberalist ideologies have regarded women within pornography as sexually liberated, as taking control of their sexuality. In addition, liberal feminists have criticised radical feminists such as Dworkin and MacKinnon for employing terms which are vague and ill-defined, such as the phrase 'sexually explicit subordination of women' (Hunter & Law, 1985). For example, this could refer to a range of activities from rape to sexual intercourse which involves the man on the top and the woman on the bottom. Indeed, as pointed out already, many radical feminists do regard sexual violence as including such a wide range of acts. For example, Brownmiller (1975) discusses the psychological coercion of women into acts of intercourse which they do not desire and which they do not have the psychological ability to resist because of ingrained masculinist ideologies around the active male and passive female, as a form of sexual violence. In addition, Daly (1984) discusses how

representations of heterosexual desire within patriarchal culture are characterised by violence and what she describes as a 'slave morality'. What we have here is a blurring of the boundaries between normative constructions of heterosexuality and sexual violence. As concisely put by Coveney *et al* (1984) *'aggression and the "need" to dominate form a routine part of what is accepted as [normal] male sexuality'* (p. 9). According to Coveney *et al* (1984), male violence against women is normalised and legitimised in sexual practices through the assumption that when it comes to sex, men are by nature aggressive and dominant, and women are by nature passive and submissive. This illustrates the close connections between the current and previous section of the chapter, and indeed, it proved difficult to separate feminist work around sexuality and sexual violence in this way.

Yet, some liberal feminists argue that what is needed is clearer criteria for distinguishing between pernicious material and sexual activities on the one hand (e.g. the use of physical force) and non-pernicious depictions and activities on the other (e.g. the use of sexual persuasion). In addition, liberal feminists have argued that radical feminist arguments around sexual violence often fail to make a distinction between consent and nonconsent, by viewing heterosexual relations as largely coercive. Indeed, MacKinnon (1985) argues that consent is a fake concept, and similarly, Dworkin (1981) attacks such (as she puts it) 'leftist sensibilities' for promoting and protecting pornography through empty narratives of freedom and free choice. However, Tong (1989) points out that this can lead to the idea that women are incapable of consent and free-will which conflicts with feminist arguments against the paternalistic treatment of women in patriarchal cultures, because if free-will and consent are regarded as fake concepts, then how do we justify treating women any differently to children? The

problem with such individualistic concepts, according to those such as Lorde (1984), is that these can provide the illusion that sexuality doesn't always take place within a social context. Although Lorde (1984) attempts to account for female sexuality as a potential source of power for women (as discussed previously), she also attacks the individualism inherent within liberal accounts, arguing that sexuality permeates all of our lives. As such, even if we do regard 'consent' and 'free-will' as real, meaningful concepts, this doesn't necessarily disavow radical feminist arguments for regarding sites such as pornography as instances of sexual violence. Lorde (1984) argues that what we do has an effect on other people and to endorse degradation and violence within, for example, pornography (even if this degradation and violence is directed towards ourselves), is to affirm that the abuse of persons (women) is acceptable. Also, in her book *Beyond God the Father,* Daly (1973) discusses the subscription of women to images of victimisation, arguing that as long as this is the case, women will not thrive. As such, according to Lorde (1984) and Daly (1973), consent and subscription on the part of women to acts and images which could be regarded as degrading or violent should not be treated unproblematically, as this is to present an oversimplistic, individualistic analysis which neglects the ways in which sexuality is socially embedded. However, one problem with arguments presented by those such as Lorde (1984) and Daly (1973) concerns the location of responsibility. If we endorse such analyses, do women who subscribe to images and engage in acts which can be regarded as sexually degrading and violent become responsible for endorsing the sexual subordination of and violence towards women, or should these women be regarded as victims themselves? Responses would largely depend on the extent to which we accept the liberalist notions of consent and free will, because logically, if we reject such concepts (as many radical feminists do), we would accept the victimisation of such

women. However, if we accept the reality and meaningfulness of such concepts, yet insist (as Lorde, 1984 does), that sexuality is always socially embedded, then we must attribute a degree of responsibility.

Another argument which points to the complexity of such media representations of sexuality and gender is that people can distinguish between fantasy and reality and that people do not absorb such media representations unproblematically, but rather are active and interpreting agents who can take a range of different readings from these. For example, encounters (or rather interactions) with media material is a process in which social meanings are queried as well as endorsed, it is dynamic and open to change (e.g. Barrett, 1980). Tong (1989) points out how this is illustrated by the different reviews which critics have presented of sexually explicit material such as the film *Swept Away* which depicts scenes of rape, arguing that such interpretations are often context specific. In addition, there is mixed and inconclusive evidence surrounding the notion that violent images lead to violent actions (see Tong, 1989). However, one response to this is that pornography is harmful *itself* whether or not this triggers violent behaviour. Many media products depicting sexual violence (e.g. books, magazines, television programs, films) represent sites where harmful images of gender and sexuality are reproduced (e.g. women as dehumanised sex objects), the kinds of images which feminists are concerned to deconstruct, not least because these lead women to be regarded as second class citizens, as less than full persons (Tong, 1989). Such images of heterosexuality are played out in everyday contexts in subtle, yet harmful ways. For example, MacKinnon (1985) argues that images of sexual subordination and violence are presented to women by men as being what 'normal', sexually healthy women enjoy and do.

A final issue concerns men as victims of sexual violence. Feminist accounts of sexual violence have concentrated upon violence towards women. However, it has been pointed out that men are also raped, battered, sexually harassed and demeaned, deframed and degraded by media products such as pornography. MacKinnon (1985) has been particularly impatient with such criticisms of feminist analyses, arguing that these fail to recognise the obvious: that far fewer men than women are victims of sexual violence. For example, official statistics show that in 1997, 6,281 offences of rape against women and girls were recorded in England and Wales, in comparison to 347 offences committed against men (Home Office Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System, 1999). In addition, nearly 90% of cases of sexual violence towards women were committed by someone known to the victim, such as a current or previous partner or parental figure (Home Office Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System, 1999). One problem with such official statistics could be that men are less likely to report being raped or sexually assaulted due to dominant constructions of masculinity (e.g. that men who are victims of such crimes are weak, effeminate or must be homosexual). However, it is also likely that many acts of sexual violence towards women also go unreported, especially given that the majority of these are committed by a man known to the woman, such as a partner, and the humiliation and degradation which often follows the admittance of rape, for example, in courts of law where the victim's 'sexual morality' or 'virtue' is publicly questioned. As such, although official statistics are never accurate reflections of the extent of such crimes, it is highly unlikely, given those that are available, that sexually violent acts committed against men would be comparable to those committed against women.

In sum, feminists have challenged constructions of sexual violence as individual acts which are the result of uncontrollable lust, presenting instead wider analyses of the meanings surrounding sexual violence and the cultural forms which reproduce and legitimise sexual violence against women. Consequently, many feminists have argued that the solution is not to control sexual violence on an individual basis, but to examine and challenge those aspects of our culture and society which reproduce ideologies which advertently or inadvertently support sexual violence. As discussed, many feminists (e.g. radical feminists) conceive of sexual violence as existing as a continuum (which includes, for example, normative constructions of heterosexuality, pornography and sexual 'coercion') and there are ongoing debates within feminism surrounding the criteria used for defining acts and images as sexually violent ones. In addition, concepts such as consent and personal choice are ones which have been fiercely debated. On the one hand, such liberal concepts are ones which can lead to a slide into the kind of individualism which underplays the social context of sexuality and the consequence of sexually degrading and violent images (as Lorde, 1984 contends). However, at the same time, a denial of such concepts can be regarded as being in danger of a wholesale problematisation of heterosexuality (which has been attacked by those such as Jaggar, 1983), determinism and of amounting to a form of 'victim feminism' which underplays the power and free-will of women. Perhaps one solution here is retain the notion of sexuality as profoundly socially embedded, whilst allowing for the possibility of negotiation, resistance and the exercise of power on the part of women.

Gender and Class

Feminists such as Hartmann (1983) have argued that there is a long process of interaction between patriarchy and capitalism as exemplified by, for example, the

division of labour according to sex. In addition, socialist feminists have long criticised other brands of feminism (e.g. humanistic and psychoanalytic feminism) for neglecting class, which has become a central category for socialist feminist theory (Kaplan, 1990). Indeed, there has been a long (albeit often troubled) relationship between feminism and Marxism within the sphere of left-wing politics. However, many feminists have been dissatisfied with the ways in which Marxist analyses have subsumed feminist struggles into larger, more primary and important class struggles (e.g. Hartmann, 1984). Consequently, those such as Firestone (1970) have attempted to extend Marxist analyses to include the division of the sexes, arguing that what is needed is a sexual revolution which is much larger than and inclusive of a socialist one to truly eradicate *all* class systems. For example, many socialist and Marxist feminists have extended critiques of class presented by theorists such as Marx and Engels into a feminist history of the material and economic subordination of women, and have made major contributions to our understandings of interactions between gender and the economy (Humm, 1992). For example, those such as Costa and James (1972) have fought for the widening of classic Marxist theory to include many activities undertaken by women such as household labour, childcare and reproduction as valid forms of productive labour, activities which traditionally have not been regarded as such within the Marxist school (see Secombe, 1973; Benston, 1969). This engagement of feminism with socialism is, according to Humm (1992), one feature which has distinguished British feminism from American feminism, which has been more clearly marked by liberalism and radicalism. This is perhaps due to the myth of classlessness so dear to the heart of capitalist America (Lovell, 1990).

Moreover, those such as Rowbotham (1973) argued that the emergence of a socialist feminism depended largely upon a movement of working class women, because, according to Rowbotham, only working class women fully experience the double oppression of both capitalism and patriarchy, or the sexual division of labour both at work and in the home (Basnett, 1986)[9]. Similarly, feminists such as Petchesky (1986) have argued that oppression and barriers to freedom (e.g. reproductive freedom, as discussed earlier) are not experienced equally by all women in all places, but rather are felt more strongly by disadvantaged groups of women in society such as the poor and the working class, women of colour and immigrants. Petchesky (1986) challenges individualistic, bourgeois ideals of 'personal choice' in discussions of women's liberation, describing these as inadequate and empty of social content, a discourse situated within capitalist society and it's identification of the market as the ultimate locus of freedom. She argues that this doesn't mean abandoning a discourse of rights (e.g. a woman's *right* to choose), but that feminist theory needs to acknowledge not all women do have the freedom to make decisions about their lives, and that feminist accounts necessarily have to confront class and racial divisions in work, income, health care, childcare and so on. She argues that feminist theory needs to take account of difference in its discussions of the conditions of women and women's experiences in terms of class, culture, occupation and locale.

As such, what we have here is a challenge the notion that the female experience is a universal one, that forces of oppression affect all women equally and that certain groups of women such as working class women can make a special contribution towards the feminist movement. This represents an important challenge to the tendency on the part

[9] This presents something of a challenge to those such as Wollstonecraft (1975) who saw her own class (the rising bourgeoise) as the vanguard of the revolution.

of feminists in the 1970s to minimise differences between women (Humm, 1992). There is a tension here between an emphasis on difference and the belief that the domination of women by men is universal and that the feminine experience is a universal one. This then raises issues around the extent to which a consideration of gender should be given priority over an analysis of social class (as has been characteristic of much feminist work) or vice versa (as has been characteristic of Marxist theory). For example, Millett (1971) argues that sexual oppression is sturdier and more enduring than the domination of groups in society according to, for example, social class. Similarly, French (1985) believes that patriarchy is the paradigm par excellence for all modes of oppression and that sexism takes precedence over all others forms of 'ism', such as classism and racism. This is because sexual domination concerns the ownership of bodies (female bodies) rather than simply the modes of production and labour power (Hartmann, 1984; Barrett, 1980). In addition, it is not just the owners of capital/the middle classes who are involved in the subordination women, but all men, including working class men (Hartmann, 1983). Hartmann (1984) and Barrett (1980) point out that the oppression of women predates capitalism, and according to French (1985), the stratification of men over women had lead in time to other kinds of stratification, such as that according to social class, whereby an elite rules over people perceived to be closer to nature, savage, bestial and animalistic (e.g. as ruled by passion as opposed to reason). The reasoning behind this is that if it is possible to justify men's domination over women, then it becomes possible to justify any and all other forms of domination. Consequently, once sexism has been successfully challenged, all other 'isms' will come tumbling down as well (Daly, 1973).

However, feminists such as Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1990) argue that questions shouldn't focus on which one (gender, class and also ethnicity) is more important or 'real', as gender, class and ethnicity all affect and are affected by one another, as so each exists within the context of the others. Similarly, Kaplan (1990) argues that gender, class and race constitute one another and that they are a set of associative terms in a chain of meaning. For example, Poovey (1984) and Ware (1992) have argued that normative femininity has developed as a bourgeois sign which is based upon white, upper class ideals (e.g. surrounding 'correct' conduct, ease, restraint, calm, passivity etc.). The construction of the feminine ideal as frail and fragile has meant that historically, the physical forms of labour in which working class women have been involved have prevented this kind of femininity from being a possibility (Skeggs, 1997). As such, normative femininity becomes imbued with different amount of power (Ware, 1992), in other words, this can be seen as something which is 'owned' by white middle-class and upper-class women, while at the same time positioning black and working class women as 'other', as outside of the ideal. In addition, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1990) point out that in patriarchal societies, it is perceived as 'natural' that men occupy a higher economic position in the labour marker than women due to essential differences (e.g. men as naturally more competitive and dominant, women as more caring and nurturant). They argue that gender and class are enmeshed in such as way that we cannot prioritise, abstractly, any one of them. This idea that modes of production and social classes might be systematically gendered, rather than the dualistic notion that gender and class division and oppression represent two parallel systems which interact, is one which has long been presented by Marxist and socialist feminists (e.g. Beechey, 1979). One argument in response to this is that whereas, arguably, it is possible (albeit difficult) for people to change class position, this is not so for gender.

However, although a credible point, this is notion can be problematised. For one, someone from a working class background, despite entering into a 'middle class' profession (e.g. law, medicine, academia), may always carry the 'markers' of being working class such as a way of speaking or an unfamiliarity with middle class cultural practices. Conversely, it is in some cases possible to alter (to varying degrees) ones gender biologically (through gender reassignment), in appearance (dressing and passing as a member of the opposite sex) or by taking on roles traditionally associated with the opposite sex. Although in the two latter examples, the biological 'realities' of sex remain intact, gender encompasses more than merely anatomy.

Another argument which supports the idea that class and gender are not easily separated concerns the different ways in which, for example, gender relations, understandings of gender and experiences differ within different class contexts. Although sexual difference and the domination of men over women can be regarded as relatively universal, the forms that this sexual difference and domination takes vary historically, culturally and within different groups in a given society (Gelfland & Thorndike Hules, 1984). For example, even a cursory sketch of history shows that not all women are oppressed by all men in the same ways and to the same extent, and to suggest so is to ignore social class and race. To illustrate this, the discussion here shall draw upon two themes explored earlier: sexual violence and reproduction. For example, Tong (1989) cites the example of a poor, male, hired hand on a rich woman's ranch, arguing that to suggest that he is in a position of power over her because he has the physical power to rape her and is not oppressed by her even though she is paying him at best a subsistence wage, is to suggest something which can only be regarded as partially true. In addition, it was discussed earlier how feminists have pointed to women's reproductive capacities

as being the central source of their oppression in patriarchal, capitalist societies. However, Anthias and Yuval-Davis, (1990) argue that the concept of reproduction is a problematic one because this is not a homogeneous process, and that the class and ethnic position of women will necessarily affect their role in this process. For example, efforts to control reproduction are often concentrated on poor women and women from ethnic minority groups. For instance, the contraceptive injection Depo-Provera has been virtually exclusively administered in Britain to poor and black women (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1990). In addition, white middle class women often use working class women and women of colour to ease their own part in the role of reproduction by employing them as servants and child minders (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1990). As such, reproduction may play an important role in the subordination and control of women (as discussed earlier), but the extent and ways in which this occurs differs for different groups of women, and very often, women themselves participate in the process of subordinating and exploiting other women. Skeggs (1997) has suggested that one reason why (middle class) feminists often dismiss class as a redundant concept is because they wish to abdicate responsibility from the relations of inequality in which working class women and themselves are positioned. Burman (1992) argues that the consequences of this failure within feminist approaches to acknowledge diversity amongst women on grounds such as class threatens to mask power imbalances within the category 'women', not just between women and men (which may be, in light Skeggs' argument, to some degree intentional). Due to such considerations, Anthias and Yuval-Davis, (1990) argue that there can be no unitary category 'women'.

As a struggle against stereotypes of sexual differences or normative discourses around this has been a feature of feminist struggles from the beginning, a deconstruction of

universal and essentialist discourses around gender and a celebration of the experiences and identities of many types of women (Gelfland & Thorndike Hules, 1984) appears to be an important part of feminist struggles. For example, Rowbotham (1973) points to the ways in which the biological distinctness of women and abstract concepts such as 'feminine nature' have been represented and used in patriarchal cultures, for example, to deter organised resistance. Consequently, she rebuts the idea that we should be involved in a search to uncover and understand our 'true nature'. However, it is not merely conservative discourses which reproduce such ideas. Critics of radical feminism such as Jaggar (1983) and Cocks (1984) have criticised the positing within such accounts of a feminine psychology characterised by qualities such as nurturance and emotionality and a male psychology characterised by, for example, aggression and rationality (see chapter two). For example, Cocks (1984) argues that this reproduces definitions of women as Other which arose historically, in part, because of developments such the rise of positivist science, capitalism and the technocratic state, definitions which ultimately serve men not women. She describes this as a *'curious collusion'* between feminism and patriarchal culture (pp. 33-34). Rather, Jaggar (1983) rejects any essential and universal assertions about men and women respectively, for example, the idea that all men are victimisers and all women victims. Although feminists such as Jaggar (1983) are not dismissing the reality of male dominance, they are rejecting the use of grand narratives and singular models unproblematically by attempting to explain social relations in uniform ways when this does not reflect their complexity. Feminists such as Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1990) and Jaggar (1983) argue that British feminism has often failed to be attentive to the concerns of working class women and women of colour, but rather has largely represented the concerns and experiences of relatively privileged white women which are partial and particular in relation to the experiences of different class

and ethnic groupings in Britain (see also Attar, 1987; hooks, 1989; Segal, 1987; Fuss, 1989; Ware, 1992). Jaggar (1983) points out that for many women, classism or racism are experienced as being more oppressive than sexism and that feminism cannot liberate women unless it is expansive enough to include (amongst others) women of colour and working class women.

However, feminist accounts are not the only ones which have been criticised for presenting limited analyses of class and in addition, feminist critiques of Marxism have not been restricted to discussions of the ways in which this gives priority to social class over gender. For example, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1990) have criticised classic Marxist analysis for presenting an abstract model of class which focuses upon the economy, capital and the modes of production. They argue that class cannot simply be reduced to production as it's material basis in the same way that gender relations are not simply reducible to reproduction, therefore rejecting both biological and class reductionism. Rather, they highlight that in addition, social class (like gender and ethnicity) also has important experiential, representational and discursive elements that are historically produced and therefore changeable. For example, gender and class divisions are *defined* ideologically in terms of biological difference and modes of production respectively, rather than being determined as such. However, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1990) are careful to point out that this does not mean that the ideological nature of such divisions doesn't mean that they do not exist, nor that such divisions do not produce real material effects, but rather are challenging simplistic, essentialist readings of such divisions.

Similarly, Rowbotham (1973) criticised Marxism for traditionally ignoring the realm of experience, language, culture and the psychological consequences of subordination. This has led those such as Rowbotham (1973) to examine women's language and culture in terms of feminist politics, thus paving the way for contemporary feminist analyses which have similarly placed texts and language as central (as shall be discussed at in the following section of the chapter). Rowbotham (1973) contends that language is not only a powerful realm which exists above and beyond the self, but also that this is an instrument of domination. For example, she discusses how the oppressed such as women and the working classes often find themselves without words to articulate their discontentment and so this is held to be non-existent, and how the realm of language is closely guarded by superior groups precisely because this is a major means by which they conserve their supremacy and power. More generally, she argues that our perceptions and experiences of ourselves are mediated by the 'lens' which powerful groups have created, by an imposed reality which subordinated groups are unable to define and control. Similarly, scholars working within disciplines such as cultural studies, such as the members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University (the first major cultural studies department in Britain which was founded in 1964) have focused their attentions on (amongst other things) 'lived' working class culture and textual representations of gender and class, thus departing somewhat from orthodox left wing analyses, such as Marxist superstructure models (Lovell, 1990). For example, Kaplan (1990) argues that novels, poetry and drama (amongst others) contain particularly rich discourses in which the languages of gender and class are fused and in which the linguistic processes of the text construct and position subjectivity within these terms. For example, Light (1990) has discussed constructions of femininity within literature and other media consumables, such as

bourgeois models of femininity and sexuality which stress companionship and duty, and which define the institution of marriage as the only acceptable site in women can pursue sexual pleasure. As such, Light (1990) is illustrating how normative constructions of femininity and sexuality are not only saturated with class meanings, but also reproduce these meanings, ensuring their continuation. In sum, it was felt by many left wing scholars that partly because materialist Marxist criticism had not felt the full force of subjectivity and language, it has sliden into reductionism (Lovell, 1990).

However, Kaplan (1990) describes how many socialist feminists have been hesitant to identify texts as a central site for exploring class meaning and subjectivity because this seems to be moving too far away from 'real' economic and political determinations (Kaplan, 1990). However, Kaplan (1990) also highlights an alternative viewpoint which is that the material relations of class can be explored within discourse in meaningful and illuminating ways, in ways which are not achieved in Marxist economic analysis which reduces this to productive forces. For example, she argues that class needs to be understood, not just in terms of an economic overview, but also through an ensemble of often contradictory meanings, asserting the heterogeneous and contradictory nature of class. In addition, she argues that social-feminist cultural analyses can be productive in terms of identifying or describing the fusion of class and gender meanings in textual representation in ways which are not achieved through a consideration of people's material circumstances. However, at the same time, Kaplan (1990) argues that although texts such as literature are rich sources for exploring constructions of gender and class, these tell us less about how these meanings are *lived* by women and by working class women, and as such, feminist critics need also to turn to women's spoken discourse.

She argues that there has been a fierce and unresolved debate around issues concerning subjectivity and the representation of class within socialist feminism.

Finally, Marxist and socialist feminists such as Rowbotham (1973) and socialist historians (e.g. Stedman Jones, 1983) have stressed the importance of considering the historical specificity of relations between groups in society such as men and women and different social classes. This is particularly important in light of, for example, debates around the changing composition of social classes in modern capitalist societies. Stedman Jones (1983) argues for attention to be paid to differential constructions of 'class' within discourse and the unpacking of the concept in order to extrapolate different uses of the term (e.g. as referring to productive relations, culturally signifying practices, political or ideological self-definition etc.). As such, unlike many socialist theorists (as argued by Kaplan, 1990), those such as Stedman Jones (1983) have embraced the study of discourse as central to socialist agendas. This could be regarded as particularly important given the changing composition of social classes which renders traditional materialistic Marxist analyses problematic. Similarly, Rowbotham (1973) attacks the use of the term patriarchy for it's sweeping universalism and insensitivity towards the historical specificity, complexity and diversity of relationships between men and women and economic production (Basnett, 1986). Barrett (1980) points out that in the context of social changes, ideologies of gender or meanings surrounding masculinity and femininity have varied over the course of history and so should not be treated as if these were static, but rather, should be considered in the different historical and class contexts in which these arise. As put concisely by Kaplan: '*neither category – class or gender – was ever as stable as the ideologies that support them must continually insist'* (1990: 358). For example, as discussed in chapter two,

theories of innate difference between men and women have been used to deny women access to power and an active role within public life.

The ideas of socialist and Marxist feminists such as Rowbotham (1973) can be regarded as an important precursor to the 1990s shift towards the acknowledgement of diversity and difference between women on the grounds of factors such as social class (others including race, ethnicity and sexual orientation), thus disavowing the conviction of a single, universal feminine experience by drawing attention towards diversity within the category 'women'. As shall be explored in the following section of the chapter, many of these ideas have come to characterise much contemporary feminist and social constructionist work in psychology and furthermore, have informed this research. These include a recognition of texts and women's own words as important sites for the investigation of discourses around gender and class and the ways in which these are fused; the location of discourse and knowledge within different historical, cultural and social contexts; and a deconstruction of universalising and essentialist discourses around gender which neglect the diversity of femininities as mediated by, for example, social class. It is to such work and further exploration of these themes that the chapter shall now turn.

4.2 Feminism, Discourse and Power

As previously discussed, feminists such as Millett (1971) have argued that women's oppression derives not from biology (except in the patriarchal association of women with 'impure' nature), but from the social construction of femininity. Such ideas are at the core of feminist poststructuralist or social constructionist enterprises within

psychology (e.g. Wetherell, 1995). Traditionally, feminist work within psychology has tended to fall within the liberal humanist (e.g. Belenky *et al,* 1986) and dominant positivist, empiricist research traditions (e.g. Lykes & Stewart, 1986; Wallston & Grady, 1985) of mainstream psychology (see Wilkinson, 1997). However today, this encompasses both empiricist and social constructionist work (Wilkinson, 1996). The current thesis is written from the perspective of the latter, or more specifically what those such as Gavey (1989) and Weedon (1987) call 'feminist poststructuralism'. Weedon describes this as:

'A mode of knowledge production which use poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change.'
(Weedon, 1987: 40-41).

Poststructuralism or postmodernism (e.g. Gergen, 1988) is a theoretical orientation or movement which gained popularity in the 1970s and 1980s (Sampson, 1989) and which places the analysis of language, discourse and symbolic practices as central. For example, this highlights how 'reality' and subjectivity are constituted through such symbolic practices and often seeks to 'undo' or deconstruct common sense understandings. Poststructuralism has both influenced and been influenced by feminist ideas. For example, Humm (1992) points out that an important feature of feminism (particularly that which is often termed 'second wave' feminism) is that women's inequality has come to be regarded, not only as the result of social restrictions, but also as stemming from networks of meanings, not all of which are institutionally visible. For example, she argues that what has remained a constant throughout both the first and

second waves of feminism is that 'difference' has not been regarded an intrinsic part of our gender identity so much as an intrinsic effect of identity construction (e.g. language as based around a system of opposites such as 'man' and 'woman'). In addition Sampson (1989) points out that the view of self which is held central to critical and poststructuralist enterprises within psychology and which is radically different from that which characterises mainstream psychology (e.g. the self-contained individual), has been informed in part by feminist ideas. These include the interpenetration of (patriarchal) society and the individual; the ways in which people are constrained by ideologies which breed such things as racism and sexism (thus challenging bourgeois, psychological discourses around the self which attribute this with autonomy and freedom), and how ideologies (e.g. around masculinity and femininity) permeate the very core of personhood (e.g. Chodorow, 1978). As such, there is an emphasis here upon identity as a moral and political issue, not just a purely academic concern. Gavey (1989) and McNay (1992) also highlight how poststructuralism's insistence on the cultural and historical specificity of knowledge resembles long-standing concerns and assumptions of some socialist feminists (as discussed in the previous section of the chapter). At the same time, the usefulness of poststructuralist enterprises such as social constructionism (e.g. Antaki, 1988; Gergen, 1985, 1988; Henriques *et al,* 1984) and approaches to research such as discourse analysis (e.g. Burman & Parker, 1993) for feminism has been advocated by a number of theorists (e.g. Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1987; Wetherell, 1986; Hollway, 1989; Burman, 1991; Gill, 1993; Hekman, 1990). Yet, the relationship between poststructuralism and feminist politics is not an untroubled one (some tensions are addressed in the following section of the chapter). Also, feminist poststructuralism should not be regarded as unique and inconsistent with other feminist traditions (for reasons previously outlined).

Yet, those such as McNay (1992) have argued that the crossover between feminism and poststructuralism has been particularly vibrant and productive. Firstly, both poststructuralism and feminism have offered fundamental challenges to mainstream ways of thinking about gender, and hence, the problems associated with these. For example, both feminists (as discussed) and poststructuralist writers have deconstructed taken-for-granted knowledge such as that the categories 'men' and 'women' do really reflect distinct types of personhood, asserting instead that these are merely social constructs (e.g. Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1994). This is important for a number of different reasons. Firstly, this takes the feminist deconstruction, for example, of two rigid sex roles equated with biological sex a stage further by actually deconstructing the categories 'men' and 'women' themselves. Many theorists have argued that this 'taken-for-granted' – that people come in two sexes – is a political necessity for sexist oppression, as the category 'woman' functions as a marker of otherness and subordination within a patriarchal social system (e.g. Wittig, 1992). As such, by dismantling these categories, we can work towards ending that oppression (see Wilkinson, 1997). Questions then become not about the differences between men and women, but how these categories are constructed (e.g. through language and social interaction) in ways which benefit the powerful and maintain the status quo, for example, how these are *constructed as different.*

Thus, language becomes an important site for investigating the maintenance or reproduction of unequal power relations between men and women. There is a long history of feminist concern with language from the nineteenth century onwards (see Cameron, 1990 for a review), particularly it's connection with oppression (Gill, 1995),

and in recent years, feminists have investigated, not only how some discourses become privileged, dominant or normalised at particular times, but also how these are used to serve the interests of powerful groups and position people in problematic or oppressive ways. For example, Willott and Griffin (1997) demonstrated how men who are relatively powerless in terms of status and income (unemployed men) continue to affirm relations of inequality between themselves and their female partners by drawing upon traditional discourses of masculinity which position women within the home, and men outside of domestic spheres (e.g. in the pub). Similarly, as discussed in chapter two, feminists have drawn attention to discourses which construct women as passive and nurturant and how these are drawn upon to support arguments that women are more 'naturally' suited to caring roles, which again positions them within domestic spaces, excluding them (whilst at the same time justifying their exclusion) from spheres of life (e.g. careers) where bipolar characteristics such as dominance and assertiveness are valued (White & Kowalski, 1994; Day *et al,* 2003b). In addition, as previously discussed, feminist analyses of sexuality have considered how heterosexual practices are socially constructed in a way which positions women as passive and responsive, and men as active and initiating (e.g. Gavey, 1988; Jackson, 1978; MacKinnon, 1983; Hollway, 1984; 1989). Hollway (1984) and Gavey (1988) argue that discourses around sexuality which construct heterosexual practice as such are drawn upon in order to legitimate behaviour by men in our culture such as sexual coercion and rape. These are just a few examples of feminist research which has highlighted how gender discourses often position women within unequal relations of power with men, in ways which limit their access to power, and further, in ways which can have negative (often dangerous) consequences for them.

However, it has been demonstrated by those such as the Russian analyst Voloshinov (1973) and Foucault (1979) that such discourses can come into contention and struggle, with alternatives competing for dominance in a particular field. As such, normative discourses are constantly under the threat of subversion from the mobilisation of counter-discourses. Taking up such ideas, feminists and critical social psychologists have contended that people can and do negotiate the subject positions and challenge the power relations that knowledge and discourse create (e.g. by subverting these through the mobilisation of alternative discourses), especially where these are perceived to be oppressive (Kitzinger, 1987; 1989). In this respect, women are accredited with some agency which is important given the criticisms which have been levelled at some feminist accounts (e.g. radical feminist) that these position women as victims of patriarchy and offer a pessimistic view of the possibilities for change (as previously discussed). For example, such ideas can be highly beneficial to feminists who wish to move away from so-called 'victim feminism', stressing instead that women do have agency and (some) access to power (e.g. Roiphe, 1993; Paglia, 1992). Rather, stressing the socially constructed and contestable nature of knowledge, and giving credence to women's active resistance against patriarchal power, opens up possibilities for positive action and social change (e.g. Grint & Woolgar, 1994; Butler, 1992). For one, from this viewpoint, discourses which are utilised in oppressive ways, which attempt to pass themselves off as self-evident, become the subject of serious deconstruction (Gill, 1995). Further, language becomes a crucial site, not only of the reproduction of unequal power relations, but also of negotiation and resistance, and as such, discourses can be seen as a valid focus for forces of social and political change (e.g. Burman & Parker, 1993). Indeed, one area of concern for social psychologists with political commitments such as feminist and Marxist social psychologists has been to highlight, bring into

greater visibility and operationalise such marginalised and subversive discourses and forms of identities that these constitute. For instance, research has drawn attention towards the gradual emergence of alternative discourses around and representations of femininity (and more recently masculinity) which are gaining more ground, and which challenge traditional (e.g. essentialist) conceptions of gender (see Gough & Edwards, 1998; Connell, 1995; Chapman & Rutherford, 1988; Lees 1997; Willott & Griffin, 1997; Edley & Wetherell, 1997). As such, there is an emphasis here upon possibilities, thus avoiding closure with respect to understandings of gender (see Wetherell, 1995). The current research recognises that talk around alcohol consumption may represent a site where women can exercise resistance to traditional discourses around and images of femininity, for example, by constructing themselves as 'hardened' drinkers who can keep up with the lads, and by dominating traditionally masculinised spaces such as the pub. In sum, it seems that this view of language (e.g. as constructive, reproductive and subversive) has more to offer in the way of analytic potential and possibilities for social change, than more realist feminist views of language as simply reflecting inequalities which reside elsewhere (e.g. Gill, 1995).

Further, the notion of discourses as fragile and transient allows for analyses of patriarchy and power relations as shifting and located as opposed to universal and static (a criticism which is often made of traditional role theories – see chapter three). As argued in the previous section of the chapter, feminists (e.g. socialist feminists) have pointed out that forms of patriarchy do mutate and change as we move through history. For example, Walby (1990) argues that we have moved from a situation of 'private patriarchy' (women directly controlled by fathers and husbands) to a new, modernised form of 'public patriarchy', whereby women are no longer strictly excluded from public

life, but are segregated within this (e.g. women as pushed to the peripheries within public drinking spaces). It also appears that analyses which can account for such shifts and which are historically located are vital in order for feminism to remain currently relevant. For example, researchers have highlighted how feminist analyses (e.g. those taken as representing the 'second wave' of feminism) are often dismissed by young women today as being outdated or irrelevant to their concerns, and as such, today's young women are turning away from or failing to identify with feminism (see Frith, 1994; Griffin, 1989; Percy & Kremer, 1995). One major strength of the current research is that feminine subjectivities and gender relations are situated very much in the current context, representing a contemporary analysis.

Another important feature of constructionist feminist work has been an embracing of the diversity of gender identities. As previously discussed, feminists (e.g. socialist feminists) have argued that analyses of femininity need to regard this as situated, multiple and diverse. For example, much feminist psychological work which shares the liberal humanist assumptions of the mainstream (e.g. Belenky *et al,* 1986) often (at least implicitly) regards women's experience as being universal as well as transhistorical, therefore regarding this as an essential entity (Gavey, 1989). However, there is a body of contemporary constructionist feminist work which has further contributed to the recognition and understanding of the different experiences of women from various backgrounds, thereby continuing to deconstruct the notion that women represent a unitary and coherent group with common issues and goals (Wilkinson, 1986; 1996). This work has demonstrated how gender is intertwined with other social categories and identities, such as race and ethnicity (e.g. Bhavnani & Phoenix, 1994), class (e.g. Walkerdine, 1996a, 1996b), sexuality (e.g. Kitzinger *et al,* 1992), and even, for

example, regional identity (e.g. Griffin, 1989) producing distinct forms of femininity. Further (and of central importance to the current research), writers such as Tomsen (1997), Burns (1980), Tomlinson (1990), Waterson (2000) and Canaan (1996) have drawn attention to leisure activities such as alcohol consumption as a site where political, sexual and class identities (in addition to gender identities) are played out, thus demonstrating the complexity of masculinity and femininity, disturbing these as unitary categories. However, such existing studies (particularly with respect to class identities) have tended to concentrate upon men and masculinity, and there is little currently available research which situates different forms of femininity within drinking contexts. This is an ommission in the existing literature which the current research project aims to address.

However, in addition, recent analyses have used language and discourse as a site for the investigation of working class femininities. It was discussed previously how socialist feminists (e.g. Kaplan, 1990) have pointed to the usefulness of textual analyses for investigating the fusion of class and gender meanings. More recently, those such as Skeggs (1997) and Walkerdine (1996b) have argued for a reinstatement of social class within feminist social theory, relating this to issues around identity construction and investment in the subject positions created by discourse, thus progressing from previous structural or social stratification analyses (e.g. Breugel, 1979; Brenner & Ramas, 1984) and concerns with positivistic, accurate measurement of this (see Crompton, 1993 for a summary of debates). Indeed, the latter has been cited as one important reason why some feminist theorists have avoided class (Crompton, 1993; Skeggs, 1997). For example, those such as Blackman (1996), Skeggs (1997), Hill (1986), Kuhn (1988) and Nead (1988) have examined historical as well as recent social constructions of working

class femininity (as generated and reproduced by the 'psy' disciplines and professions, British political and popular discourse) which define this as different, dangerous and pathological. In particular, such theorists have pointed to middle class constructions of (white and black) working class female sexuality as particularly deviant and threatening to social order and the liberal humanistic pursuit of a more civilised society (e.g. Skeggs, 1997, Weeks, 1981, Gilman, 1992, Ware, 1992; see also discussion around gender and class presented previously). However, Finch (1993) also points to the drinking behaviours of the working class as being an area of middle class observation and concern, as being a focus of the 'middle class gaze'. The positioning of black and working class women as such can be seen to have had a number of consequences. For one, black and working class women have come historically to forge discourses around femininity that continually and dramatically challenge prevailing notions (e.g. see Davis, 1995 for a discussion of notions of femininity forged by African-American women). Further, it seems that women of colour and working class women are not only positioned by more general discourses around femininity (e.g. as the inferior Other to masculinity) in ways which limit and constrain their lives, but are further subjected to marginalisation through the use of discourses which construct their subjectivities, leisure activities and lifestyles as pathological and inferior to white middle class femininities.

In sum, this section of the chapter has reviewed contemporary feminist social constructionist or poststructuralist work which has developed many of the arguments and which has contributed to the efforts of much second wave feminism. Firstly, this body of work has taken the social construction of gender as it's central focus, thus challenging essentialist understandings of gender, the importance of which has been

outlined and argued. For example, essentialist conceptions of gender (both within conservative and radical discourse) have been criticised by the thesis for supporting the status quo and offering a pessimistic view of the possibilities for social change. Secondly, feminist poststructuralist work has recognised language and discourse as crucial sites for not only the investigation, but also the resistance of asymmetrical relations of power. The recognition of language as central to the oppression of groups in society is not a new one and is not unique to feminist poststructuralism (as discussed). However, feminist poststructuralists have taken the project of the study of discourse and power relations on board productively, whereas other feminists such as socialist feminists have been hesitant (Kaplan, 1990). Finally, poststructuralist feminists have embraced the diversity of femininities, examining the construction and negotiation of diverse forms of femininity within discourse, and have produced studies of femininities as mediated by class in ways which avoid the materialistic and superstructure models of traditional class analyses (e.g. Marxist). In short, these have addressed criticisms which have been levelled at such traditional accounts, for example, their neglect of language and representation as important elements of class. However, the marriage between poststructuralism and feminism (like that between Marxism and feminism) has not been an untroubled one, and the feasibility of accommodating the two has been fiercely debated, as the next section of the chapter investigates.

4.3 Poststructuralism and Feminism: Some Tensions Explored.

As outlined, some feminists have highlighted unresolved theoretical tensions between poststructuralism and projects explicitly concerned with social transformation such as feminism, questioning how far feminists can really drawn upon poststructuralist thought

(see Lovibond, 1992; Soper, 1990; Jackson, 1992; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995; Gavey, 1989; Burman, 1991; Gill, 1995; McNay, 1992; Nicholson, 1990; Butler, 1990). Criticisms have largely centred around the deconstruction of grand narratives and the theoretical commitment to relativism within poststructuralist approaches, which are argued to disavow the grounds for a feminist politics (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995). For example, Parker (1992b) argues that relativism leads to:

'A passive, cynical and ultimately obstructive view of politics.'
(Parker, 1992b: 25).

For instance, the poststructuralist contention that there is no real, objective truth (anti-essentialist and anti-realist approach) makes it difficult to argue for a particular version of reality (Parker, 1992b), for example, women's universal and ongoing oppression and subordination, as such world views come to regarded as provisional and susceptible to deconstruction (Edwards *et al,* 1995). As the reality of women's oppression is argued to be a core concern of feminism, according to those such as Kirkup and Smith-Keller (1992), this has more in common with the goals of science than with a poststructuralist theoretical tradition which challenges it's very claims to produce knowledge. This is not to mention the disconcertion and fear instigated by the view that power determines which discourses and practices become normalised and dominant (e.g. promotion and reproduction on the part of powerful groups) for people who would like to believe that reason will triumph, and for those in society who lack power (Flax, 1987). Further, the poststructuralist deconstruction of the category 'women' and stress upon the diversity of feminine subjectivities and subject positions (e.g. by highlighting the importance of class, race, ethnicity and sexuality as mediating femininities), has caused concern for

feminists who point out that this can lead to the denial of any common interests among women and single feminine identity around which to organise struggle (see Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995). Also, a refusal or reluctance on the part of women to make an identification with feminism may be a sign of an inability to position oneself as a feminist because of confusing and contradictory messages about what feminism actually is, due to such fragmentation (see Griffin, 1989). In sum, it is argued that such approaches to phenomena render taking a political stance, promoting values and beliefs and mobilising organised struggle highly problematic (this being at the heart so to speak of feminist agendas).

However, feminist writers such as Skeggs (1997) have argued that such fragmentation and the embracing of diversity, although not often recognised as such, is positive in that this has provided women with many different ways to be a feminist. Further, some writers have challenged the contention that accepting a relativist position means abandoning values and beliefs (e.g. Bruner, 1990; Gergen, 1985; Edwards *et al,* 1995; Sampson, 1993; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Gavey, 1989). Indeed, other feminists have argued that questions of value are inescapable and so should always be embraced and addressed (e.g. Soper, 1991; Butler & Scott, 1992). For example, Bruner (1990) argues that what is lost is not values but 'authorial meanings' or some final authority which can decide the truth outside of argument, dialogue, debate and discussion. In other words, those adhering to a poststructuralist orientation can have values and political commitments, but must be aware that there is no sure way of guaranteeing or fixing them, or convincing others of their truth (Gavey, 1989). As such, those such as Gill (1991) have argued that a 'politically informed relativism' which holds values, commitments and politics at the heart of accounts in the absence of ontological

guarantees, can act as a principled foundation for feminist discursive analyses (thus emphasising the importance of reflexivity in poststructuralist and feminist accounts – see following chapter). Similarly, those such as Kitzinger (1986) and Gavey (1989) have argued that feminist theory and research should be assessed in terms of it's utility in achieving politically defined goals, rather than it's 'truth value', as there is no necessary connection between the quest for truth and social transformation anyway (Gill, 1995; Edwards *et al,* 1995; Flax, 1992; Butler, 1992).

Further, feminist poststructuralists tend to concentrate their focus upon struggles within specific sites, attempting to deconstruct and challenge dominant discourses and power relations within and open up spaces for debate, rather than producing overarching solutions to patriarchy. It can be argued that such a concentrated focus is perhaps more effective than attempting to change the world overnight, and is not inconsistent with an embracing of multiple feminine subjectivities which exist within such sites. Also, although those such as Spivak (1989) and Gavey (1989) rightly point out that the essentialist category 'women' can be used tactically in order to anchor the network of gendered meanings which research produces, and avoid slippage into an overindulgent poststructuralist analysis of inconsistent multiple meanings, theorists should proceed with caution here. Attempting to establish a (fictional) universal feminine identity which is entirely distinct from masculinity can easily lead us back to the kinds of deterministic and pessimistic essentialist theories around gender which have been so heavily criticised by gender commentators, and so in the long run, may do more harm than good. Also, who decides what these common interests are, and what the 'true' feminine identity constitutes? This view not only incurs essentialism but also imperialism, the authority of (white, middle class) academics to speak for womankind as a whole and set the feminist

agenda (Spelman, 1988), an authority which is understandably strongly contested and challenged by, for example, women of colour[10] and those from working class backgrounds.

Further major concerns with regards to poststructuralist forms of feminism centre around the status that is afforded to the 'extra-discursive', that is, material beyond the texts which are being analysed (Hollway, 1995). This can mean the 'exterior' world of social practices and their material effects, or the 'interior' world of subjectivity (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995). For example, it appears that the anti-humanist decentring of the individual within poststructuralist accounts fails to give priority to women's individual subjective experiences, such as sexual desires and the emotive experience of being a woman, as this is approached within poststructuralist frameworks on a more social (less psychologised) level. In other words, such experiences are regarded as collectively constituted by available discourses around femininity, sexuality etc. in contrast to humanist approaches which regard such experience as existing above and beyond language (see Wetherell, 1995). This view of subjectivity causes particular problems when incorporated into a feminist framework, as feminist approaches commonly give priority to the rediscovery, reclaiming and validation of women's personal and unique experiences (Marcus, 1987). Others such as Gill (1995) firmly locate this concept of the extra-discursive in the social world, this referring to material and social realities which can be conceived of existing outside of language and discourse, such as the physical environment, institutions, technology and practices such as the division of labour (Wetherell, 1995). Those such as Gill (1995) and Parker (1992a) argue that the emphasis within discursive approaches upon language and the

[10] For fuller critiques of feminism's ethnocentrism – see Joseph & Lewis (1981); Amos & Parmar (1984); Bryan *et al* (1985); Spillers (1984); Bhavnani (1989) and hooks (1989).

micro-politics of power down plays macro-structural inequalities and the way power installs itself to produces real, material effects. For example, if discourses (and the asymmetrical power relations that these maintain) are constantly under the threat of subversion through active resistance and are ever changing (as discussed), how do we explain the continuity of male domination in society? Such said inadequacies in feminist poststructuralist theory beg an analysis of unequal relations of power as existing above and beyond the discursive realm, for example, as located in certain social and economic structural arrangements. In this sense, power comes to be regarded as more material (not just as residing in discourse), operating in ways which lay down important restrictions upon the variety of ways open to us to construct ourselves and the world and our possibilities for resistance (e.g. Foucault, 1988; Parker, 1992a). Such an approach to power, which remains sympathetic to social constructionism whilst developing a more realist position, is sometimes known as 'new realism' or 'critical realism' (e.g. Parker, 1992a; Bhaskar, 1989), which Parker (1992a) views as necessary for a critical social psychology aimed at bringing injustice and oppression into visibility, and working towards changes that improve social arrangements and foster human emancipation.

For example, Parker (1992a) points to the division of labour in Western capitalist economies as offering a partial explanation for the continuation of gender inequality. He notes that workers (often men) are located together in the workplace whereas women are located in the home, isolated from one another. This set up means that 'masculinised' discourses around solidarity and fraternity are likely to emerge, whilst at the same time it is less likely that such discourses will become available to women, making collective action to alter their position more difficult. This is an interesting concept when considered in relation to women and alcohol. For example, women's

increasing presence within public drinking spaces together as a gender group could signal an (increased) emergence of discourses around female solidarity at an everyday (rather than academic) level, and an increased threat to patriarchal practices, such as those which position women within domestic spheres. Similarly, as discussed in the previous chapter, accounts have related changes in the drinking patterns and habits of women across the globe to changes in local educational and economic structures (Moore, 1995; Cardenas, 1995; Kua, 1994; Medina-Mora, 1994), for example, women's increasing entrance into the labour market as providing them with greater opportunities to drink. Again, such work points to the importance of considering wider structural organisational patterns, changes within these and ensuing economic realities in analyses of women and alcohol.

Further, when considering forms of femininity, it is again important to consider how these are situated within wider structural organisations and the realities of occupying those positions. For instance, to take class as an example once again, it is difficult to ignore the structural organisation of a classed society and the economic realities of being working class. Skeggs (1997) contends that the division of labour and the provision of education designed to allocate working class people within certain spheres of work (e.g. working class women as 'trained' for underpaid or unpaid caring occupations), restrict and limit the access that working class people have to economic and material resources. As such, Skeggs (1997) points out that analyses of class need to take account of such material and structural realities, as well as conceiving of class as being a discursive and subjective phenomena.

However, Wetherell and Potter (1992) argue that drawing an ontological distinction between the discursive and the extra-discursive is a mistake, both methodologically and epistemologically. Although those such as Parker (1992a) do not construct a false dichotomy between the 'extra-discursive' and the discursive as such, the conception of the former as existing beyond or outside of language (indeed the very term itself) does imply separability. Gavey (1989) argues that feminist poststructuralist approaches do maintain an emphasis on extra-discursive issues such as institutional practices and the material bases of power by implicating these in the maintenance of discourses and power relations, for example, normative discourses around femininity and unequal relations between men and women as being reproduced in the interests of a patriarchal, capitalist social structure. As such, the discursive and extra-discursive are treated as deeply interrelated. However, feminist poststructuralists generally do not view the positioning of women within social structures and institutions as deterministic and immovable, allowing for some conception of agency (as previously discussed). For example, a British societal structure stratified in accordance with material possessions, received education, occupation etc. gives rise to discourses and practices which position working class women in certain ways, but how they occupy these positions can vary (Skeggs, 1997). Yet at the same time, feminist poststructralists also reject the liberal humanistic idea (criticised previously) of complete free-will or choice, acknowledging that people have circumscribed access and movement between subject positions, and are seriously constrained by social practices which are located within wider structural frameworks and institutions. What we have here is an approach which acknowledges that women are positioned, but at the same time contends that women can resist and negotiate (as well as embrace) those positions.

This argument around inseparability can also be applied to the 'interior' extra-discursive realm of desires, emotions, fantasies etc. also. Those such as Harré (1983, 1989) have argued that our understandings and experiences of ourselves are laid down by the discursive resources that are available to us in our culture and so such feelings, however 'overwhelming', are always inevitably identified, labelled and constructed through already available discursive categories and signifiers (e.g. Wetherell, 1995). As such, one possible argument here is that we have had little choice but to understand ourselves in terms of concepts pertaining to emotion and desire which have become pervasive in our language, as a means of giving our actions and experiences structure and meaning (Burr, 1995), for example, discourses around masculinity which construct men as dispassionate, unemotional etc. (Gough, 1998). As such, once again, there is a powerful argument here against the treating of such phenomena as independent or 'extra'. Also, Weed (1989) points out that the prioritising of experience within feminism has blocked ways of disrupting the subject/society dualism, a dualism which is strongly contested by poststructuralist enterprises. As discussed, these writers have contended that our experiences (however personal these may appear) are always constituted socially, through the discourses and categories which are discursively available to us in order to understand and interpret these, and so are not unique, individual creations. To complicate matters here, the distinction between 'interior' and 'exterior' forms of the extra-discursive also appears, to some degree, to represent a false dichotomy, as the construction of certain practices (e.g. heterosexual) as being the product of subjective experience (e.g. romantic desire) is a product of, and at the same time perpetuates, wider institutions and practices (e.g. marriage, patriarchal society etc.). In sum, language (as argued) does not merely play a reflective role, but constitutes (and so is pivotal to the nature of) what is being described here as the 'extra' discursive.

In summary, although an effort has been made here to address and respond to some of the criticisms that have been levelled at poststructuralism and it's usefulness for feminism, debates will not be resolved by the thesis (if ever). Further, the focus upon points of tension and conflict between feminism and poststructuralism should not be regarded as a purely negative assessment. The pursuit of what Skeggs (1997) describes as a 'feminist purity', rather than embracing fragmentary forms of feminist theory and activity, threatens to bring closure to feminist debates, incur a failure to sustain reflexivity, and lead to the wholesale rejection of theoretical approaches (e.g. poststructuralism) and approaches to research (e.g. discourse analysis) which can be highly beneficial to feminism (Squire, 1995). Rather, the uncovering of tension and conflict brings into view some vitally important issues and the critical examination of some of the central concepts that feminists have worked with, such as the notions of a unitary feminine identity and universal feminine experience, considering what the implications of these are for conceptualising the lives of, for example, black and white working class women (Skeggs, 1997). In this respect, the debate between feminism and poststructuralist theory is pushed onto new and challenging ground.

4.4 Final Remarks

It is anticipated that the thesis will highlight and demonstrate the usefulness of a study of discourse and representation for feminism. However, there are a number of issues which will be ongoing throughout the thesis, and which are revisited in the thesis's final chapter as grounded in the analyses generated. For example, some of the major tensions between feminism and poststructuralism have been explored here. Indeed, feminist

psychologists who pitch their work within a poststructuralist framework and use discourse analysis also have to take on and acknowledge such inconsistencies and points of conflict between these approaches and a feminist perspective. As such, the final chapter will consider how productive the approach of the research and the interpretation of data has been in this instance for a feminist politics. The following chapter shall now extent discussion around the aims of the research and the methodological approach taken.

CHAPTER 5 – EXPLORING CONSTRUCTIONS OF FEMININITY AND WOMEN'S ALCOHOL USE: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Introduction

Whereas the central aim of the previous chapter was to establish a theoretical position, this chapter now turns towards a discussion of the methodological approach of the research. In other words, given the central aims of the research (as outlined in chapter one of the thesis), the discussion here extrapolates how the research can proceed in order to investigate these concerns. It must be stressed that the present chapter should not be regarded as separate from the previous one, as a departure from theoretical, philosophical and political debates and issues, as theory, politics and method are so deeply interrelated (e.g. Klein, 1983). For example, shifts in ideology and the basing of understandings on different conceptual foundations must necessarily be accompanied by changes in research practice (e.g. Mies, 1983). As Rist argues, when we speak of methodologies:

'We are in the final analysis speaking of an interrelated set of assumptions about the social world which are philosophical, ideological and epistemological. They encompass more than simply data gathering techniques' (1977: 62).

As such, the methodological approach of the research can be regarded as one which is largely informed by the pitching of the research within a feminist poststructuralist framework (see previous chapter). Whilst extrapolating the overall methodological

approach in the first section of the chapter, discussion of 'new paradigm' and feminist re-conceptualisations of the research process (e.g. those espoused in traditional psychology) and subsequent approaches to doing research is also presented, for example, by means of illustrating the ways in which these ideas and practices have informed the current research project. The chapter then moves on to introduce the reader to the reasoning behind and aims of the two major research studies conducted, whilst providing some further background literature pertaining to the methods employed and discussing some existing studies which have taken a similar approach. Methodological procedures pertaining to the research studies (e.g. the processes involved in the selection and production of texts) are further unpacked in the empirically-based chapters devoted to discussion of these studies. The thesis's discussion of methodology has been structured in this way for two major reasons. Firstly, to include all discussion of methodology in one chapter would have rendered this highly cumbersome. Secondly, situating discussion of methodological processes in the empirically-based chapters will allow the reader to consider discussion around results in the context of the how these emerged. In short, this chapter can be read as one which introduces the reader to the overall methodological approach and direction of the research, whereas the empirically-based chapters will provide the reader with more specific details pertaining to the processes involved in each research study. The chapter then turns to a more detailed discussion of discourse analysis (e.g. Burman & Parker, 1993; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Parker, 1992a; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The previous chapter briefly introduced this as an approach to research which is becoming of increasing importance to feminist approaches in psychology (e.g. Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1987; Wetherell, 1986; Hollway, 1989; Burman, 1991; Gill, 1993). This chapter engages in a rather more 'technical' discussion around discourse analysis, examining this field more closely and exploring

variability within. In particular, the chapter examines the form or approach to discourse analysis primarily used here: poststructuralist or Foucauldian discourse analysis (Burman & Parker, 1993), exploring and justifying it's usefulness in this instance, as well as considering some associated limitations (especially when the usage of this is exclusive) and ways in which these can and have been addressed. This section of the chapter also includes a full breakdown of the analytic steps applied to the texts gathered/produced during the research studies. Finally, the chapter engages in a critical discussion of the methodological approach taken.

5.1 Feminist and 'New Paradigm' Approaches to Research

As already outlined, the overall methodological approach of the research is one which is informed by a feminist poststructuralist orientation (see previous chapter). Yet, to break this down or unpack this further, this can also be regarded as one which is informed by critiques of positivism[11] and associated methodologies which have been articulated both by feminists (who have been at the forefront of critiquing mainstream social scientific research) and critics at the time of the crisis in social psychology (e.g. Armistead, 1974; Parker, 1989), re-conceptualisations of research processes and subsequent 'alternative' approaches to research practice, notably feminist (e.g. Wilkinson, 1988; Stanley, 1990), but also 'new paradigm' approaches (e.g. ethogenics - Harré, 1974, 1979, 1986; Harré & Secord, 1972). It is important to point out that 'new paradigm' and feminist approaches are *not* regarded as the same here – rather, the latter is an important area of debate in it's own right (e.g., see Harding, 1987; Bordo & Jagger, 1989; Nielson, 1990;

[11] Reber (1985) describes positivism as the viewpoint that *'all knowledge is contained within the boundaries of science, and only those questions answerable from the application of scientific method can be approached'* (p. 559).

Fonow & Cook, 1991). However, the chapter includes discussion of both because of parallels in the concerns articulated by proponents of 'new paradigm' and feminist approaches, and because, as Wilkinson (1986) argues, it is important for feminists to recognise such parallel thinking.

The chapter shall discuss the overall methodological approach of the research whilst examining how this has been informed by the concerns of the research and the thesis's conceptual foundations (see previous chapter), as well as by feminist and 'new paradigm' debates and research under three sub-headings: qualitative methodology; discourse analysis and reflexivity.

Qualitative Methodology

Traditional research practices in psychology are ones which are characterised by a positivist conception of science (e.g. the 'value free' search for truth and reason, and the abandonment of irrationality and superstition) and the application of methods and approaches taken from the physical sciences (i.e. carefully controlled empirical investigations such as laboratory experiments). These have been advocated and used within social psychology for a number of reasons. For example, it was believed that using approaches and methods taken from the natural sciences would aid psychology in achieving the same level of respect, and also, this was believed to be the best means of pursuing the liberal humanistic project which came to characterise social psychology. Approaches which were not seen to meet this scientific criteria (e.g. introspective approaches) soon became marginalised within the discipline.

However, feminists and critics during the crisis period in social psychology have subjected the use of such positivist methodologies to serious scrutiny and criticism. For example, critics were concerned that the research practices of social psychology were ones which were failing to explore those matters which were of greater relevance to ordinary people's lives such as experience and interaction (see Stevens, 1995; Toffler, 1981). Feminists in particular were concerned that the voices and experiences of women were being ignored, suppressed or distorted by the discipline. Consequently, feminist approaches to research have become aimed at giving 'voice' to women and prioritising their experiences, for example, as a means of establishing a basis (by understanding the conditions of women's lives) from which change can take place (e.g. Miller, 1978). In contrast, the use of positivist, quantitative methodologies has resulted in a focus on rather discrete attributes and processes (e.g. memory, perception) which were seen as peripheral and trivial. For example, note the following remarks made by Toffler:

'Obsessive emphasis on quantified detail without context, on progressively finer and finer measurement of smaller and smaller problems, leaves us knowing more and more about less and less.'
(1981: 141-42).

This is because discrete, precisely defined topics of investigation lend themselves to quantification and control more readily than, for example, experience, language and interaction, which could perhaps explain why such issues have been neglected by mainstream social psychology. Such criticisms and points, as discussed in the earlier chapters of the thesis, can be applied to existing psychological research around women and alcohol which has made use of quantitative methodologies. For example, as

discussed, some of these include a narrow focus upon discrete factors mediating women's alcohol consumption (e.g. sex role orientation – McCrady & Sand, 1985), thus failing to explore women's experiences and understandings of drinking and to recognise and explore this topic as socially and politically meaningful.

The use orthodox methods (i.e. quantitative) employed by traditional and mainstream social psychology has also resulted in a serious decontextualising of phenomena. In other words, there has been a failure to locate phenomena within wider social contexts (as implied by Toffler's comments) which give human action it's meaning, placing and studying this instead within the highly controlled, highly artificial lab environment (this leading to the further construction of phenomena as discrete). For example, note the following comments made by Parlee:

'Concepts, environments, social interactions are all simplified by methods which lift them out of their contexts, stripping them of the very complexity that characterises the real world.'
(1979: 131).

Such dissatisfaction with quantitative methodologies instigated an increased move[12] in social psychology towards qualitative methodologies, some of which (e.g. ethnography and action research) have a long-standing history in disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. It must be noted that no one particular methodological approach is synonymous with the 'new paradigm' of research in social psychology, and likewise, very few feminists are insistent that there should be a distinctive feminist methodology

[12] It must be noted that the 'crisis' did not mark the beginnings of the usage of qualitative methods in psychology. Some (e.g. Repertory Grids) were already in use before this time (Parker, 1994a).

(an exception here is Reinharz, 1983). In fact within feminism, consensus over method appears to be less well established than consensus over political and ideological motives. However, qualitative methods have been advocated as being more appropriate to the research enquiries of critical social and feminist psychologists, such as the exploration of everyday experience (see Harré & Secord, 1972; Harré, 1979; Reinharz, 1983; Griffin, 1986) and language (see Westkott, 1983; Wetherell, 1986). For example, it is argued that qualitative methods allow women's voices to be heard to a degree which quantitative methods do not achieve (Wilkinson, 1988; Stanley, 1990) and are better equipped to deal with the multiplicity, complexity and diversity of social phenomena and processes (e.g. Wetherell, 1986; Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 1989; Burman, 1991) than quantitative methods which repress these in the pursuit of (amongst other things) experimental control and scientific respectability (i.e. those based on the Hypothetico-Deductive Model - see Shotter, 1975; Wetherell, 1995; Harré, 1974; 1986 for fuller critiques). As the exploration of the multiplicity, diversity and inconsistency of femininity (e.g. through listening to women's voices) is central to discursive and poststructuralist forms of feminist social psychology, and hence, the current research (see previous chapter), this makes a qualitative approach particularly useful and appropriate here.

Further, those approaches - notably, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology - which can be regarded as partly underpinning the said 'reconstruction' of social psychology (Armistead, 1974) and which have influenced feminist approaches also (e.g. Stanley & Wise, 1993) purport the study of social phenomena in more naturalistic ways, and in this sense, are taken by commentators of methodology such as Bryman (1988) as

representing the very intellectual undercurrents of qualitative methodologies[13]. The influence of such approaches within contemporary social psychology and feminism, along with a dissatisfaction with decontextualising quantitative methods, has fed into qualitative practices which not only investigate the multiplicity and diversity of everyday discourse and women's experiences, but further, which explore these *in context.* The exploration of phenomena in context is also important here because of the emphasis which is placed upon practices (i.e. those pertaining to femininity and women's alcohol use) as situated, as tied to particular historical, cultural and social contexts. Woolgar (1988) argues that this 'indexicality', that is, where an explanation is tied to a particular site, is a 'methodological horror' to positivist researchers, as this reduces their ability to generalise from the research findings and claim that these are 'reliable'. This pursuit of universality and reliability has led to the ahistorical and acultural nature of mainstream quantitative research (e.g. Mies, 1983). Rather, here, the aim is not to establish universals, and indeed *all* meanings are embraced as indexical. So once again, we can see how an orthodox, quantitative approach to the research would be inappropriate and counter-productive.

The discussion shall now turn to focus upon the particular qualitative approach taken here: discourse analysis.

Discourse Analysis

As argued, the placing of language as central within critical social psychological projects, including the current one, renders a qualitative approach particularly useful. However, further than this, the particular view of language which is adopted by the

[13] Others include phenomenology (Husserl, 1927; Schutz, 1967), the notion of *'Verstehen'* (Weber, 1947) and naturalism (Matza, 1969; Randall, 1944).

research, that is, language as constructive of meaning and subjectivities (see Sapir, 1947; Foucault, 1972, 1979; Gergen, 1985; Belsey, 1980; Weedon, 1987; Black & Coward, 1981; also, see previous chapter) makes discourse analysis (e.g. Burman & Parker, 1993; Edwards & Potter, 1992) particularly appropriate here. For example, this conceptualisation ushers in a particular approach to the study of language which differs quite radically from those characteristic of orthodox psychology. Specifically, language is regarded as precisely where the (constructive and reproductive) action is (Edwards & Potter, 1992), rather than as a vehicle to studying or uncovering something else, such as mental structures, thought processes etc. (as is characteristic of traditional psychological approaches). Potter and Wetherell (1987) note that this treatment of language is central to all forms of discourse analysis:

'Participants' discourse or social texts are approached <u>in their own right</u> and not as a secondary route to things "beyond" the text like attitudes, events or cognitive processes. Discourse is treated as a potent, action-orientated medium, not a transparent information channel.'
(p. 160 – emphasis in original)

Burman & Parker (1993) note that a further feature which different approaches to or brands of discourse analysis share in common is a tendency to view and embrace meanings as multiple and shifting, rather than unitary and fixed. Again, as this is a view which characterises the current research project, discourse analysis is further pointed to as particularly conducive.

However, it must also be noted that as with feminism, discourse analysis is not a unified field. It is difficult to identify foundational premises or techniques which are specific to discourse analysis because, as outlined in the previous chapter, of the breadth and conceptual/methodological 'fuzziness' of the term (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995). For example, some diverse traditions underpinning different forms of discourse analysis which have been pointed to are hermeneutics (Gauld & Shotter, 1977), social semiotics (Hodge & Kress, 1988), the sociology of scientific knowledge (e.g. Ashmore, 1989; Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Potter & Mulkay, 1985), speech act theories (e.g. Grice, 1975; Searle, 1969), ethnomethodology (e.g. Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984), conversational analysis (e.g. Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Button & Lee, 1987, Levinson, 1983) and of course, poststructuralism (e.g. Barthes, 1974; Derrida, 1977a, 1977b; Shapiro, 1988). This not only marks the inter-disciplinary nature of discourse analysis, but further, this diversity of influences informs and feeds into different research practices within this field (albeit not a unitary one), for example, different approaches to analysis which concentrate upon different aspects and functions of talk and texts (Burr, 1995; van Dijk, 1985).

As such, it appears necessary to explore diversity within discourse analysis and locate the research approach taken here within the range. Burman and Parker (1993) identify three general approaches to, or what they describe as 'reference points' within discourse analytic research in psychology at present, although it must be noted that these do not represent discrete or coherent types of method. For example, it is possible that two, or even all three of the descriptions provided could be applied to some discursive work:

1. Those which attend to linguistic repertoires and ideological dilemmas (e.g. Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Billig, 1987; Billig *et al,* 1988). Such approaches tend to focus on the performative or action-orientated qualities of talk and text other than simply transmitting information, in other words, how accounts are constructed in ways which are aimed at achieving particular goals. Such theorists tend to use the term *'repertoire'* rather than *'discourse'. 'Interpretative repertoires'* can be described as resources (e.g. metaphors, linguistic devices) that speakers use in order to construct a sense of what is going on; the means by which they construct events and the world through language, rather than merely representing them (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The precise differences between a 'discourse' and an 'interpretative repertoire' are somewhat unclear. However, those such as Parker (1992a) and Hollway (1984) do argue that it is useful to distinguish between the two. For example, whereas a discourse is often regarded as referring to a set of perhaps more abstract meanings which construct an object, (e.g. femininity), interpretative repertoires are often seen as referring to more strategic or action-orientated aspects of talk, such as how people construct versions of the world for their own purposes. Yet, the similarities appear to be more striking than the differences, as both essentially refer to the ways in which people construct their social world through language.

2. Those which focus on conversation and the making of sense (e.g. Moir, 1993; Widdicombe, 1993). Analysts working with such forms of discourse analysis often investigate the sense that people make of questions put to them, rather than sum up what they are doing with a label which has been imposed (e.g. Moir, 1993). In

addition, discourse analysts working with this approach attempt to investigate how particular identities are negotiated through talk (e.g. Widdicombe, 1993).

3. Those which are concerned primarily with subjectivity and are often described as 'post-structuralist' or 'Foucauldian' (e.g. Parker, 1989; Parker & Shotter, 1990; Gergen, 1991; Burman & Parker, 1993; Henriques *et al,* 1984; Hollway, 1984, 1989; Weedon, 1987; Walkerdine, 1986). Theorists working with this brand of discourse analysis use the term *'discourse'* rather than *'repertoire',* in contrast to the first type of discourse analysis described here. As the name suggests, approaches to discourse analysis which are often termed 'post-structuralist' or 'Foucauldian' are largely informed by post-structuralist orientations to the conceptualisation of phenomena (e.g. symbolic practices as constitutive of meaning). However, that is not to say that other brands of or approaches to discourse analysis (as previously discussed) are not also influenced by post-structuralist ideas. Although social psychologists taking a different approach to discourse analysis (e.g. focusing upon different function or features of talk and texts) to those working with a poststructuralist brand of this may not use the term 'poststructuralism' to describe what they are doing, their approaches often still emphasise variability, construction of meaning etc., these being concerns associated with poststructuralist traditions (e.g. Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

The thesis's concern with subjectivities and the placing of power relations as central means that poststructuralist discourse analysis is the approach which is of primary influence here and in turn, is the approach which appears most conducive to the ideas and aims of the research. More specifically, the approach taken here is one which can be

described as feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis or poststructuralist discourse analysis informed by a feminist perspective (e.g. Hepworth & Griffin, 1995; Willott & Griffin, 1997). At a later point in the chapter, the discussion turns to examine poststructuralist discourse analysis more closely, for example, features which differentiate this from other discursive approaches and which make this potentially useful here. This leads into a discussion of the analytic process applied the texts produced/gathered by the research, which includes a clear breakdown of the steps involved in this.

Reflexivity

The discussion has already highlighted tensions between traditional models of research and feminism, which Mies (1983) argues are fundamentally incompatible. Another major and long-standing feminist critique of positivism surrounds the notion that research can and should be value-free and objective (e.g. Gill, 1995), and that researchers should strive for detachment and distance from their research subjects in the interests of scientific credibility (see Woolgar, 1988; Parker, 1994a). For example, Stanley and Wise (1983) argue that this denies the basic 'humanness' of researchers, for example, that they can be affected by the research process and their 'subjects', that their behaviour can be understood using the same frameworks as those who are being studied and that they need to reflect upon the their own actions in the research process. Similar criticisms of positivist research were made by critics during the crisis in social psychology. For example, the proponents of ethogenics (Harré, 1974, 1979, 1986; Harré & Secord, 1972), a 'new paradigm' approach which is often regarded as representing part of the 'first wave' of critical social psychology (see Stainton-Rogers *et al*, 1995), argued that this failure to engage with human characteristics and powers within

positivist psychology, such as the power to reflect upon actions and account for them, renders such approaches inappropriate and counter-productive (Parker, 1994a; Shotter, 1975; Harré, 1974).

However, further than this, positivist conceptualisations of the research process such as the value-free production of knowledge (i.e. the imagined possibility of screening out interpretation and producing unmediated, uncontaminated representations of the objects of study) disguises the power relations and values operating within. For example, feminists and critical psychologists have argued and demonstrated that psychological work is loaded with ideological bias and that male values are enshrined in research practice (e.g. Sedgwick, 1974; Bernard, 1983; Reinharz, 1983; Griffin, 1986). Indeed, discussions presented in the earlier chapters of the thesis have illustrated and supported this point (in particular, see discussions around sex difference and socio-biological research in chapter two). As such, critical psychologists and feminists have deconstructed traditional constructions of the research process, insisting that as researchers we are as bound up in this as the participants are (Skeggs, 1997; Burr, 1995) and that we always bring our own belief systems, cultural values, frames of reference etc. to the research and so this always involves an interpretative component (e.g. Parker, 1994a).

In turn, such re-conceptualisations of the research process and the production of knowledge have come to strongly underpin qualitative methods and have informed feminist and critical psychological research practices, such as the pursuit of transparent political agendas. For example, Griffin (1980) discusses how 'feminist ethnography' is politically motivated to provide a space for the articulations and experiences of those

who are marginalised, pathologised and othered in most mainstream research. In addition (and related to this pursuit of transparent political agendas), there is an emphasis within critical and feminist work upon the importance and practising of reflexivity (see Wilkinson, 1986, 1988; Stanley & Wise, 1983; Callaway, 1981; Kitzinger, 1986; du Bois, 1983; Griffin, 1986; Reinharz, 1983; Marshall, 1986; Parker, 1994a; Potter, 1988; Burr, 1995; Banister *et al,* 1994; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992; Sapsford, 1998) or 'epistemic responsibility' (Skeggs, 1997; Code, 1987, 1988). Indeed, this has become central to feminist research practice. Reflexivity, at it's most basic level, is based upon the notion that the researcher's values should be *'acknowledged, revealed and labelled'* (Reinharz, 1983: p. 172). In other words, this involves the researcher self-exposing the research process and interpretation of data as informed by his/her values, theoretical orientations, political agendas and so on. As argued, *all* research is informed as such. For instance, the very idea within traditional research that maintaining researcher distance and attempting to produce objective accounts is so important in itself represents a position (i.e. one which is predicated on realism and a positivist model of science). Yet, the difference is that researchers adopting such a position do not usually declare and explore this, as the discourse and rhetoric of science is so powerful and normative.

In this respect, the thesis has and is presently engaged in reflexive discussion, for example, by declaring the theoretical underpinnings and political commitments of the research and by examining how these have informed the methodological approach taken. However, this is not enough. For one, a consideration of how philosophical positions, political commitments, value systems etc. inform the research process should move beyond discussions of methodological decision making and the formulation of

research questions. Lovibond (1995) argues that within poststructuralist approaches, knowledge must always be conceived of as practice, and so we must consider how and why this comes into being rather than simply assuming that this reflects some 'out there' reality. For example, as discussed, the production of knowledge (including that generated within academic spaces) is regarded by critical psychologists and feminists as deeply interested and value laden (even where these values are not made explicit), operating in ideological ways, for example, by reproducing unequal relations of power (e.g. Wilkinson, 1996). When researchers take such a position (as is the case here), they should explore their own production of knowledge (i.e. the generation and interpretation of findings during their own research activities) as interested and informed. This means moving beyond simple declaration of political and theoretical commitments to reflect critically upon these, explaining and justifying how these have informed the readings of data presented and the taking of responsibility for the social and political consequences of those interpretations (Gill, 1995; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995; Code, 1987, 1988).

Such reflexivity, when exercised thoroughly, should also contain an exploration of how the positions occupied by the researcher outside (but most certainly not separable from) the research situation have informed his/her interpretations. For example, in her discussions of feminist ethnography, Skeggs (1997) argues that the powerful process of constructing and representing those who are being researched as 'other' is always done through references to the self. As such, she argues that reflexivity or 'epistemic responsibility' should involve exploring how, as researchers, our own desires and implicatedness in the positions we occupy has influenced the representations of those under study presented, which feminists such as Mixon (1974), Elden (1981) and Stanley and Wise (1983) argue researchers have a moral obligation to.

Such an approach to reflexivity is argued to be important for a number of reasons. Firstly, researchers failing to exercise reflexivity in this way are vulnerable to accusations that they are acting as the 'certified deconstructors' of other people's discourse (Jackson, 1992), or as 'self-serving' critics who treat only other's discourse with scepticism (Gill, 1995). There is an underlying implication here that a failure to reflect critically upon ones own interpretations signals an arrogance, an assumption that ones own work, with all the best political intentions in the world, is above the kinds of criticisms levelled at orthodox psychological research (e.g. that surrounding women and alcohol). An additional, slightly more positivist argument is that such an approach to reflexivity can strengthen accounts by bringing these in close approximation to objectivity (e.g. Parker, 1994a). Although, as discussed, feminists have been among those who have provided powerful critiques of notions of objectivity (along with Marxists and Weberians), in more recent years, some feminists such as Harding (1991) and Haraway (1991) have resurrected the term. They, along with those such as Parker (1994a) argue that by making the processes of knowledge production in research apparent and accountable, for example, by recognising and exploring the interpretation of texts as always influenced by the researcher's location in various discourses, the reader is allowed to decide for his or herself how far such positioning has influenced the readings presented. Although the aim here is not to present an objective account as such, or the disinterested 'truth', that is not to say that the research does not aim to present analyses which are thorough and credible, and so it would seem that in order to achieve this, an exploration of interpretations as constructed and informed is warranted. A further, overarching reason for exercising reflexivity is that this can be argued to heighten the question of power within the research situation. This shall be discussed

further towards the end of the chapter, when this turns to critically address some major methodological and interpretative issues here. In addition, the question of power is revisited in the thesis's final chapter (this is where the bulk of reflexive discussion can be located), as grounded in the research processes and analyses presented. Along with this (in light of the arguments around reflexivity presented here), the final chapter engages in an exploration of how the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the research (e.g. poststructuralism), it's political commitments (e.g. to feminism) and my own positioning have informed the readings presented, as grounded in those readings.

In sum, at this point in the thesis, the general methodological approach of the research has been established. This is an important reference point when assessing the research (e.g. how far it has achieved it's political aims etc., embraced diversity and multiplicity, exercised adequate reflexivity etc.), which, as illustrated, should not be judged against an inappropriate model of science. For example, the analyses presented by the thesis should be regarded as situated, informed and mobilised rather than representing objective, disinterested, universal and timeless 'truths'. The following section of the chapter shall now move on to introduce the reader to the two research studies conducted: a media text study and focus group interviews with women. The reader should note once again that this chapter is mostly concerned with providing background to the two studies, reasons why these were conducted, discussion of major methodological decisions taken and the major aims of the research studies. Details pertaining to the processes involved, the participants, the approach to reading the texts gathered and produced etc. can be found in the empirically-based chapters.

The media is increasingly becoming an important site of study for social psychologists and feminists for a number of reasons. For one, this is regarded as a useful site for those interested in developing more socio-cultural and less individualised understandings and because of the reflection and constitution of 'common sense' knowledge within this space (Morant, 1998; Livingstone & Lunt, 1994; Rose, 1998). In particular, feminists are becoming more and more interested in the significance of popular culture for women (e.g. Douglas, 1979; Squire, 1995) and some researchers interested in femininity have taken the media as the main of focus of their analyses (e.g. Ferguson, 1983; McCracken, 1993; Winship, 1987). One benefit of examining media texts around femininity here is that these can easily be situated with respect to historical, social and culutral contexts. More specifically, these can be read as being informed by and reflecting wider cultural processes which define versions of femininity in a given socio-cultural and historical context, and so comparisons can be made across time and space (see Rose, 1998). For example, Ferguson (1983) argues that media texts around femininity can be regarded as important historical documents which reveal much about the position of women at that time, in that culture. For instance, she analysed women's magazines from the period 1949 to 1980 and discussed how in more recent decades, articles have increasingly featured 'the career woman' as a theme, thus reflecting women's increased entry into the workplace. Similarly, the apparent increase in recent times of media coverage around women's alcohol consumption, along with images, advertisements etc. featuring women consuming alcohol could be taken as reflecting changes in the social positioning of women (e.g. increasing numbers of women in the workplace - Makela *et al,* 1981; Moore, 1995; Kua, 1994; see chapter three) which have

furnished opportunities to pursue traditionally male activities and to confidently inhabit public spaces. It is this entry of women into conventionally male spaces which has incurred specualation about the contemporary feminisation of mass consumer culture (e.g. Squire, 1995).

However, Morris (1988) cautions that analyses of media texts which merely celebrate the liberatory or fantastic possibilities and pleasures of the culture within which they are located can be banal. Indeed, whilst taking a closer look at media texts around women and alcohol, it becomes apparent that women's occupation of traditionally male spaces, rather than being soley celebrated, continues to be resisted by all manner of 'backlash' practices (Faludi, 1992; Gough, 1998). As such, it would be clearly facile to presume that the mere presence of women within 'male' environments such as the pub reflects societal acceptance. Further, Burman and Parker (1993) criticise approaches to discursive research which are pitched at a rather descriptive level, with no critical or progressive intention or effect. Such research could be accused of simply reproducing rather than transforming or challenging mainstream discourse and as *'traditional positivist methods masquerading as discourse analysis'* (p. 11). As argued, the thesis does not regard language, in this case within the media, as merely playing a reflective role (e.g. reflecting the position of women in society and related practices, such as their new found freedom to move within public drinking spaces etc.), but as playing a constructive role also. For example, it must be noted that the media not only circulates existing knowledge, but also plays a role in generating new forms of knowledge around femininity (e.g. Morant, 1998) and masculinity (Edley & Wetherell, 1995; Barthel, 1992). Further, the media often reproduces discourse around masculinity and femininity

which doesn't just reflect, but perpetuates and reinforces power differentials between men and women.

For example, those such as Betterton (1987), Ferguson (1983), Douglas (1995) and Skeggs (1997) point to popular culture as providing powerful textual sources from which women partly 'learn' to be feminine in ways dictated by mainstream culture, including how they should look, dress, act, what kinds of lifestyles they should lead, relationships they should have and so on (what Ferguson, 1983, describes as 'cults of femininity'). The versions of femininity presented and reproduced are often ones which are problematic, as has been highlighted, for instance, by studies which have interrogated material targeted specifically at women and girls. This includes reading material for schoolchildren which largely situates women in domestic or caring roles (Swann, 1992), and girls' comics which advocate patience, passivity and serving others as ways of 'getting a man' (Walkerdine, 1987). Further, in Ferguson's study (1983), in addition to the 'career woman' (as previously discussed), other themes which were identified included 'getting and keeping your man', 'keeping the family happy' and 'be more beautiful'. As such, we can see how these feminine ideals have persisted despite social and economic changes (see Burr, 1998).

In this respect, the media (like psychology) comes to be regarded as powerful social institution (Ferguson, 1983) and an important site, not just for investigating prevailing constructions of femininity, but also of political reaction. It is important to note that the kinds of texts discussed here are not regarded by the thesis as functional socialisation agents (as sometimes appears to be indicated by Ferguson, 1983; see also chapter three), but rather, as those such as Skeggs (1997) point out, these can often produce symbolic

violence against women. For example, feminist approaches to the study of eating disorders or 'body distress' have pointed to the influence of mainstream Western representations of femininity as exemplified by a slender body and the pressures placed on women to be slim (these most powerfully evident in the media), rather than individual or family-based pathology (see Hepworth & Griffin, 1995; Orbach, 1986; Bordo, 1993, 1997). In other words, the media (like so-called therapeutic practice) can be argued to exercise damaging, disciplinary practices on the female body as part of wider processes geared towards the construction of 'ideal' femininity (Bartky, 1990). Similarly, discourses around women and alcohol evident in the media which, in a very similar way to those evident within psychological texts (as discussed) construct this in deviant, pathological ways, may have a disciplinary affect on women's leisure, for example, through public regulation and surveillance of this. In this respect, those such as Skeggs (1997) argue that feminist analyses need to take account of, amongst other things, popular discourses and representations.

It is anticipated at this point that the usefulness of media text studies for feminist social psychological analyses of this kind has been articulated and justified. In addition, it was noted at an early stage in the research that women's alcohol consumption had recently come under scrutiny within the U.K. media. This appeared in part to be due to the number of 'women's lifestyle' surveys conducted in recent years reporting that women in Britain today are drinking more than ever (Bennett *et al,* 1996). As can be imagined, a perusal of coverage found that this was often somewhat 'hysterical' about women's 'increasing' alcohol consumption, generating (or attempting to generate) moral panic around this issue, for example, by reporting 'scientific' findings to the public in over-simplified, exaggerated form (see Frieze *et al*, 1978). A further observation was that on

the whole, the coverage appeared to present women who drink as problematic. As such, it was decided that a media text study was lending itself to a detailed discourse analysis and would be highly beneficial to the research. A major aim of the media text study was to investigate multiple and competing constructions of femininity and women's leisure in the present cultural and historical climate. However, the study set out to achieve more than simple, uncritical reproduction of the discourses evident within such texts. Rather, a reading here explicitly informed by a feminist politics aimed to critically consider the ideological and practical functions of discourses around femininity and women's alcohol use evident in recent media texts, deconstructing these and pushing forward alternative constructions (but whilst considering these relationally, and therefore hopefully avoiding falling into the trap of merely celebrating female liberation). As with psychological texts around women and alcohol, media texts are regarded as politically loaded and interested, rather than merely reporting on or reflecting 'the truth' about women's alcohol consumption in an objective way, and so are treated as such by the media text study. The methodological processes involved, and results of the media text study, are discussed thoroughly in the following chapter.

5.3 Exploring Women's Understandings: The Use of Focus Group Discussions.

The central aim of the second research study was to give women the opportunity to speak about their drinking and the topic of women and alcohol generally, as opposed to merely reproducing what Squire (1995) describes as the closed scientific narratives of traditional psychological texts. As such, whereas the previous study took an institution (the media) as it's focus, exploring the circulation, reproduction and generation of discourses around women and alcohol within this space, the second study focuses upon

the reproduction and generation of discourses at an everyday level, through talk and interaction. Yet that is not to say that the two studies are separate or are not interrelated – they are deeply so. The systems of meaning generated by institutions such as the media (and psychology) 'filter down' into everyday talk and action, and at the same time, are informed by everyday events and constructions. As such, it was anticipated that some of the discourses uncovered during the media text study would reappear here, but again, simple reproduction was not the only concern. There is complex interplay between the systems of meaning presented by institutions such as the media and how these are taken on board, rejected, translated and negotiated by women during everyday interaction (Livingstone, 1996). As such, this study aimed to build upon the previous one by exploring how the systems of meaning identified are understood and negotiated by women during their everyday lives. For example, *how* and *why* are these systems of meaning and the practices which they invite reproduced or subverted by women through their talk. This previous point is particularly important. For example, Mishler (1986) argues that one reason why it is important for feminists to publicise the views of 'ordinary' women is because this can empower them. It was felt that this could be achieved by the current research project by giving women the opportunity to subvert discourses which construct women's drinking in negative and detrimental ways and which can be utilised in oppressive manners (e.g. those circulated within psychology and the media), and to construct alternatives discourses and strategies of resistance. By bringing such counter discourses into greater visibility, the research can present a serious challenge to normative, regulatory discourses around femininity and women's drinking. In addition, a particular focus of this study was subjectivity, and so there was a further concern to explore investment in the multiple and contradictory subject positions and forms of feminine identity created and fed into by these systems of meaning. In

sum, this study progresses from a consideration of the subject positions, the forms of identity and the types of social action that are invited and constrained by contemporary constructions of femininity and alcohol, to examine how these actually shape the everyday understandings, practices and identity construction of women.

The next decision to be made was how the research would evoke the views of 'ordinary' women (i.e. what methods would be employed). It was decided that qualitative research interviews would be the main method of data collection for this study. This decision was taken because this would allow for an in-depth exploration of everyday talk around femininity and alcohol. More specifically, it was decided that focus group discussions around the topic of women and alcohol would be conducted, rather than the more traditional method of one on one interviews. This decision was taken for a number of reasons. Firstly, focus groups are more naturalistic and less artificial than traditional one on one interviews, allowing the participants to *'elaborate on their views in a relatively naturalistic conversational exchange'* (Potter & Wetherell, 1987:165). Secondly, focus groups are more dynamic and interactive than the traditional one on one method of interviewing, thus better equipping the research to investigate the social construction and negotiation of femininities *in action.* For example, Widdicombe (1995) argues that it is in the context of interaction that issues of identity become live, practical concerns. Thirdly, it was anticipated that focus groups would encourage and better enable an exploration of diversity, for example, the variable investment in and negotiation of different forms of femininity, reproduction versus subversion of discourses around femininity and alcohol use, and, as Potter and Wetherell (1987) put it, the *'diversity of participants accounting practices'* (p. 164). Given the aims of the research and it's theoretical underpinnings, the previous two points are of particular importance here.

Finally, focus group interviews have, in recent years, been the preferred method of interviewing of researchers similarly interested in the social construction of gender, such writers demonstrating their usefulness for research enquiries of this kind (see Willott & Griffin, 1997; Kaminer & Dixon, 1995; Gough & Edwards, 1998; Edley & Wetherell, 1997).

Further, it was decided that the focus groups would be informal-but-guided ones. For example, efforts would be made to keep these informal, in order to render these as naturalistic as possible, and in order to help maximise the participants' contributions to the construction of meaning (Willott & Griffin, 1997), providing participants with the opportunity to freely raise topics and issues which are of importance to them, particularly ones which weren't anticipated. This was considered important, because as those such as Chodorow (1996) argue, if we impose categories on women which are not otherwise important to them, we imply that we have more access to the truth, an epistemological privilege that they lack, and we uncut the commitment to women's subjectivity that motivated our research in the first place. Further, it was felt that this would raise the extent to which the data can be considered to be co-produced. The co-production of data is central to feminist research practices which place an emphasis upon the researcher and their participants as collaborators in the same enterprise (e.g. Reinharz, 1983), and likewise, is considered important here. This means that reflexivity becomes all the more important, as the emphasis here on researcher participation as opposed to detachment leads to an increased acknowledgement[14] of the researcher's values, frames of reference etc. being imported into the research (Burman, 1994). Yet, at the same time, it did seem that some guidance during the focus group interviews was

[14] However, this is not to say that the researcher's values are not imported in more traditional, empiricist research which strives for researcher detachment.

necessary in order to ensure that certain and the same topics were covered during each discussion (although, as argued, scope was allowed for others), and in order to prevent the discussions from becoming merely a conversation about anything (see Burman, 1994 for a discussion around the dangers of unstructured interviewing). As such, it was decided that an interview schedule or aide memoir would be used during the focus group discussions. The construction of this is discussed in chapter seven, along with other research tools used and the processes involved in this study.

5. 4 Identifying the Discourses: Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis

As stated earlier in the chapter, the style of discourse analysis primarily adopted here is poststructuralist, informed by a feminist perspective. As also previously outlined, there are a number of features and functions of poststructuralist discourse analysis which differentiate this from other brands, and which can potentially strengthen research projects in a number of ways. For example, as outlined, some approaches to discourse analysis (e.g. those based upon a model of discursive action - Edwards & Potter, 1992), focus upon fine details of talk and texts, such as the action-orientated qualities of this, or, in other words, what the speaker or writer was aiming to achieve. In contrast, poststructuralist forms of discourse analysis are argued to be geared more towards constructing more abstract or overarching patterns of discourse within the historical and socio-cultural context within which the research is located (Willott & Griffin, 1997). Further, poststructuralist forms of discourse analysis are more primarily concerned with questions of subjectivity and power relations than the other breeds outlined, or more specifically, what the implications of discourses are for these (Squire, 1995). For example, Burman and Parker (1993) argue that when researchers use a poststructuralist or Foucauldian discourse analytic approach, they are able to look not only at how

objects are constructed in discourse (e.g. 'personality', 'attitudes', 'prejudice'), but also at how subjects are constructed (e.g. how we experience ourselves when we speak and when we hear others speak about us). Further, as argued previously, the different forms of subjectivity and subject positions that discourses create carry differential, relational power implications (see previous chapter). This makes a Foucauldian brand of discourse analysis particularly appropriate here, as a central aim of the research is to explore the construction of feminine subjectivities and how these are positioned within relations of power. Also, Burman and Parker (1993) argue that a further advantage of poststructuralist discourse analytic approaches is that these draw into psychology the work of Foucault (1972, 1980) and the ways in which his ideas have been used to provide critical accounts of the functions of the discipline (see Rose, 1985; Walkerdine, 1988). This is of particular importance here, as one aim of the thesis is to criticise and deconstruct the inadequate and damaging ways in which psychology has theorised gender and women's alcohol use (see chapter two in particular). Although such accounts have not been formally analysed for discourses as such, the incorporation of Foucault's ideas into the thesis has better enabled it to provide such a critical account. Further, the research is interested in how psychological discourses around femininity (and alcohol) are reproduced by the media and through everyday talk, and how these are operationalised in regulatory and oppressive ways.

However, there are problems associated with the exclusive usage of a poststructuralist brand of discourse analysis, as shall now be explored. For example, this is accused of neglecting other features of talk and text which may be analytically interesting, for example, the subtle strategies that people engage in when speaking or writing (Parker, 1994b; Bowers & Iwi, 1991), the analysis of such discursive actions being more

commonly associated with action-orientated or more 'bottom-up' styles of discourse analysis (e.g. Edwards & Potter, 1992). Further, although those such as Potter and Wetherell (1987) are not primarily interested in issues of personhood, they do suggest that the very experience of being a person is dependant upon the interpretative repertoires or particular representations of selfhood that are available to us in our culture (this being similar to Harré's notion of 'the grammatical self' - 1983, 1989). As such, an analysis of these may be beneficial to researchers interested in subjectivity. Similarly, Widdicombe (1995) criticises poststructuralist discourse analysis for claiming to be concerned with issues of subjectivity and the empowerment of people by giving them a voice, yet at the same time, fails to attend to the details of what people are saying and doing with their talk, for example, the ways in which they themselves give meaning to their identities and actions. As such, far from being an obstacle to understanding the political significance of identities, a detailed analysis of talk shows the site where power and resistance are played out.

One possible solution here is to approach the texts collected and produced by the research studies predominately using a poststructuralist brand of discourse analysis and thus retaining the benefits of this (as outlined), whilst at the same time, treating the discursive actions of the speakers and writers as strategic and purposeful. For example, such an approach may consider how accounts are constructed rhetorically (e.g. Billig, 1990) in order to defend, for instance, the speaker's or writer's investments in certain subject positions and systems of meaning. As such, whilst reading the forthcoming empirically-based chapters, the reader will note that some attention has been paid to these functions of language. The dismantling of barriers between different brands of discourse analysis has been suggested by some users of this as a way forward (e.g.

Wetherell, 1998). However, the compatibility of different discourse approaches remains a matter of debate, and it would appear, does depend somewhat on the particular research project and it's aims. Despite this, it is contended here that the incorporation of an analysis of the action-orientated functions of talk and texts will enrich the thesis.

A further criticism which has been levelled at discourse analytic work more generally is that researchers working within this field often fail to present a clear and systematic description of the analytic procedure as conducted. For example, Figueroa and Lopez (1991) noted that in their encounters with British discourse analytic work, one major striking absence was the methodological process by which material was produced. As such, the reader is often left guessing with regards to how the analyst has uncovered the discourses they describe and theorise, and where descriptions of analytic procedures are provided, these are often vague, referring, for example, to 'coding practices'. Taking a qualitative approach should not be mistaken as a choice on the part of the researcher to abandon rigour (Ashworth, 1997). Further, it is difficult to make discourse analysis accessible to students, researchers etc. without being able 'teach' them how to conduct this. However, discourse analysis is often regarded as an approach to research as opposed to a particular method or technique, with no one universal or correct way to conduct this (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). As such, the provision of detailed analytic procedures may deceive a novice reader into believing that this is the one and only prescribed way in which to conduct discourse analysis, and that this one approach is applicable to the deconstruction of everything and anything (Burman & Parker, 1993). It is also difficult for the analyst to set out such a detailed procedure when often this does not do justice to the means by which they arrived at their reading. For example, Squire

(1995) argues that skill gained through practice and a degree of intuition are generally regarded as important elements of a good discourse analysis.

Despite these latter arguments, the chapter does provide a detailed account of the analytic procedure as conducted (see figure 1 below). For one, those who will primarily be reading the thesis are not novices, and this is not an undergraduate text book. Further, this is provided in the interests of rigour and transparency. Yet, it must be noted that readings of texts were also informed by the aims of the research generally (as outlined in chapter one) the research studies specifically (as clearly outlined in the empirically-based chapters), a degree of intuition (Squire, 1995) and perhaps most importantly, a degree of sensitivity towards the action-orientated functions of talk (as discussed). The analytic procedure described is largely taken from Willott and Griffin (1997) for two major reasons. Firstly, the authors were working with the same discourse analytic approach as is primarily adopted here: feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis. Further, to date, this is the most detailed procedure of this form of discourse analysis encountered (as outlined, such detailed procedures are difficult to find). Willott and Griffin's (1997) analytic approach also incorporates a constructivist grounded analysis (e.g. Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992), this being, as the name suggests, a constructivist reworking of the traditional, more realist, 'bottom up' approach of Grounded Theory. As such, this is more compatible with the approach taken here. Although Willott and Griffin (1997) do acknowledge that there is no easy or straightforward fit between poststructuralist discourse analysis and Grounded Theory, and further, that a feminist standpoint to each of these approaches is not untroubled (see discussion in previous chapter around the usefulness of poststructuralism and discourse analysis for feminism),

they do maintain that these can combined in a way that maintains the potential benefits of each.

STEP 1: TRANSCRIPTION (applies to the second research study only) – the approach to transcription was one which was mainly concerned with spoken conversation, but also took account of features in the participants' talk such as pauses, overlap between speakers and the manner in which words and phrases were expressed (e.g. in raised voice). A modified version of the Jefferson system of transcription conventions was employed (Jefferson, 1985). See appendix 11 for a full list of the symbols used.

STEP 2: CHUNKING THE MATERIAL – The text was broken down into chunks, a 'chunk' being a series of interjections or block of text ending with an interjection from the interviewer or a topic shift introduced by the writer/one of the discussants.

STEP 3: IDENTIFICATION OF IN-VIVO THEMES- Each chunk was then coded using an in-vivo theme. The in-vivo themes refer to words or phrases used repeatedly within the text, or was assigned as an overall representation of the topic of discussion within that chunk.

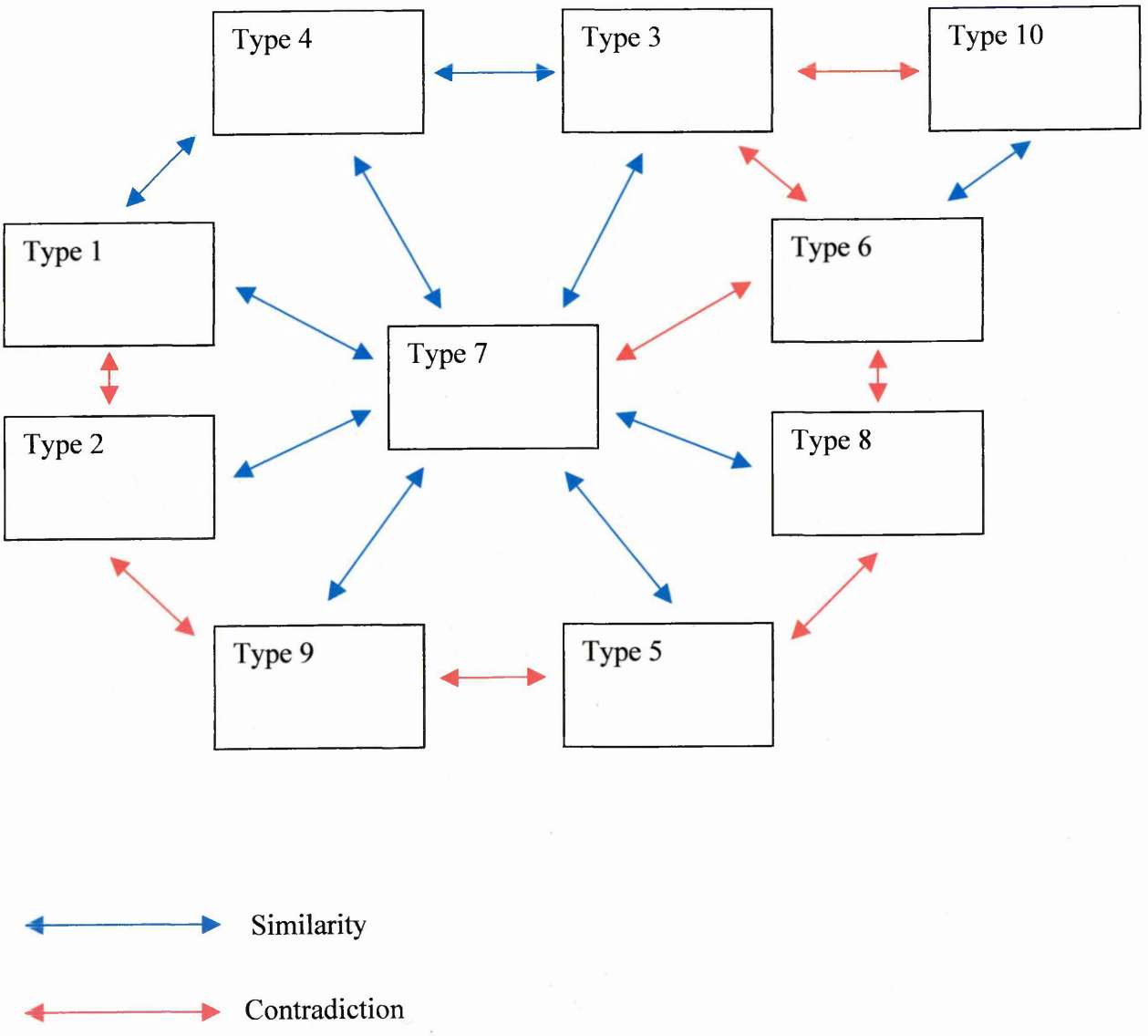
STEP 4: SETTING UP IN-VIVO THEME FILES/GROUPS – Chunks coded under a single in-vivo theme were then gathered together to create in-vivo theme groups or files.

STEP 5: IDENTIFICATION OF DIFFERENT WAYS OF TALKING ABOUT EACH THEME – A single in-vivo theme group was then taken and a close reading of the material within was conducted in order to identify the different ways of talking about

that theme. Each 'type' or way of talking about the theme was then written on an index card, along with the relevant theme, in order to make the next stage of analysis easier to conduct.

STEP 6: CROSS REFERENCING BETWEEN DIFFERENT TYPES - The index cards were then spread out and studied in order to identify relationships between the different types, for example, similarities and differences or contradictions. During this stage of analysis, a type of spider diagram was obtained (see figure on following page). This stage of the analysis represents a move from identifying ways of talking about that theme towards the identification of discursive patterns.

Figure 1: Cross Referencing Between Different Types or Ways of Talking About a Theme.

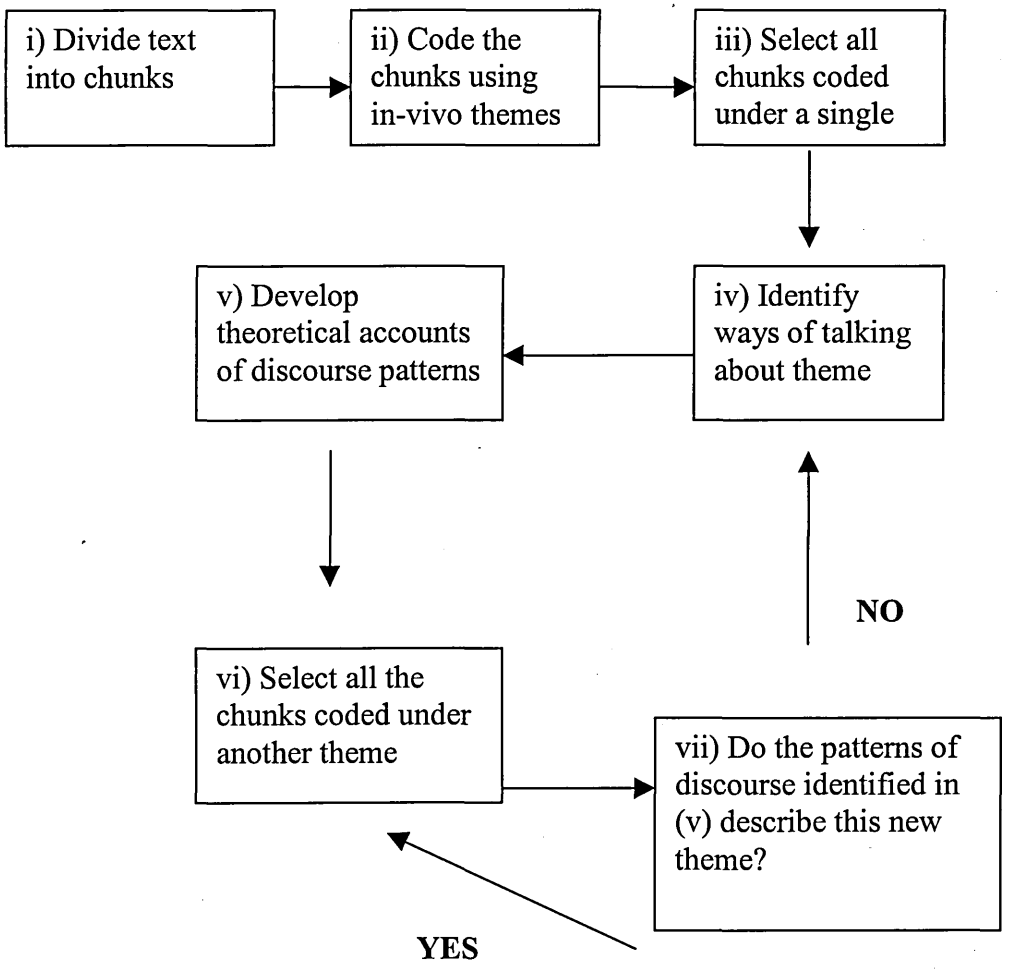


Adapted from Willott & Griffin (1997:114)

STEP 7: DISCUSSION OF DISCURSIVE PATTERNS AND DISCOURSES - Prior to this stage, in keeping with the principles of constructivist grounded analysis, attempts were made (as far as possible) to avoid using interpretative tools which lay outside of the interview texts. At this stage however, use was made of external resources, such as existing research literature. The aim of this stage was to provide a theoretical account and detailed analysis of what appeared to be the recurrent discursive patterns, and consider the findings in relation to existing literature in the relevant fields.

STEP 8: SELECTION OF NEXT THEME - Once the above steps had been completed for the first theme, another theme was taken. Once again, all the chunks of the texts coded under that particular theme were selected. The text was then studied in order to determine whether the patterns of discourse identified for the previous theme adequately described how the writer or speakers talked about this new theme. If the patterns already identified were inadequate, stages 5 to 7 were repeated.

Figure 2: Diagram of Analytic Steps



Adapted from Willott & Griffin (1997: 112)

The focus of this section of the chapter is upon a number of ongoing debates within qualitative and discourse analytic research, many of which refer to some of the potential limitations and problems associated with such approaches. The discussion here considers what the implications are for the current research project, attempts to respond to these and (as far as is possible) considers how the research can to address these issues. The discussion here will largely be based around the following: reduction and abstraction of material; questions surrounding power and ethics within qualitative research; and reflexivity and relativism, these appearing to be major issues troubling researchers working with qualitative methods and discourse analysis. This section of the chapter is by no means exhaustive. For example, Burman and Parker (1993) discuss a total of thirty-two problems connected to discourse analytic research (see also Burman, 1991; Bowers, 1988 and Abrams & Hogg, 1990 for further critical accounts). Some of these problems have been raised and discussed already, for example, problems with the pitching of analysis on various levels were discussed and addressed in the previous section of the chapter. Also, as outlined earlier, further critical discussion of the methodological processes involved in the research and readings presented in the forthcoming chapters shall be a central feature of the thesis's final chapter. However, for now, the discussion shall turn to some major issues surrounding the general or overall approach of the research.

For one, qualitative methods should not be regarded as providing an absolute 'solution' to the problems associated with quantitative methodologies (as discussed). Indeed, many such problems can be regarded as being retained by qualitative methods, or still

being present in a different guise or form. For example, quantitative methods have been criticised for reducing material and data down and abstracting certain kinds of information from it in order to render this more manageable, this being another major criticism of quantitative methods during the 'crisis' period in social psychology. As those such as Parker (1994a) have pointed out, such a process of reduction and abstraction will eventually reach a point where the context considerably or even completely disappears. In contrast, qualitative methods are often regarded as retaining context and limiting reduction and abstraction, yet how far can this be claimed? For example, analytic procedures such as those adhering to the principles of Grounded Theory and discourse analysis often involve a partial concentration on the reproduction of themes and discursive patterns, with discussion of results often focusing upon material which has been categorised or coded in light of these. As such, it seems likely (perhaps even inevitable) that some of the material generated will be skimmed over or perhaps even lost altogether. Similarly, Squire (1995) and Widdicombe (1995) argue that the researcher's political agenda can result in them passing or 'glossing' over inconvenient aspects of talk, for example, those which contradict their arguments or are inconsistent with their goals. This often means that the intricacy of the material is lost, and further, this does a disservice to those on whose behalf the researcher claims to speak (Widdicombe, 1995).

This is a serious point to consider, and indeed, when dealing with large amounts of material, as is often the case with discourse analytic research, it can be regarded as easy or convenient to 'pass over' some of the material. However, there are a number of points to be raised here. Firstly, the primary concern of the research is with culturally available discourses around femininity and alcohol use in contemporary British society,

as evidenced by the respondents and authors of the media texts tapping into these, *not* with what particular individuals say or think. As such, if a particular utterance falls outside of the discursive patterns identified, and is therefore not paid great analytic attention, this is not regarded as a major failing of the analysis. Further, to attempt an in-depth exploration of every utterance is not only an impossibility here, but may result in a slide back into the kind of highly individualised, psychologised work that the thesis is attempting to move away from. Further, as outlined, Squire (1995) and Widdicombe (1995) argue that material which is inconsistent with the researcher's political goals may be 'glossed over'. However, recurrent discursive patterns and discourses are highly difficult to ignore, and even those which could be regarded as inconsistent with the political commitments and goals of the research can be highly revealing. For example, these can be used to exemplify the pervasiveness of such discourse in society, and as evidence of the need for change, for instance, the construction and promotion of discourses which can provide people with alternative ways of understanding themselves and the world around them (see Sawicki, 1991; Gavey, 1989; Coward, 1984). Finally, high levels of reduction and abstraction of material threaten to result in a limited discussion which lacks richness, diversity and multiplicity of meaning, and so rather than this being 'convenient' for the researcher, it is likely to do damage to their research.

The potential glossing over of material is an example of one way in which the researcher maintains power and control within the research situation (e.g. the power of the researcher to modify or exclude data). Unequal relations of power can be seen to exist within the research situation in a number of different ways on a number of different levels, depending on the particular research situation (those particular to the

research here shall be discussed in the final chapter). However, the researcher's power to treat material selectively, as well as impose interpretation can be regarded as overarching power issues. For example, Gubrium and Silverman, (1989) and Opie (1992) argue that the experiences of informants are often subordinated to a more or less preconceived or imposed interpretative framework. Similarly, Stenner (1993) refers to the ethical problems surrounding the researcher's power and control over other people's words. As those such as Kaminer & Dixon (1995) argue, the meanings imposed upon talk and texts by the researcher may not necessarily correspond to those intended by the speaker or author. Parker (1994b) argues that when researchers are using poststructuralist discourse analysis, they often need make no assumption about what the speaker or writer *meant* to say, the focus being on the wider discourses which the speaker or writer is tapping into. As such, it could be argued that this does not pose a serious consideration here. Yet, this does raise ethical concerns. There are strategies which can be introduced into the research process in order to address such problems, for example, the usage of respondent validation or an exploration how far readings produced fit the participants' own understandings of their discourse (Squire, 1995). However, it is debatable as to how useful respondent validation is, or far this really addresses this problem. For example, Marks (1993) argues that this merely brings about the illusion of democracy in the research process, as once again, the researcher ultimately retains their power or authority. For example, researchers may overlook or modify inconsistencies between their interpretations and those of the participants in much the same way that researchers are accused of (or at least are accused of having the power to) smooth over inconsistencies in their data (as argued previously). Further, the use of respondent validation can be argued to be inconsistent with certain models of research. For instance, disagreement with regards to interpretation on the part of the

respondents could be argued to invalidate the researcher's reading in instances where, for example, the researcher is working with an ethnographic model (Burman, 1994). However, where the research is pitched within a poststructuralist framework (as is the case here) such validation is often not considered necessary, as such objections could be interpreted as evidence that the respondents have particular investments in refusing the interpretation (Opie, 1992). This is one major reason why respondent validation is not considered useful here, as this may result in a never ending analysis of such investments and multiple interpretations.

This leads us back into debates around the relativism inherent within poststructuralist approaches to research (see previous chapter). For example, it has been argued that in the absence of 'ontological guarantees' (Gill, 1991), reflexivity is imperative in order to justify and clarify the interpretations presented. However, Burman and Parker (1993) caution that the reflexive strategies of relativist discourse analysis can result in a *'wallowing in the researcher's interpretative assumptions'* (p. 168) and consequently, political immobilisation. In other words, such 'over indulgent' reflexivity can distract attention away from and undermine the social and political significance of the account, can result in a reluctance to theorise accounts in a wider context and discourage intervention because the account is seen as 'just one reading'. Similar arguments have been presented by those such as Squire (1995), Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Gill (1995) who point out that once engaged in, reflexivity is difficult to finish with and can result in paralysis and a dizzying immersion in the infinite regresses possible, for example, those difficult-to-comprehend factors such as repression and desire.

Taking these arguments into account, it is clear that the reflexive process has to proceed with caution in a number of ways. For one, a reflexive account, particularly one which incorporates an exploration of the researcher's own investments, experiences, desires etc., is in danger of slippage into a highly psychologised, individualistic analysis, whereas the focus here is very much on the social context. For example, this could result in an account which is more about my experiences and desires than discourses around femininity and women's alcohol use. In part, interpretation and reflexive discussion of this will be somewhat self-referential, as it is contended that this will enrich and strengthen the thesis. However, this is not intended to be a self-indulgent project. Caution will be exercised not to allow reflexivity to detract away from the social and political significance of women and alcohol, the highlighting of this being (as outlined) a central aim of the thesis. Similarly, referring back to Burman and Parker's (1993) comments surrounding the reflexive strategies of relativist discourse analysis, the forthcoming chapters will attempt to locate the discourses and systems of meaning identified within a wider context, this being characteristic of research projects working with poststructuralist brands of discourse analysis. However, at the same time, caution will be exercised in drawing 'generalisations' from the research findings, for example, claiming that discourses uncovered are representative of the systems of meaning operating in *all* such contexts. This would lead the analysis back into the kind of universalism that the thesis is critical of. A certain degree of tension between text and context (e.g. Figueroa & Lopez, 1991) does remain, but that is not to say that the readings presented cannot move outside of the text to arrive at wider understandings. For example, discourses are not to creations of individuals, but rather represent shared systems of meaning which are available to people as ways of understanding themselves and the world. As such, the 'tapping into' of those discourses is evidence of their

operation within wider social, cultural and sub-cultural contexts. The final point made by Burman and Parker (1993) surrounding political intervention is perhaps more of a concern here. On one hand, the thesis can be regarded as a political intervention in so far as this draws attention to and challenges discourses around women's alcohol consumption which can work in regulatory and damaging ways. But the thesis is not one which will make any immediate substantial social changes (how would it?). However, the challenging and deconstruction of normative assumptions surrounding a subject area which to date, has not been examined critically within psychology, is a good starting point, and could eventually lead (as suggested in the previous chapter) to the use of alternative interventions and therapeutic approaches to women's 'problematic' alcohol consumption.

Another concern surrounding reflexive practices is the assumption that these will challenge the authority of the researcher and the power imbalances within the research situation. Moreover, Gill (1995) argues that reflexivity can actually reinforce these. She points out that by exploring readings as constructed and informed (e.g. by values, political motives, social positioning etc.) reflexivity can become a powerful way of protecting ones argument against criticism, for example, by acknowledging the reading as one possible one amongst many and countering criticisms before they have actually been raised (in Barthes's sense, the writer has provided an 'inoculation' against critique). As such, one could argue that such reflexivity (reflexivity informed by relativism) can be used as a disguised positivist strategy. Nevertheless, making the process of interpretation more transparent and more accountable makes it more difficult for the researcher to introduce interpretations via 'the back door' (e.g. those which

support their theoretical and political commitments; confer with their own experiences etc.) and makes the accounts presented more credible and solid.

A final ethical consideration which has been raised by those such as Gubrium and Silverman, (1989) and Opie (1992) is that although the aims of research may be well worthy, they may of no immediate benefit to the informants. Politically informed research (particularly action research - e.g. Reinharz, 1992) is argued to be geared towards the empowerment of marginalised or misrepresented groups, and in this respect, is beneficial to those who take part. However, those such as Abrams and Hogg (1990) question the implicit assumption within discourse analytic work that the researcher is specially equipped to identify and represent those said marginalised groups. Further, Burman (1994) argues that an important element of poststructuralist models of research is a questioning of the presumption that participants within the research situation share the same goals as the researcher. For example, an early account of interviewing provided by Bingham and Moore (1959) describes this as a 'conversation with a purpose', but this begs the question, whose purpose? There is some weight to the argument that ultimately, research pursues the purposes of the researcher, for instance, through their gaining increased academic recognition or qualification as a result (Day, 1999). To this extent, research can be regarded as a somewhat 'selfish' endeavour. Taking this into account, the final chapter of the thesis shall explore the benefits of the research to the women who took part. Yet at the same time, there is a concern here that the uncertainty invoked by such arguments could (albeit an extreme example) lead to psychologists abandoning critical projects and filing off back to the laboratories.

5.6 Final Remarks

The chapter has extrapolated the overall approach of the research as qualitative, discursive and reflexive. In addition, the chapter has introduced the research studies, presenting the reasons for conducting these, along with some relevant background literature. The first of these is a media text study which examines media output around the subject of women and alcohol. The second research study, politically motivated to publicise the views of 'ordinary' women, involves the carrying out of focus group interviews around the topic of women and alcohol. The chapter then moved on to describe the analytic approach adopted, this being one which is predominantly characterised by a poststructuralist discourse analysis, but which also incorporates principles of Grounded Theory as a means of generating themes and is sensitive to the action-orientated qualities of talk and texts. This section of the chapter also included a detailed breakdown of the analytic steps involved in order to render this process transparent and provide evidence of it's rigour. Finally, the chapter explored and addressed some major issues surrounding research of this kind. The thesis makes no claim to resolve these issues, some of which, like the theoretical and political concerns discussed in the previous chapter, will be ongoing throughout the thesis. Nor are such problems static – these will undoubtedly mutate as discourse research moves in different directions and new territories, and indeed, discourse researchers are continually meeting and discussing such ways in which the field can move, and how such problems can be addressed. Yet, it is important to highlight such methodological and interpretative issues so that the research can progress from here with a sensitivity towards these, exploring ways in which these can be dealt with. As outlined, some of these issues will be revisited in the final chapter of the thesis. The following chapter provides further detail

pertaining to the methodological processes involved, and results from the first research study which examines media discourse around women and alcohol.

CHAPTER 6 - CONSTRUCTIONS OF FEMINITY AND ALCOHOL IN THE BRITISH NATIONAL PRESS (JANUARY 1998 – DECEMBER 2000)

Introduction

The present chapter is devoted to discussion of the first of the research studies conducted: an examination of media texts around the topic of women and alcohol. As outlined in the previous chapter, women's 'increasing' alcohol consumption has come under scrutiny recently within the British press, and as will be demonstrated in this chapter, the coverage on the whole can be seen to present women who drink as problematic. More specifically, many of the texts sampled and analysed appear to be attempts to consolidate drinking as a male activity, positioning female 'competitors' in this domain (i.e. drinking women) in problematic ways, for example, as vulnerable victims but who are also partially responsible for any harm they may suffer. This echoes many discourses evident within the psychological literature as previously discussed (see chapter two in particular), and as shall be explored in this chapter, such meanings may be of concern to feminists campaigning for justice for women who have been victims of male violence.

The first part of the chapter unpacks the methodological processes involved in the study, for example, sampling of the texts. This also provides further information about the overarching ways in which the texts sampled were read (i.e. ways which have not been extrapolated in the previous chapter's discussion of the analytic procedure applied to texts sampled and produced), these being conducive to the aims of the present study.

The chapter then moves on to present and discuss the findings of the study, exploring the ideological implications of the discourses produced during analysis and concludes by summarising the major systems of meaning around femininity and women's alcohol consumption identified.

6.1 Sampling Decisions

The first sampling decision which was made was that collection of material would be restricted to printed media output only. For example, although recent television programmes (most notably 'chat shows') devoted to this subject area could have provided particularly interactive and dynamic material to work with, it was felt that it would have been difficult to represent such highly visual material in the thesis. The second sampling decision made was that collection of material would be restricted to one type of publication, namely, national newspapers (including their supplements and weekend editions). Many media text studies focus upon output from one particular source (e.g. Ferguson, 1983, McCraken, 1993, Winship, 1987, Betterton, 1987, Ussher, 1997 – women's magazines; Livingstone & Green, 1986, Manstead & McCulloch, 1981, Goffman, 1976 – television advertisements; Entwistle & Hancock-Beaulieu, 1992 – newspapers). As such, this appears to be normative practice. However, in addition, this decision was also taken for practical reasons. For one, a particular preoccupation with women's drinking within national newspapers was noted. This meant that material on or around women and alcohol in such publications was much more readily available. For example, although early efforts were made to collect material from other types of publication (in particular, gender-targeted magazines), this became a rather unproductive venture for two reasons. Firstly, there simply weren't as many articles,

commentaries, features etc. on or around women and alcohol appearing in these publications as there were in national newspapers. Secondly, back-editions of such publications are highly difficult to obtain. Libraries tend only to keep past editions of highly specialised magazines which can be regarded as gender-targeted such as Vogue and Good House Keeping (this was found to be the case at local city libraries), and further, computerised indexes which aid archive searches of material in such publications were not found to be readily available (the use of such indexes shall be discussed further in a moment). Although it was considered that the study may benefit from an exploration of how constructions of women's alcohol consumption differed between different types of publications (e.g. those evident within 'women's spaces' such as women's magazines compared to those evident within national newspapers), it was necessary to collect an equal amount of material for each group (type of publication). For instance, methodological literature around studies which take the media as a focus advises that if such studies involve any kind of comparative investigation (for example, between different kinds of publication), then an equal number of units of meaning[15] should be included in each category or group (e.g. Morant, 1998). The difficulties encountered in gathering material from types of publication other than national newspapers made this extremely difficult. One solution would have been to reduce the sample groups (material sampled from different publications) in size in order to make these more equal. However, this would have resulted in a limited amount of material to work with. As such, it was decided that the study would concentrate on material obtained from national newspapers.

[15] A 'unit of meaning' refers to a single article, picture, image, feature, commentary or advertisement (Morant, 1998).

Another decision was taken to sample material in an inclusive rather than exclusive way. In other words, any unit of meaning on or around the subject of women and alcohol from national newspapers would be collected, whether this be an article on women's said increasing alcohol consumption as a group or about a particular woman's (e.g. a female celebrity) recent night out on the town. Further, it was decided that collection of material would not be restricted to written material such as articles, commentaries etc., but would also include collection of visual material (e.g. photographs, cartoons, advertisements), as these can also be regarded as texts which can be read for meaning (e.g. Burr, 1995). A final decision to be made was how much material to collect. Morant (1998) advises that media text studies of this kind should aim to collect between 15 and 40 units of meaning, depending on the nature of the research question and the substance of the units collected. For example, a single unit can vary from a lengthy article spanning over a number of pages to a short commentary. As such, if the bulk of material collected comprises lengthy articles, then the number of units for analysis can be nearer 15 than 40, in order to render the data more manageable. Taking these guidelines into account, the study aimed to collect approximately 30 units of meaning or text. However, this number was open to revision, for example, this could be increased if the majority of units collected only comprised short commentaries etc. and decreased if mostly lengthy articles were collected. The next section shall present a further breakdown of the sample groups or categories involved in the study.

6.2 Sample Groups

In Britain, national newspapers are generally regarded as falling into two groups: 'broadsheets' and 'tabloids'. The distinction is superficially based on the comparative

sizes of the two kinds of publication, with broadsheets, as the name here suggests, being larger in size. But the labels also reflect differences in target readership, with broadsheets mainly aimed at the educated and professional middle classes and tabloids concentrating on the working or lower middle classes. This is an important point to consider because, as those such as Winship (1983) argue, different forms of femininity are offered to different audiences. For example, Holland (1987) demonstrated how through narrative devices, The Sun newspaper makes a particular class address to women and in doing so, defines feminists as moralists, patronisers and condescending middle class educators. As such, their female readers are encouraged to invest in more traditional forms of femininity, whilst investment in a feminist position is actively discouraged. Further, during their study of health coverage in the British press, Entwistle and Hancock-Beaulieu (1992) found clear differences in the style of reporting and content of articles between 'quality' (broadsheet) and 'popular' (tabloid) newspapers. As such, it was assumed in the early stages of the study that conflicting constructions of femininity and women's alcohol use would be detected in the two kinds of national newspapers outlined here, and so an interest in variability led to the study being based around these two newspaper groupings.

The next stage was to identify titles belonging to each group. This was easier for some titles than others. For example, The Sun is popularly recognised as a tabloid, The Guardian as a broadsheet. However, titles such as The Express and The Daily Mail were a little more difficult to categorise in these terms, as despite being tabloid in size, assume a more 'middle brow' readership. Following the practice of librarians, these two publications were coded as tabloid, whilst being mindful of potential differences. In sum, nine major titles were identified as falling within one of the two newspaper groups,

and so became 'targeted titles', that is, titles from which the study aimed to collect material.

Table 1: Targeted Titles

Broadsheets	**Tabloids**
The Guardian	The Sun
The Telegraph	The Mirror
The Independent	The Daily Star
The Times	The Daily Mail
	The Daily Express

This does not comprise a complete listing of *all* British national newspapers, and indeed, these were targeted titles rather than absolute categories (the intention was not to exclude material from other national titles). However, this did provide the study with a useful framework and direction. As outlined, methodological literature around media text studies advises that where such research projects involve a comparative element, an equal number of meaning units should be included in each sample group, and further, that a minimum of 10 units should be collected for each group (e.g. Morant, 1998). As such, the study aimed to collect 15 units of meaning for each newspaper group, making a total of 30 units in all.

6.3 Collection of Material

Collection of material was conducted using two complementary methods: longitudinal collection and collection of archives. The longitudinal collection of material began in

January 1998 (year one of the research project) and continued until December 2000 (year three), thus spanning almost three years. As such, although this study is being articulated as 'study one', chronologically it represent an over-arching study. The collection of texts over such a long period of time was necessary as the study had a specific focus (women and alcohol), rather than a more general or loosely defined one (e.g. social representations of femininity). In other words, printed media output on or around women and alcohol only appeared every so often, and so restricting the study to a shorter time-span would have seriously limited the amount of material gathered. A range of British newspaper titles were surveyed regularly and consistently with any relevant information being extracted or photocopied and kept in a hard file separated into two sections: 'tabloids' and 'broadsheets'.

However, longitudinal collection can be regarded as a somewhat 'hit and miss' method here, particularly as a detailed reading of a variety of national newspapers on a daily basis was very difficult to maintain due to constraints on time and resources (see final chapter for methodological reflections). Whilst efforts were made to read as much as possible, collection did become particularly active when an event (e.g. a celebrity drink story or the publication of results from an alcohol-related survey) occurred. As such, this was complemented with archive searches in order to ensure more systematic surveillance of relevant material appearing in national newspapers during the time span of the study. The main method for searching for past material which has featured in British national newspapers is via the British Newspaper Index (BNI) and so this was the main search facility used here, with searches being conducted at Sheffield City's Central Library. The BNI is held on a number of CD ROMS at most UK city libraries, with various CDs indexing material from different time periods (e.g. January 1998 –

September 2000). For any given time period, material can be searched for in a variety of ways on the BNI, including searches by title, date and/or subject matter. In this case, searches were conducted via the latter means, for example, keywords and terms such as 'alcohol' and 'women and alcohol' were entered. The information held on the CD ROMS for each of the hits produced (including the name of the newspaper, date, title of the piece, author, an abstract and further keywords) was then surveyed in order to 'sift' out any material which had already been collected or contained no relevant information or discussion, but did feature the keyword(s) entered somewhere in the text (hence the reason this was 'thrown up' by the index). However, as outlined earlier, the emphasis here was on inclusion rather than exclusion, and so if the piece did or was likely to contain relevant discussion, then the hit was recorded.

Following conduction of archive searches, the next stage was to view and collect revelvant material. The central libraries of Sheffield and Leeds hold back editions spanning many decades of the major broadsheet titles (The Guardian, The Independent and The Times), including their supplements and weekend editions on microfilm in their reference sections. As such, hits from these publications were viewed using a special piece of equipment designed for this purpose, and if relevant information was found in the text (it was sometimes uncertain from the information held on the BNI whether the pieces would be useful), then these were photocopied, again using special library equipment. However, the relevant reels of microfilm for some of the hits were often found to be missing. A further problem was that full archive collections only existed for the major broadsheet titles cited above. Hard copies of back editions dating only three months were held at Sheffield and Leeds Central Libraries for some tabloid titles (e.g. The Daily Mail), but others (notably, the other tabloid titles in table 1) were

not kept at all. This limited the collection of tabloid material via this method, highlighting the usefulness of longitudinal collection[16]. Some hits obtained from the BNI searches which were of interest but could not be collected locally for these reasons were eventually obtained through The British Library (Newspaper Library) based in London.

6.4 Balancing the Groups

The target number of meaning units for collection (15 for each group, 30 in total) was met. In fact, a slightly greater number of units was collected for each group, but did not exceed 20 in either case, and so the original numbers of units intended for analysis were maintained. In order to render the groups equal in size (i.e. to have 2 groups which each contained 15 units), a small amount of material had to be excluded from the study. Some of the units collected were regarded as slightly weaker or less useful than others, for example, short commentaries which only mentioned women and alcohol in passing were considered less useful than lengthy articles devoted to this topic. As such, it was the former material which was primarily selected for exclusion. The result was that 2 short commentaries and 13 long articles were included in the 'tabloid' group, and 1 short commentary and 14 long articles in the 'broadsheet' group (a full list of all the articles and commentaries is provided in appendix 1). In cases where written text was accompanied by visual imagery, both were considered together as one unit.

[16] Another major advantage of longitudinal collection, as described in the previous chapter, is that this allowed for observation of 'what was going on in Britain/the world' at the time of press.

6.5. Approach to Analysis

The material gathered was subjected to the analytic procedure detailed in the previous chapter (see section 5.4) in order to clearly and systematically identify in-vivo themes and discourses. In addition, the material was read with a sensitivity towards a number of features, which included:

1. Multiplicity, complexity and contradiction within a single unit of meaning e.g.:

- Different and conflicting constructions of women and alcohol evident in the text;
- The different and conflicting subject positions that these create for women.

2. Variability across time and space including:

- Similarities and differences between the constructions of women and alcohol circulating within the media and those circulating within the academic literature;
- Differences and similarities in the forms of femininity and constructions of women and alcohol offered to different readerships (e.g. tabloids vs. broadsheets) and offered by authors of different gender;
- Attention towards time scale e.g. how constructions may or may not have shifted over the time span of the study (nearly three years);
- How women's alcohol use across the globe may be constructed in comparison to women's alcohol use in Britain.

3. The generation of contemporary forms of knowledge e.g. the concept of 'binge-drinking' and feminine subjectivities e.g. the 'geezer bird'; 'the ladette'.

4. The 'objectification' of social constructions of femininity and women's alcohol use through visual imagery (Morant, 1998).

5. The ideological implications of constructions of women and alcohol evident in the media texts, including a sensitivity towards:

- Representation of the 'other' and the male gaze;
- Anti-feminist backlash (e.g. Faludi, 1992);
- How women are positioned within unequal relations of power;
- Meanings which are excluded or suppressed;
- Forms of social action which are invited and discouraged by such constructions.

ANALYSIS

6.6 In-Vivo Themes

In-vivo themes which were identified during analysis included, for example, 'body', 'health', 'consumption patterns', 'dangers and risks' and 'ladettes'. A full list of all in-vivo themes identified for this study can be seen in appendix 2.

6.7 From 'Laddism' to 'Gender Neutrality': Shifting Meanings

There was evidence in the media texts gathered of a shift in meanings surrounding the gendered construction of alcohol consumption. Furthermore, it appears that something of struggle over such meanings has occurred within the space of the British media in

recent years. However, as shall be illustrated and discussed, it does appear that despite competition, more traditional constructions remain largely dominant.

For example, one of the first major discursive patterns which was identified during analysis was one which constructed alcohol consumption in masculinised terms, and as such, we can see a reproduction of this long-standing gendering of drinking. This is evident, for example, when one examines the language used in the media texts to describe contemporary female drinking in Britain (which was constructed across the media texts gathered as being on the increase) and forms of feminine identity characterised partly in terms of alcohol consumption (e.g. The Express, 9th July, 1998 contends that *'The typical new woman will drink beer out of pint glasses'*). For instance, this is illustrated by headlines such as *'Wild new ways of girls who love to be lads'* (The Express, 9th July, 1998 – emphasis added) which have appeared in British newspapers in recent years. Similarly, women were constructed as competing with men in the drinking stakes, for example:

Extract 1

'Girls are boozing harder than ever and are almost matching blokes pint for pint, a report revealed yesterday.'

(The Sun - 19th April, 2000)

Extract 2

'Women are matching men drink for drink.'

(The Observer - 12th December, 1999)

The implication here appears to be that women are competing with men *at their own game,* male consumption levels being constructed here as the normative, unquestioned

benchmark against which female consumption levels are (unfavourably) judged and evaluated. Further, an article from The Observer (12th December, 1999) draws links between the effects of alcohol consumption and male biology, specifically, that drinking increases levels of testosterone in the bloodstream. The article warns women that this effect can result in the deepening of their voices and make them hairier, and so in the long term, *'if she* [any woman] *drinks like a man she may start to look like one'*. Further than this, recent years have seen a media construction and circulation (most evident in the late 1990s) of new, male-centered forms of language in order to describe such contemporary female behaviour and identities. Namely, concepts have emerged such as 'laddism' (The Express, 9th July, 1998), 'ladette culture' (Guardian Unlimited, 19th April, 2000) and 'the ladette' (e.g. The Express, 9th July, 1998; The Observer, 12th December, 1999; The Guardian, 12th May, 2000; The Sun, 19th April, 2000). This continues the trend of the linguistic practice of adding diminutive suffixes to established terms in order to signify the female version ('actress', 'countess' etc.) which Spender (1982) argues reinforces 'plus male minus female' relations.

The need to construct such new forms of language to comprehend contemporary feminine behaviours and associated identities appears to have been incurred precisely because alcohol consumption has traditionally (and still is, as demonstrated here) been constructed in masculinised terms which position women outside of this. Yet, the conceptual framework here has remained the same through the use of such male-centred language, and so we can see a reproduction (rather than a challenging) of the masculinisation of alcohol consumption. As such, these phallo-centric forms of language are ones within which any notion of femininity becomes invisible. This is problematic for women in a number of interrelated ways. For one, this production of

lexical gaps within which women are without words to describe and frame their identities and actions in a non-masculine way denies femininities an independence or active agency of their own. Those such as Moi (1986) argue that the assertion of such agency has been one of the main aims of feminist struggles, and so we can see the detrimental implications of such media discourse. Yet in addition, what we appear to have here is a construction of such femininities as representing some form of fake or imitatory masculinity which is reminiscent of Freudian constructions of femininity.

In conjunction, women investing in such masculinised forms of identity, and drinking women more generally, are constructed across the media texts as departing from traditional femininity (or as Libby Brooks, Guardian's women's editor puts it *'wilfully ignoring the virtues of femininity'* - Guardian Unlimited, 19th April, 2000), a manoeuvre which is constructed as gathering speed. This departure from the virtues of femininity is 'grounded' across the media texts within two issues in particular: appearance and motherhood. For example, as indicated in the article from The Observer (12th December, 1999) cited previously, departure in one respect (by indulging in male vices such as alcohol consumption) can lead to departure in another (loss of feminine, good looks – the 'crux' of normative, desirable femininity). Indeed, warning messages concerning the effects of drinking on the female appearance were evident across a number of articles and commentaries gathered. For example, the Daily Mail (1st September, 1998) similarly warns women that drinking can have detrimental effects on their appearance through weight gain (*'alcohol causes weight gain because it is rich in calories'*) and poor complexion (e.g. *'lack of condition, dryness, spots and other blemishes'*). Further, health warnings in the media texts concentrated upon the effects of alcohol consumption upon female fertility and unborn children more than any other

health issue. For example, an article from the Daily Mail (1st September, 2000), accompanied by an image of an attractive young woman holding a baby (an epitomal image of normative, desirable femininity - see appendix 3) warns women that even low levels of alcohol consumption can make it harder for them to conceive. Similarly, two further articles (Daily Mail and The Guardian - 27th January, 2000) both reported on research recently carried out by psychologists at Queens University in Belfast, which concluded that drinking even small amounts of alcohol during pregnancy can affect an unborn baby's brain and central nervous system, which can in turn result in delayed child development later on. The Daily Mail presented this as front page news, accompanied by the large, bold, 'screaming' headline: *'Pregnant women warned: Avoid all alcohol'* (see appendix 4). This is particularly interesting and revealing when compared to another commentary gathered from the same newspaper entitled *'Alcohol is killing more men'* (16th November, 1999) in terms of how this is presented within the newspaper, notably, in terms of size, visual prominence and the amount of space attributed (see appendix 5). This could be taken as support for arguments presented by those such as Cooke and Allan (1984) that in Western culture, women are predominantly constructed as wives and mothers, this being a major reason why female drinking is regarded as requiring special explanation and focus, particularly (I would add here) when drinking is regarded as posing a threat to this central virtue of femininity.

In sum here, it appears that such discourses and the positions or identities that these create ('the drinking woman'; 'the ladette') are problematic for women. Indeed, one could go further to argue that such discourses, in a sense, create no position at all or at least one that is not valid. Such positions appear to sit uncomfortably somewhere

between 'true' masculinity and normative, desirable femininity, not really belonging to either one. To invest in such positions and drinking practices is to deny traditional femininity and the virtues associated with this (e.g. child bearing, feminine good looks, moderation), whilst at the same time, falsely imitating masculinity and acting as *' a pretender to a world of male vice on which she* [any woman] *has no rightful purchase '* (Guardian Unlimited, 19th April, 2000).

Yet in recent years, the media has not just represented a site where such masculine language has been circulated and reproduced (mostly by male journalists) - this has also acted as a site of resistance (mostly on the part of female celebrities and writers) to such definitions and discourse. However, alternative representations have often remianed elusive. For example, note the comments of the then Radio One D.J. Zoe Ball, who is represented by two of the articles gathered as an archetypal celebrity ladette (The Express, 9th July 1998; The Sun, 19th April, 2000), and television presenter Lauren Booth, both of whom reject the ladette label:

Extract 3

'It's not about being a ladette. It's about being a single woman today.'

(Lauren Booth - The Express, 9th July, 1998).

Extract 4

'The thing is, I've never professed myself to be anything other than what I am. I've always been out with the lads having a good time and I've never been particularly ashamed of myself for doing so.'

(Zoe Ball – The Express, 9th July, 1998)

Here, Karen Booth constructs contemporary feminine behaviours (e.g. alcohol consumption and related activities) as being part of modern lifestyles for women, rather than the 'buying into' of a particular form of identity. What is particularly interesting about Zoe Ball's comments is that these indicate an awareness on her part that the ladette label, when attached to women, has negative connotations (as previously argued here), and as such, she appears to feel the need to defend herself against accusations of laddism and distance herself from this definition (as put in The Express, *'she is a little worried about her behaviour leading to accusations of laddism'*). Indeed, in another article, there is further support for the argument that laddish behaviour on the part of women is viewed negatively or unfavourable in comparison to such behaviour on the part of men:

Extract 5

'Sometime Oasis singer Liam Gallagher was in spectacularly drunken form at this week's Q Awards and no one batted an eyelid. If it had been Caroline Aherne wrestling journalists, heckling winners and throwing bottles of beer at walls we'd all have been writing her professional obituary. Instead, we laughed at Liam's ridiculously laddish behaviour and wrote it off as rock 'n roll excess'.

(The Sun – 2nd November, 2000)

The women whose comments have been discussed here do have interests in rejecting these discourses and the identities that these create. For example, by overtly investing in or subscribing to the 'ladette' image, those such as Zoe Ball could be open to accusations of media-grabbing pretension. However, such comments do raise issues around powerful, male constructions of the 'other' within the media or what Foucault (1988) describes as the *'generalised male witness* (which) *comes to structure woman's consciousness of herself as a bodily being'* (p. 77).

But how to avoid falling back on the masculine? One strategy which was identified was one which urges the retention of femininity or denies that modern drinking women are trying to be like men. For example, Sophie Spence (head of new product development at Whitbread) argues:

Extract 6

'The important thing to realise about these changes is that they aren't about girls acting like blokes; it's about girls being able to do some of the things blokes do without compromising their femininity.'

(The Guardian – 12th May, 2000).

What is particularly interesting about this extract is that it directly competes with the discourses discussed earlier which do construct female drinkers, particularly 'ladettes', as comprising their (normative) femininity. As we approach to turn of the century, it appears that concepts such as 'laddism' and 'the ladette' are still favoured by the tabloids, possibly because of the sensationalism attached to these, this being according to those such as Entwistle and Hancock-Beaulieu (1992) a defining characteristic of tabloid content. However, within the spaces of the broadsheets, it appears that around this time these concepts come into competition with alternatives such as 'regendering', 'gender neutrality' and the 'CKOne approach' (e.g. The Guardian, 12th May, 2000). What these concepts basically refer to is:

Extract 7

'The current convergence of male and female taste and consumption; the way women get tattoos, like football, watch strippers, buy erotic fiction and go on lone holidays, for example, while men learn to use cosmetics, do aerobics, cook and read magazines.'

(The Guardian – 12th May, 2000)

Here, the implication appears to be that it makes no sense to talk about laddism or ladettes anymore because alcohol consumption and other activities (as described above) which are traditionally 'male' or 'masculine', are no longer the preserve of men. Indeed, an overall discursive pattern which was identified during analysis (as shall be discussed further at a later point in the chapter) was one which constructs drinking culture as becoming increasingly feminised, or as Chris McDonough (marketing controller at Bacardi Breezer producers Westbay) puts it, the *'feminisation of drinking'* (The Guardian, 12th May, 2000). Overall, the 'gender bending' picture which is constructed here is a much wider one, where it is no longer a case of women entering into male domains and trying to be like men, but one where men are also engaging in practices traditionally associated with femininity. In sum, there is an overall 'breaking down' of gender categories and boundaries, and a wider circulation of discourses which challenge and deconstruct essentialist constructions of gender.

However, what is missing from these reports is the concept of power, as if traditional expectations around gender have suddenly vanished to reveal a brave new world of personal choice and androgyny. Notably, this is reminiscent of liberal feminist ideas which were discussed and criticised in chapters three and four. Indeed, many of the criticisms raised there can be applied here. For example, this may be a valid scenario for centre-left, middle class 'Guardian readers', but it is clear (as previously discussed in the thesis and illustrated here) that the indulgence of 'non-traditional' roles on the part of women (and men) such as alcohol consumption is often met with disaproval and even punishment, and so the notion of agency here is undermined. Discourses and definitions which construct alcohol in masculinised terms do remain pervasive, and further than

this, more dominant than these somewhat marginalised concepts such as 'gender neutrality'. One explanation for this could be an interest (particularly on the part of men) to retain or reclaim alcohol consumption as theirs (i.e. a masculine activity), and so again, power appears to remain central.

6.8 Class and Alcohol Consumption: A Shift in Focus

As outlined, new or contemporary forms of femininity (women subscribing to or taken as representing these being described as *'new women'* or *'ladettes'*) are partly characterised by the media texts gathered in terms of alcohol consumption. Another defining characteristic of the typical 'ladette', according the media reports, is that she is likely to have *'a good career'*, perhaps in *'publishing, PR, advertising, accountancy or law'* and as a result, has *'serious spending power'* (The Express, 9th July, 1998). In sum, it is British women's increasing financial power and independence which is constructed as the crux of their new lifestyles, for example:

Extract 8

'The survey noted that a new financial independence was helping women change the lifestyles that had been the norm for their parents.'

(The Express - 9th July, 1998)

This is very similar to arguments presented by those such as Cardenas (1995), Kua (1994) and Medina-Mora (1994), who have identified changes in women's roles (e.g. increased entry into the workforce) and a resulting independence as increasing the likelihood that women will drink in countries (e.g. in Asia and Africa, Central and South America) where female consumption has not been considered acceptable in the

past (see chapter three). However, further than this, what we appear to have emerging here is a construction of the contemporary, British pint drinking 'new woman' or 'ladette' as middle class. Not all women have careers (e.g. in PR, advertising, law etc., as described by the article from The Express) and serious spending power – only those from certain sections of society. Indeed, a major discursive pattern which was identified was one which located contemporary female drinking patterns and increasing female consumption in Britain within middle class culture in particular:

Extract 9

'Women from the professional classes are three times more likely to drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week (18 per cent) than those living in unskilled households (16 per cent).'

(The Daily Star - 26th March, 1998)

Extract 10

'A new generation of young professional women are said to be operating a "debits and credits" system, balancing gym-going with gin-swilling.'

(Guardian Unlimited – 19th April, 2000)

Extract 11

'Hands up all you young, style conscious, affluent, urban women out there: experts say you're to blame for the recent boom in female boozing.'

(The Guardian – 12th May, 2000)

This echoes the findings of recent large-scale surveys reporting that women over the age of twenty four from professional or managerial backgrounds report drinking more than other women (e.g. Breeze, 1985; Goddard & Ikin, 1988; Heller *et al,* 1988; Waterson & Murray Lyon, 1989; ONS, 1998). Further than this, discussions around middle class and professional women's alcohol consumption in the media have focused upon issues

surrounding more problematic drinking (although the suggestion here is not that the behaviours and lifestyles of so-called 'ladettes' are represented in the media texts in unproblematic terms). For instance, an article featured in The Guardian (11th November, 1999) refers to an unnamed solicitor and teacher who had recently been in the headlines for *'hitting the bottle'*. The author of the article, Helen Dunmore, remarks that:

Extract 12

'These women's professions are emphasised in the reporting. It is important to the stories that these are women with status. They have careers, not jobs.'

(The Guardian - 11th November, 1999)

These statements thus further construct social class as a central issue in recent media discussions around women and alcohol. A recurring discourse within these articles and commentaries was one which constructed 'work-related stress' as a central cause of problematic drinking patterns among middle class and professional women. For example, Helen Dunmore states that the unnamed teacher gave *'evidence of work-related stress'* (The Guardian, 11th November, 1999) for her alcohol abuse. A further article gathered from The Guardian contended that *'young professional women follow the male habit of an after work drink to wind down from a stressful day'* (19th April, 2000). Once again here, we can also see the construction of alcohol consumption in masculinised terms. A further example is an article from The Daily Mail (5th August, 1998) reporting upon comedienne Caroline Aherne's self-confessed alcohol addiction. The article cites *'the pressures of her work'* on three occasions as being a likely reason for her alcohol abuse.

The construction of women as drinking in order to self-medicate problems is a long-standing one (see chapters one and two). Note also that in addition to stress (the most often quoted 'cause' of problematic drinking amongst women in contemporary Britain across the texts gathered), a link was also drawn in one article (Daily Mail, 1st September, 1998) between female drinking and depression (this being previously discussed as a pervasive one in the psychological literature - see chapter two). As argued, this leads to a suppression of pleasure discourse around female alcohol consumption. Indeed, Foucault (1979) argues that historically, there has been a repression and undervaluation of female pleasures in Western society, and although he discusses this with particular reference to female sexuality, there appears to be support here for the continuation of this in contemporary British society with regards to certain aspects of women's leisure (alcohol consumption). Interestingly, this suppression of pleasure discourse around women's alcohol consumption was acknowledged within one article gathered from The Guardian (16th November, 2000) which contained resistant discourse surrounding the construction of female drinking as self-medication and the presentation of a pleasure discourse. In the article, the author (Laura Hird) contends:

Extract 13

'New research suggests women are drinking more to relieve stress. Or is it just because they like it?

(The Guardian – 16th November, 2000)

However, the article was a unique one in it's construction of female drinking in terms of pleasure, and so it does appear that a pleasure discourse remains suppressed. What is particularly new here is this focus upon female alcohol consumption within middle class culture. As argued in chapter three, it is the drinking behaviours of the working class

which have historically been the predominant focus of observation and concern (Finch, 1993). One article refers to this when it discusses how *'200 years ago, gin was dubbed "mother's ruin" because of it's great popularity among working class mothers'* (The Observer, 12th December, 1999; see also Waterson, 2000). In addition, as pointed out by Skeggs (1997), it is working class femininities which are often constructed by the media in terms of excess and lack of restraint (e.g. the over-weight television character 'Roseanne' played by Roseanne Arnold). In contrast, it is professional and middle class women who are now being dubbed the *'gin swillers'* (see extract 10) and presented as indulging in excessive consumption.

So why the shift in focus? For one, it was noted that the focus upon female drinking patterns and practices within middle class culture was more pervasive within the broadsheet newspapers. This is perhaps because middle class and professional women represent a large proportion of the readership of major broadsheet titles such as The Guardian, and so there is a concentration upon issues surrounding this group of women. As outlined, those such as Winship (1983) argue that different forms of femininity are offered to different readerships. In this case, the forms of femininity offered appear to be those which 'mirror' the assumed practices of the female readership. However, the representations offered by the media take on different forms for different reasons (e.g. serve certain purposes; pursue certain agendas), which shall now be discussed and which can perhaps be read as 'shedding light' upon this recent shift in class focus. Firstly, certain statements in the texts gathered construct women, particularly middle class and professional women, as competing with men not just in the drinking stakes, but also in the employment market, for example:

Extract 14

'The number of women earning more than £25,000 a year has doubled since 1991. Unemployment among women is just 2.8 per cent compared to 6.8. per cent for men.'

(The Express - 9th July, 1998)

Although these unemployment figures refer to the population at large, there appears to be a particular focus here upon higher-earning professional women, particularly because of the reference made to the increased number of women earning more than the amount stated. As such, women are constructed as competing with men not just for jobs, but the jobs that matter. As such, one explanation for the shift in focus could be that middle class women today are regarded as posing a greater threat to the traditionally masculine occupation of powerful positions and public spaces. Further, the underlying message of the examples cited which construct work related stress as a central cause of problematic drinking amongst this group of women, whether intentional or not, appears to be that 'women can't cope' with these positions. Of course, drinking as a means of relieving or self-medicating work-related stress is applied to men also (e.g. The Guardian, 19th April, 2000 – see above), but with the exception of this one example, this discourse was applied exclusively to professional women in the texts analysed. One explanation could be that the texts gathered were ones which focused upon women's alcohol consumption rather than men's. But rarely did the texts exclude all mention of men's alcohol consumption (the classic trend of cross-gender comparison was in evidence) and the message here about women's coping strategies remains the same. This could be construed as a backlash (Faludi, 1992), an attempt to preserve or reinstate certain positions and public domains as masculine ones.

A further explanation for the degree of media attention surrounding such classed, contemporary forms of femininity and associated practices (e.g. those pertaining to alcohol consumption) relates to the language of deviance which pervades the texts gathered. This is exemplified by headlines such as *'Why girls are behaving badly'* (The Express, 9th July, 1998) and *'Boozing women behaving badly'* (The Observer, 12th December, 1999), and extracts such as the following:

Extract 15

'For all our specious theorising about ladette culture, the prevailing ethos remains that drinking – and more importantly getting drunk – tells a particular story about a woman. She is immoderate and probably immoral [...] *She is wilfully ignoring the virtues of femininity which grant her status* [...] *The woman who drinks is too loud, too brazen, too obvious...and a bad woman.'*

(Guardian Unlimited - 19th April, 2000)

As argued in chapter four, the language of deviance has traditionally surrounded (black and white) working class femininities (see Blackman, 1996; Skeggs, 1997; Hill, 1986; Kuhn, 1988; Nead, 1988). As such, working class women have come to be positioned outside of normative femininity, which has developed as a sign based upon white, middle and upper class ideals (Ware, 1992). Taking this into account, it is perhaps likely that if the surveys discussed in the texts gathered had identified working class women as being those within this gender group who were consuming the most alcohol and engaging in unruly practices (e.g. having multiple sexual partners), then this news would not have received so much attention and being surrounded by so much controversy. Note that one article gathered from the Daily Mail (6th October, 1999) reported upon the suspension of four girls from one of Britain's most exclusive boarding schools after smuggling in alcohol. If this had occurred in a state school,

would it have made the papers? It is highly unlikely. The point is, when it is middle class women who are identified as deviating (or as Libby Brooks puts it *'wilfully ignoring the virtues of femininity'*) from that which they are taken to represent ('correct', normative femininity), a greater threat is posed to traditional femininity itself and a patriarchal and capitalist social order which is dependent upon the maintenance and continuation of this. In sum, it could be argued that middle class women are now also regarded as posing a threat to social order and the status quo (perhaps the greatest threat), where traditionally, it is working class women (see Skeggs, 1997; Weeks, 1981; Gilman, 1992; Ware, 1992) who have been regarded as such.

6.9 Space Invaders: The Feminisation of Public Space and Consumer Culture

As already discussed, women are constructed both in the social scientific literature (see chapter three in particular) and within the media texts gathered as increasingly entering into traditionally masculinised domains and public spaces such as the workforce, the professions and the pub. Further, as previously outlined, a system of statements identified during analysis constructed drinking culture more generally as becoming increasing feminised. For example, an article which featured in the Daily Mail (29th August, 2000) constructs women as increasingly invading the traditionally masculinised culture of wine quaffing and expertise:

Extract 16

'In recent years, women have seized many of the senior positions in the wine world [...] *There are now all-girl wine-tasting sessions and numerous courses aimed at women who want to develop their palates. Wine lunches at the pukka London wine merchants Justerini & Brooks, whose big-windowed showroom on St. James's is within spittoon-rattling distance of Clarence House, are no longer exclusively for*

chaps. Justerini's staff may still be charming ex-public schoolboys, but today's clientele includes a growing number of women.'

(Daily Mail – 29th August, 2000; emphasis added)

Note the language which the author of the article (Quentin Letts) uses here – women have *seized* these positions, not earnt them. They are *invading* such domains, not entering them. Indeed, Letts is quite open about his position on the said feminisation of the world of wine snobbery: he is vehemently opposed to it. His comments construct wine quaffing and expertise as essentially and rightfully a masculine domain (e.g. *'Everything about the wine, from choosing it to laying it down to decanting it, is a masculine activity'; 'Wine is truly men's work'*). The article is littered with sexist and derogatory remarks which position women outside of the world of wine expertise such as (to cite but a few) *'She* [his wife] *would buy it* [wine] *too young and doubtless spend too much. Women always do'* and *'How often do you see a woman set about a cork with a flourish and draw it from the bottle neck with an accomplished "plop"?'* The article is also littered with nostalgia and once again, backlash discourse. For example, Letts argues that the so-called feminisation of wine quaffing culture and expertise is *'another step towards the mothballing of the male of the species'* and that this:

Extract 17

'Robs men of another of the diminishing number of activities in which they could claim to provide a useful function. It's goodbye to another of those small bastions which helped to give men a notion of their position in the bewildering galaxy of modern life.'

(Daily Mail – 29th August, 2000; emphasis added)

Once again, he also taps into the kind of warning discourse surrounding increasing female alcohol consumption which has saturated media texts in recent years:

Extract 18

'From a health point of view, it may not be good news that women are losing their inhibitions about wine. The Office for National Statistics has estimated that one in five women consume more alcohol than is good for her. Alcohol Concern is worried about the growing number of working women who may be overdoing it on the drink front.'

(Daily Mail – 29th August, 2000).

It has been previously argued that such 'warning' discourse could represent a backlash response to the increasing feminisation of public domains and female versus male competition in the drinking and employment stakes. I would argue that Letts's comments are the strongest evidence so far to support this argument, given the wider context of the dicussion. Finally, the imagery which accompanies Letts's article appears to crystalise it's discourses around gender, wine quaffing and expertise. This constitutes a cartoon drawing of an attractive woman caressing an oversized, phallic bottle of wine with a stereotypical image of a monocled English gent holding a glass of wine in the background and shaking his fist angrily at her (see appendix 6). This theme of the emacsulating woman has been found in a number of other studies and it seems to exert much fascination for many men in contemporary society (see Faludi, 1992; Denis, 1992; Gough & Peace, 2000).

Yet despite the objections of those such as Letts, a number of texts gathered construct the increasing female entry into public drinking spaces (e.g. *'Until recently, serious boozing – in public, at least – has been a male monopoly. No longer'* - The Observer, 12th December, 1999), and the feminisation of consumption culture as being supported by leisure, food and drink retailers. For example, Letts discusses how in light of recent

findings that women have overtaken men as the buyers of wine, *'a leading supermarket disclosed that it's wine department is to be run by an all-female team'* (Daily Mail, 29th August, 2000). Further, note the following extracts reporting upon the 'new look' of cities' bars and pubs:

Extract 19

'The growing influence of female drinkers has already registered favourably in the look of our cities' bars and pubs (style bars, flowers and cosmetics in the loo, bigger windows, better food, use of aspirant male models as bar staff).'

(The Guardian – 12th May, 2000)

Extract 20

'Pub chains such as All Bar One are explicitly creating environments to attract women: big windows, light food, large wine selections. "Simple things like putting newspapers into bars helps", said Bob Cartwright, communications director for Bass Leisure Retail, which owns the All Bar One outlets. "Women tell us that if they are meeting someone and they are waiting on their own, it helps to be able to read. If they look around it has been known to catch the eye of a predatory male."'

(The Observer - 12th December, 1999)

Extract 20 constructs recent changes in the physical environment of many public drinking places as being largely centred around concerns to create safe and comfortable drinking spaces for women. However, a competing system of statements construct such shifts as being mobilised in the interests of cold hard cash. For example, the article from The Observer (extract 20) returns to a discussion of women's increasing financial independence, stating that *'leisure retailers are competing feverishly for women's money'*. Also, note the following extracts:

Extract 21

'Canny breweries have built bright white bars to welcome the women. The modern woman is profitable as well as pilloried.'

(Guardian Unlimited - 19th April, 2000)

Extract 22

'This woman [the affluent, urban woman] *is earning more and more money and spending more of it on booze. The problem for the industry is that it has been so male-dominated for so long that it just doesn't understand her very well: until the 90s, most drinks companies thought women so unimportant that they didn't even bother to research to market. The catch up work should lead to major changes in what we drink, and where we drink it, over the next few years.'*

(The Guardian - 12th May, 2000)

Extract 23

'The big battle for the female pound (or £2.50) is currently taking place in the chiller cabinet behind the bar. It's between the "spirit mixers", chiefly Bacardi Breezer (market leader, now outselling lots of big-name bottled beers), Vodka Source (fastest growing brand, street-style marketing) and Smirnoff Ice (relative newcomer but booming).'

(The Guardian - 12th May, 2000)

Extracts 22 and 23 construct a wider feminisation of the leisure industry which is not just restricted to changes in the physical environment of many drinking spaces (as described) but has also fed into activities at the research stage (which, as discussed, has being traditionally concerned with male drinkers) and has influenced the types of beverages which pubs and bars stock up on. In particular, there is an emphasis upon what The Guardian (12th May, 2000) describes as *'essentially up-market versions of alcopops'* (various types or brands of these outlined in extract 23), which are constructed across many of the media texts gathered as 'feminine' drinks:

Extract 24

'Do you notice, the majority of drinks promotions are for those trendy bottled spirits with alluring names to which women are drawn?'

(The Guardian – 16th November, 2000)

There appears to be support here for arguments presented by those such as Douglas (1979) and Squire (1995) that popular culture has become feminised in modern times. They argue that this has been due to, amongst other things, the supposition that women are the ones who consume this with the least restraint and analysis, thus pointing to the gender biased assumptions operating within capitalist markets such as the drinks and leisure industries in modern day Britain as opposed to progressive politics. Further, this notion that public drinking spaces and drinking culture in general are becoming feminised is a highly contentious one. For example, as discussed, a system of statements evident in the media texts constructed public drinking spaces as becoming increasingly 'female friendly', ones where women can enjoy a drink alone whilst waiting for a friend without having to worry about attracting the attention of predatory males (see extract 20). Yet, a competing system of statements constructed public drinking environments as still being ones where women are subjected to the male gaze and surveillance. For example, Helen Dunmore, writing for The Guardian, contends that women *'have to be wary'* in public spaces because *'bar staff make judgements, male customers make advances'* (11th November, 1999). Similarly, Libby Brooks contends that *'women who drink in public still face society's medieval desire for them moderate their behaviour'* (Guardian Unlimited, 19th April, 2000). Here, in contrast, public drinking spaces are constructed as ones which can be decidedly uncomfortable for women. Moreover, Helen Dunmore goes on to argue that *'Women are most themselves in private spaces'* (The Guardian - 11th November, 1999).

Such statements can be read as ideally locating women out of the public realm and back into the private. Indeed, Helen Dunmore and Libby Brooks' remarks generally (i.e. around public surveillance), however well intentioned, can be read as sending out warning messages to women who drink in public spaces. Yet, it would be something of a mistake to assume that women who drink in private as opposed to public spaces escape the disapproving gaze. The surveillance of women's alcohol consumption is conducted at such an organised, institutionalised level (for example, through the media and the medical and 'psy' disciplines), that women may feel this every time they pick up a magazine or newspaper and read an article which constructs women's drinking in problematic terms. Further, as a result of the feelings of guilt, shame etc. incurred by this, women may engage in 'self-regulation' of their drinking which Foucault (1977) argues is often the most powerful form of policing. In sum, we appear to have a discursive pattern emerging here which constructs female occupation of public spaces or domains (e.g. the professions, pubs and clubs) in negative terms, highlighting the detrimental consequences of this for women (e.g. drinking in order to self-medicate work-related stress; surveillance and subjection to the male gaze). Further than this, a discursive pattern which constructs public drinking spaces as not only uncomfortable for women, but further, as potentially dangerous, was also identified. This shall be discussed throughout the following two sub-sections of the chapter (6.10 and 6.11).

Also, it must be noted that just as newspapers (particularly the broadsheets) have focused their attention recently on particular, classed forms of femininity partly characterised by alcohol consumption, it is a particular section or type of drinking establishment which is described by the newspapers (again, particularly the

broadsheets) as becoming increasingly feminised. Namely, this is the new 'trendy' bars and pubs such as 'All Bar One' (as referred to in extract 20). Once again, the focus is upon middle class drinking culture, as it is a middle class or professional clientele that typically frequent such establishments. As argued, it is no coincidence that this focus has characterised recent broadsheet output, as it is this section of society who represent a large proportion of the readership of this type of newspaper. As such, the construction here of drinking culture as becoming increasingly feminised is very much located within a middle class cultural context, although this is often discussed in universal terms. There are two points to be made here. Firstly, drinking places such as All Bar One are a far cry from traditional back-street pubs and Working Men's Clubs in deprived inner city areas, which are often still very male dominated. Secondly, it appears that other forms of drinking culture (e.g. working class drinking culture) have been rendered somewhat invisible within the British press in recent years, this applying to both the broadsheets and tabloids. This tendency can perhaps be located within a wider socio-political context, where the British Prime Minister likes to speak of the 'rise and sprawl' of the middle classes, having us believe that we are all middle class now, and again, rendering the working class relatively invisible. Taken together, these points emphasise the importance of exploring different types of drinking culture, this being a concern of the second study which is discussed in the following two chapters.

6.10 Male Violence: Disturbing Victim Discourse and The Attribution of Responsibility

A number of the articles gathered drew links between male aggression and alcohol consumption. This is not surprising, given that this link is a long-standing one (see chapters one and two). A major discursive pattern which was identified in such texts was one which positioned women as victims of such violence. For example, a short

commentary featured in The Independent (7th December, 1998) reported that according to Alcohol Concern, 60 to 70 per cent of men who assault their partners are under the influence. Similarly, the Observer article previously cited reported that in between 30 and 40 per cent of domestic violence incidents, the man has been drinking (12th December, 1999). The implication here is that this is violence which occurs behind 'closed doors' in domestic spaces. However, other articles gathered located male violence within public drinking spaces. Indeed, despite the so-called feminisation of drinking culture and public space, drinking contexts were constructed as potentially dangerous places for women. The chapter has already discussed how some statements within the articles gathered position women in public drinking places within the field of vision of the male gaze, warning women that in such spaces they may be subjected to surveillance and unwanted male attentions. Yet, one article gathered in particular presents a much more terrifying picture. The article which featured in The Guardian (20th June, 2000) reports upon what it argues is *'a woman's worst nightmare and a rapist's ultimate fantasy'*: drug-assisted rape. As described in the article, this usually involves the assailant(s) spiking a woman's drink with drugs such as Rohypnol (the pills often associated with drug assisted rape) in public drinking contexts (e.g. pubs and clubs), and then raping her. Within the article itself, there are a number of competing discourses around drug assisted rape, which position both victims and rapists in various, contradictory ways, and which highlight this as a politically contentious and problematic issue. The first two competing discourses evident in the text are one which locates this as a recent phenomenon versus one which constructs this as nothing new. For example, according to the article, it is only in recent years that drug-assisted rape has begun to receive any substance of media coverage in Britain, and it is only recently that the first detailed public inquiry into this has taken place (The Sturman Report), thus

suggesting that drug-assisted rape is new. However, women's rights campaigner Julie Bindel argues:

Extract 25

'Men have always drugged and raped women, it's nothing new'.

(The Guardian – 20th June, 2000)

So why has this come to receive more media attention in recent years? One explanation, as presented in the article, is that this is on the increase (*'one helpline says it received 757 calls last year from people claiming they had been drugged and raped – a sharp increase from 507 in 1998).* However, this leads into a discussion of another set of conflicting constructions within the article. It is argued that the degree of recent media hysteria around drug-assisted rape suggests that this is an epidemic, and indeed, has instigated a great deal of fear amongst British women. However, the Sturman Report concludes that although this is on the increase, this is not as prevalent as the media construct it to be. Sally Ware (author of the article) argues that drug-assisted rape has received so much media attention because:

Extract 26

'Drug rape is one of those subjects of which newspapers and documentaries can't get enough: there's something vilely irresistible about the idea of a single act being both a woman's worst nightmare and a rapist's ultimate fantasy.'

(The Guardian – 20th June, 2000)

This points to the sensationalism of the media, and, more disturbingly, it's appetite for the abuse of women and the stoking of their fear. The degree of media attention which drug-assisted rape has received in recent years would perhaps be cause for concern for

feminists such as White and Kowalski (1994) and Campbell (1993). They discuss the creation of a climate of fear and dependence amongst women who view themselves as vulnerable to male aggression and violence, as such media hype could be argued to contribute to that climate of fear.

A final set of competing discourses surround the attribution of responsibility for drug-assisted rape. As argued, the overall discursive approach of the article is one which positions women as victims of this. However, accounts are smuggled in which could be read as problemising this positioning. For example, the article describes and promotes the use of precautionary procedures which women can and should exercise whilst out drinking. These include appointing someone to guard the drinks; never accepting drinks from strangers; and drinking out of bottles as opposed to glasses, keeping a finger over the opening of the bottle between sips to prevent anyone from slipping something into the drink. Similarly, Sue Lees (whose comments are included in the article) argues *'Watching your drink is something you have to do nowadays'*. Further, Betsy Stanko, in reference to the Metropolitan police, argues *'the way they've dealt with it* [sexual violence] *is to issue warnings.'* Such statements appear to attribute a certain degree of responsibility for sexual assault on to women, suggesting that if they are 'cautious', this is less likely to happen to them. Women should not have to live in fear and regulate their (drinking) behaviour because of rapists. The problem does not reside with them, and to suggest (however subtly) otherwise has problematic implications and consequences for women. Similarly, there is a system of statements within the article which attribute blame or responsibility for drug-assisted rape on to the drug itself:

Extract 27

'Much of it [discussion around drug-assisted rape] *focuses on the evilness of the drug, rather than the man using it.'*

(The Guardian – 20th June, 2000)

But it is not the drug that rapes women, and once again, we can see the attribution of responsibility onto subjects or objects other than the offender. A major problem with this, as argued in the article by Betsy Stanko, is that:

Extract 28

'We end up never discussing what should be discussed: why men want to rape women. We are accepting a natural predatory state of maleness and letting men off the hook again.'

(The Guardian – 20th June, 2000)

Chapter two of the thesis discussed how the psychological literature around gender is littered with discourse which constructs sexual violence as a natural, in-built male tendency (e.g. Thornhill & Thornhill, 1992). Further, the thesis has drawn attention to research literature which constructs drinking women as being at increased risk from violence, sexual or otherwise (e.g. World Health Organisation, 1994; Linqvist, 1991). What we appear to have here is evidence of a wider circulation of such discourse. Moreover, the thesis has also discussed how the consequences of the use of such discourse (e.g. in legal trials) are a failure to support women who have been victims of assault, and a failure to tackle to the real problem. For example, here, Stanko discusses how the police have focused on issuing warnings to women (the problems of which have been discussed), rather than tackling the crime and the perpetrators head on. Also, as discussed previously, those such as Abbey and Harnish (1995) have argued that women who have been raped are less likely to receive support if they have been

drinking. This appears to stem from a central construction of women who drink as behaving in orthodox ways and as putting themselves at unnecessary risk from men's natural predatory urges, which could, in part, account for the incredibly low (6 per cent at the time the article in the The Guardian went to press) conviction rates for reported rapes. What is encouraging about the article from The Guardian is the subversive discourse which is evident here (which can mostly be detected in the comments made by Betsy Stanko), demonstrating (again) that the media represents a site, not just where sexist, mainstream discourse is reproduced, but also where this is challenged. The mobilisation of such counter discourse is important and necessary if society's views towards female drinking and male violence, and the practices which these invite, are to change (which given current responses of the criminal justice system, they need to).

Another collection of articles which simultaneously position one woman in particular as a victim of male violence, whilst disrupting or problemising that position, report upon an incident which took place in a Paris pub in June 1998, in which footballer Stan Collymore attacked his then girlfriend, television presenter Ulrika Jonsson (The Express, 10th and 11th June, 1998; The Mirror, 10th June, 1998). The general tone of the articles is condemnatory and, as outlined, Jonsson is identified as the victim of the attack. However, the incident itself and the positioning of Jonsson as an 'innocent victim' appears to be problemised via, once again, the 'smuggling in' of certain accounts and statements. Firstly, the articles concentrate largely upon Jonsson's behaviour prior to the attack. For example, in two of the articles reporting on the incident which appeared in two different newspapers on the same day (The Express and The Mirror - 10th June, 1998), reference was made repeatedly to the fact that she was drinking (e.g: *'Ulrika was drinking beer'* – The Mirror; *'Ulrika was downing beers in*

one' – The Express). This was also supplemented with images of Jonsson drinking (see appendix 7). In one article (The Mirror) this was referred to six times although the article was only two pages long in total. This is hardly surprising, given that the incident took place in a pub! Moreover, reference wasn't made once to the fact that Collymore was drinking, although in another article reporting on the incident (The Express, 11th June, 1998), he confirmed that he was. This can be taken as evidence that female drinking (particularly 'downing pints of beer') is not regarded as normative in our culture, and so is an observation that was considered worth commenting upon. Further, reference was also repeatedly made to Jonsson's behaviour towards other men who were present in the pub and sexual jealousy was constructed as a central reason (justification even) for Collymore's attack on her. The Mirror article described how *'Ulrika was behind the bar pulling pints for the boys'* and that she was *'chatting to heartthrob Ewan McGregor',* these being pointed to or constructed as reasons why Collymore seemed jealous (e.g. *'It struck me that he was extremely jealous'*). Indeed, in one article, Collymore himself cites jealousy as a reason why he attacked Jonsson (The Express, 11th June, 1998).

Once again, there are issues here around the attribution of responsibility and the discourses deployed to position this woman (and perhaps all women) in ways which hold them partially responsible for harm suffered. As argued, the concentration upon Jonsson's drinking behaviour (indeed, she is described by The Sun as another archetypal celebrity ladette – 19th April, 2000) suggests that this is viewed as non-normative, and further, this is implicated as an important element in the chain of events leading up to the attack. Stanko (1985) found, on conducting research into the judicial systems of the United Kingdom and United States, that women who were perceived as

not obeying codes of 'suitable behaviour' (e.g. those representing normative femininity) are sometimes seen as deserving a violent response from their partners. Similarly, discourses which construct sexual jealousy as a possible reason or justification for male aggression and violence (as identified here) are well-worn and have been operationalised historically in adultery law to excuse such behaviour (see de Weerth & Kalma, 1993). Once again, we can see how such discourse fails to support women who have been victims of assault, and further, how the media represents a site where such discourse is reproduced.

The reporting of this case also implies that Jonsson 'should have known better' given her knowledge of Collymore's violent history, thus again disrupting her status as a victim. Two articles describe how she supported Collymore over two previous assault charges– one on his ex-partner and one on two men outside of a night-club (The Mirror, 10th June, 1998; The Express, 11th June, 1998). Following Collymore's clearance in April 1998 over the former assault charge, the two articles both quote Jonsson as saying:

Extract 29

'I'm delighted about this for Stan and his son. For any dad, what Stan has gone through is a nightmare. But the case won't affect our relationship. I'm looking forward to seeing more of him.'

(The Mirror - 10th June, 1998; The Express - 11th June, 1998).

More generally, the way in which the incident itself was constructed was revealing. For example, the incident appears to be 'played down' by the headline of one of the articles: *'Tears and tantrums as Ulrika and Collymore have a bust-up'* (The Express, 10th June, 1998), which suggests a mere dispute between the pair as opposed to a violent assault,

which is precisely what the article goes on to describe in rather graphic detail. What was noticable about the descriptive accounts provided in the articles is that these often focused upon the way in which Collymore was hitting Jonsson, constructing the incident as particularly serious in light of this. For example, one witness of the attack reported that *'Collymore was laying in, I think with a closed fist'* (The Mirror, 10th June, 1998). What is interesting is what is implied or what is not being said here – would the attack have been considered more acceptable if Collymore had been hitting his girlfriend with an open hand? Taken together, such statements could be regarded as constructing male violence in hierarchical terms, with some forms violence (e.g. punching) being located higher up the hierarchy than other forms (e.g. slapping). This portrayal will clearly concern feminists endeavouring to establish principles of zero tolerance with regards to men's violence against women.

6.11 Discourse Around Alcohol and Sex: Positioning and Power.

A number of articles were gathered which centred around the topic of female alcohol consumption and sex. As with aggression and violence, the link between alcohol and sex is also a long-standing one, and so it is perhaps not surprising that drinking and sex emerged as a recurring theme (see chapters one and two). More specifically, there was evidence of a great deal of hysteria surrounding contemporary female drinking and sexual practices, and in turn, resistant discourse. For example, a survey conducted by Company magazine which questioned a thousand young women, and which reported that nearly half of them had engaged in 'problematic' sex whilst under the influence (e.g. having casual sex with strangers; sex which they bitterly regretted later; unprotected sex) sparked much controversy and debate in November 2000. For

example, The Sun newspaper (2nd November, 2000), reporting upon the findings, made a great deal out of what it described as *'a shocking survey'* and the *'shocking truth about how women live'*. It warns that alcohol affects women's judgement making them less alert and more careless, and points out that unprotected sex can lead to unwanted pregnancies and the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases. As such there is wider reproduction here of some of the discourses evident in the psychological literature around alcohol and sex discussed in chapter one of the thesis. For example, to recap, Piombo & Piles (1996) concluded from their research that alcohol consumption and the resultant disinhibitory effects can often result in women engaging in sexual activity with someone who they otherwise would not. Similarly, Klassen and Wilsnack (1986) have pointed to alcohol consumption as often leading women to engage in unsafe and 'promiscuous' sex.

Resistant discourse evident within the texts constructed the media hysteria around British women's current drinking habits and sexual practices, and the 'warning discourse' which is so pervasive within the media texts gathered, as reflecting the continuation of double standards in our culture. For example, The Sun feature's editor Sam Carlisle, whose responses to the Company survey are also included in The Sun article, argues *'If it were men, no one would care'* and that *'unprotected sex would be something* [for men] *to boast about'*. Also in response to the Company Magazine survey, a 22 year old woman from Bristol contends:

Extract 30

'I don't know why people think girls shouldn't go out and have a few drinks – men have been doing it for years. There are double standards because if a girl has drunken sex she's seen as tarty, but if a man does it he's a stud.'

(SunWOMAN – 8th November, 2000)

Similarly, Karen Krizanovich responds to the findings of a different 'women's lifestyles' survey reported in an article from The Express (cited earlier) which pointed to increasing sexual promiscuity among British women, saying:

Extract 31

'And why is the survey so shocked that women sometimes sleep with more than one man? If a survey reported that about men it wouldn't even make the papers.'

(The Express - 9th July, 1998)

Here we can see a reproduction of (and a simultaneous resistance to) discourses which construct sexual promiscuity as normative for men (e.g. Wilson, 1975) and non normative for women, this being exemplified by The Sun's description of the results of the survey as *'shocking'*. As previously argued, such discourses position men and women within unequal relations of power (e.g. Hollway, 1984), and are often used to justify behaviour on the part of men in our society such as infidelity and rape. Similarly, in another article commenting upon the results of the survey featured in The Observer, the author (Nigella Lawson) argues critically that these are taken as evidence of women's *'vulnerability'* and *'easy victim status'* in drinking situations. Indeed, a system of statements was evident in the texts which again positioned women as victims, this time, in sexually-charged drinking situations, for example:

Extract 32

'Licensed Victuallers' Association spokesman Ken Lindsay said: "It's terrible to hear that women are getting into trouble after drinking but they are definitely more vulnerable. Any good publican would watch out for the ladies because you never know what could happen to them."'

(The Sun – 2nd November, 2000)

In addition to constructions of men as sexual predators who pose a threat to women, here, men are simultaneoulsy constructed as protectors of women. Such discourse can be regarded as contributing to the contradictory climate described by those such as White and Kowalski (1994) where women feel both afraid of men and dependent upon them for protection. This positioning of women in drinking contexts as vulnerable again echoes discourses evident in the research literature around women and alcohol. For example, as discussed in chapter one, a report by the World Health Organisation (1994) concluded that women might be at increased risk in drinking situations due to:

'Complex gender and power dynamics at play in social and sexual contacts. Males may assume female intoxication is associated with sexual promiscuity and that drinking makes females more vulnerable' (p. 16).

As such, surveys such as the one conducted by Company Magazine and the bringing of the findings to the public's attention via the British press could be regarded as being in the best interests of vulnerable women. Or are they? Bordo (1993, 1997) argues that historically, the female has been associated with unruly passions, urges and desires. Such desires are often constructed as being in need of control and regulation. For example, Carol Morley (The Guardian, 5th June, 2000) argues that *'attempts to control promiscuous women are often expressed as concern for their well-being'*. This is similar

to arguments presented by critical psychologists that psychological practices can often be regarded as playing a regulatory or governmental role, for example, the control of 'problematic subjects' (e.g. drinking and promiscuous women), and that these are often exercised by those positioned as 'caring' (Burman, 1995). As such, reports around female drinking and sexual practices which construct this in problematic terms could be read as further evidence of backlash, for example, as a regulatory reaction towards women's so-called sexual liberation.

Surveys such as that conducted by Company Magazine, and reports around this, also concern women's rights campaigners such as Julie Bindle for slightly different reasons. For example, note the following extract:

Extract 33

'Woman's rights campaigner Julie Bindle argued that men should also be held accountable for taking advantage of drunk women. She said "This is about blaming women for men's bad behaviour and allowing men to do and perform appalling acts to women when they are in a vulnerable state."'

(The Sun – 2nd November, 2000)

Once again, we can see the positioning of drinking women as vulnerable and potential victims. Further, what we appear to have here is a circulation of discourses which contribute to constructions of heterosexual practices as problematic and male-coercive (see Gavey, 1988), located specifically in this instance within drinking contexts. Indeed, there were other statements in the texts gathered which constructed drunken sexual practices as such, for example:

Extract 34

'Financial clerk Laura confessed: "I remember one time I had gone out with my mate and her boyfriend who brought along a friend. We all went back to my house and me and this lad went upstairs. I didn't really want to have sex with him but he was dead persuasive. I suppose because I was drunk it was just something to do."'

(SunWOMAN – 8th November, 2000)

Here, the speaker (Laura) constructs the incident as one in which she was coerced into having sex. What concerns those such as Julie Bindle is that surveys such as the one conducted by Company Magazine focus upon women's irresponsible behaviour when drunk, therefore detracting focus (and blame) away from the men involved. Here, we can see the re-emergence of a theme previously discussed: attribution of responsibility. What is interesting about Julie Bindle's comments is that if one was not aware of the wider context of the article (women engaging in drunken, 'problematic sex'), one might think that she was discussing drug-assisted rape. Could alcohol perhaps be regarded as a more widely available substance which, in many instances, works in a similar way to drugs such as Rohypnol? In an article featured in The Observer, it's author (Michael Jackson) argues that a subtext of many of today's adverts for alcohol (particularly those which are 'feminised' such as *'alcopops'* and *'expertly shaken cocktails'*) is *'it gets her into bed'* (whether she wants to or not? – The Observer, 12th November, 2000). This points to a 'blurring' of boundaries. For example, Julie Bindle's comments appear to construct men who engage in sex with drunken women as committing a form of sexual violence against them by taking advantage of them whilst in a vulnerable state, thus expanding the boundaries surrounding those acts which can be regarded as such. Similarly, a man who plies a woman with drink in order to get her into bed could be regarded here of committing an act which is not a million miles away from drug-assisted rape. As such, there appears to support here for arguments presented by

feminists such as Kelly (1988), Dworkin (1981) and MacKinnon (1982) that sexual violence should be regarded as existing on a continuum.

Yet, there are a number of problems with the positioning of women as vulnerable and of heterosexual practices as problematic and male-coercive. Firstly, these deny women agency and power, whilst at the same, attributing power to men. Such 'victim feminism' has been heavily criticised in recent years by those such as Roiphe (1993) and Paglia (1992). Secondly, not only do such discourses compete with constructions of public drinking spaces as becoming increasingly feminised and female friendly, but further, as argued, construct these are dangerous spaces for women. As such, these discourses could be read, once again, as ideally positioning women outside of such spaces, for example, out of the public and back into the private. Finally, constructions of heterosexual relations and practices as problematic (e.g. male-coercive) have been criticised by those such as Hollway (1995) for not allowing for pleasure and egalitarianism (once again, there is a suppression of pleasure discourse within such accounts), positioning women who have sexual relations with men as necessarily engaged in relations of dominance and subordination.

Yet, a competing system of statements (which one should note, all come from female writers) construct drunken sex as normative practice and alcohol as a facilitator of heterosexual relationships:

Extract 35

'Drink also helps to start a lot of relationships. It makes the tentative building of the early days a lot easier.'

(The Guardian – 16th November, 2000; Laura Hird)

Extract 36

'I don't think I have ever had sex for the first time with anyone stone cold sober. It's not how it works, surely?'

(The Observer – 12th November, 2000; Nigella Lawson)

Extract 37

'It's not surprising that many women, too, are ashamed of their behaviour when drunk, protesting that their actions are out of character, but people often need to have drink inside them in order to do what they want but wouldn't dare do sober [...] *Fundamentally, even when people are out of their head, they know what they're doing.'*

(The Observer – 12th November, 2000; Nigella Lawson)

Here, alcohol is constructed as a disinhibiting facilitator of heterosexual relations, one which is used as such by *both men and women*. Indeed, despite Michael Jackson's observations discussed earlier that a subtext of many of today's adverts for alcohol is *'it's gets her into bed'*, he also goes on to argue, *'I gather that in these enlightened days, women even use alcohol to lead men astray'* (The Guardian, 12th November, 2000). This attributes women with more power and agency than the discourses discussed earlier which position women as vulnerable. Indeed, further than this, a system of statements identified in the texts gathered constructed men as victims of sexually aggressive and predatory women. For example, note the double-entendre headline which featured in The Sun newspaper: *'Girls on the pull'* (19th April, 2000). The article, commenting on increasing levels of alcohol consumption amongst British women (and in this respect, the 'pull' referring to the pulling of pints) implies active sexual predatory behaviour (the 'pull' in this respect referring to pulling men). Further, note the following extracts taken from articles gathered:

Extract 38

'A third [of women questioned in a survey] *confessed that they had cheated on a man and almost half said they had gone man-hunting with friends.'*

(The Express - 9th July, 1998; emphasis added)

Extract 39

'Women are smoking, drinking and screwing around. Look at Ibiza – out there it's the girls getting trashed and leaping on the boys.'

(The Observer - 12th December, 1999; emphasis added)

Extract 40

[author of article describing the events at a New Year's Eve party she had attended] *Bump into original dream boat on the landing. Frontal lobe dysfunction now arrests impulse to control so push them into the nearest bedroom. Lobal dysfunction apparently mutual so locked into disinhibited heaven until intrusion of Big Ben through muffled floorboards. "Oh, we don't want to miss the midnight chimes" mutters intended victim, heading downstairs.'*

(The Guardian - 31st December, 1998; emphasis added).

Positioning women in such ways challenges normative constructions of femininity as submissive, passive and sexually restrained. However, the language used often draws upon masculinised notions of predatory sexuality, perhaps reinforcing the 'unnnatural' ('unfeminine') quality of this behaviour for women. Further, it is perhaps a little premature to start celebrating the sexual power which is attributed to women here (this being a characteristic of many modern media textual sources, particularly those aimed at a female readership - Skeggs, 1997), as issues of safety prevail for women in public drinking spaces (see World Health Organisation, 1994; Lindqvist, 1991). Also, the construction of women as sexual predators does appear to be simultaneously

undermined. For example, it is difficult to decipher from extract 40 given that the whole context of the discussion is not provided here, but this does have a satirical tone. What is striking about this extract is that if the roles had been reversed, in other words, if it had been the man who pushed the woman into the nearest bedroom and she had tried to escape, this would have read, seriously and disturbingly, like an account of events leading up to a rape. A satirical tone in this instance would of probably not been considered appropriate. However, this appears to work in the case of the extract cited precisely because it is the woman who is doing the pushing and sexually aggressive women do not pose as much of a threat to men as the reverse situation.

6.12 SUMMARY

The media text study has produced some important findings which shall now be summarised. Firstly, this has highlighted the media as a space where mainstream, sexist discourse is simultaneously reproduced and challenged. Some of the discourses presented here include the construction of alcohol consumption as a masculine activity, underlined by masculinist terminology (e.g. 'ladette'). Women are positioned outside of drinking culture by such discourse, whilst their occupation of such space is often met with backlash discourse which can be read as an attempt to preserve or reclaim alcohol consumption and drinking spaces as male or masculine (see also Kaminer & Dixon, 1995; Willott & Griffin, 1997).

Yet, as argued, such discourse has not gone unchallenged in the media. For example, the chapter has highlighted something of a shift away from the construction of alcohol consumption as an exclusively male activity. As discussed, some of the texts sampled

and analysed made reference to the feminisation of drinking culture (see Douglas, 1979; Squire, 1985). Also, we have seen the emergence of de-gendered discourse which proffer a convergence of masculine and feminine tastes and leisure activities, these being represented by terms such as 'gender neutrality' and 'regendering'. Such language helps to deconstruct essentialist understandings of gender and the notion that drinking culture is male. In addition, the chapter has highlighted presentations of women as exhibiting modern active and assertive sexual identities whilst drinking. However, these must not be regarded in isolation from other representations where women are positioned as at risk from predatory men or even partially responsible for harm that they may suffer by virtue of their 'unfeminine' behaviour. It is important not to allow gender and power to be subsumed completely by consumerist and individualist discourse because women's drinking and leisure activities need to be contextalised with reference to the prevalance of more conventional ideals around gender and the problematic practices which these inform (e.g. judicial practices which fail to support victims of violence).

A further major finding of the study is that there appears to have been a recent shift in focus away from the drinking practices of the working class towards middle class drinking culture as a focus of interest and concern. A number of explanations for this have been presented. For example, this could be located within a wider socio-political climate whereby Britain is constructed as 'middle class', this rendering the working class invisible. Further, this could be due to a concern that it is middle class women in particular who are increasingly moving into traditionally masculinised domains such as the professions and drinking culture and thus it is this group of women who represent the greatest threat to traditional ways. Similarly, it has been argued that hysteria is

generated in particular when it is middle class women who are seen to be departing from normative femininity, as it is this group of women who are taken to represent this, in contrast to working class women who have historically been positioned outside of this ideal (see chapter four). In general, the relative invisibility of different types of drinking culture and femininities here highlights the importance of the next study which involves women from different social backgrounds and contexts. It is to this study that the following chapter turns.

CHAPTER 7 – EXPLORING WOMEN'S ACCOUNTS (PART 1): JOINT NEGOTIATED CONSTRUCTIONS OF DRINKING AND SPACE

Introduction

So far, the thesis has critically examined discourses around femininity and alcohol which have been generated and reproduced within institutions, namely, the social sciences (with a particular focus on psychology) and the media. A major distinguishing feature of this study is that it examines the construction and reproduction of discourses between women through talk and social interaction. However, as argued in chapter five, this study should not be regarded as a 'departure' from the analyses and discussions which have already been presented, as everyday understandings both inform and are informed by institutional discourse (Stainton-Rogers *et al,* 1995). Yet, as previously discussed, such discourse is interpreted, negotiated and translated by people in variable ways (Livingstone, 1996). For example, Skeggs (1997) argues that textually mediated femininity is practiced through local interpretation, that is, as situated within local contexts. As such, this study aimed to build upon discussions and analyses presented so far by exploring how and why established constructions are understood and negotiated by women during their everyday lives. Also, as previously outlined, there is a particular concern here with subjectivity, and so a central aim of the study was to explore investment in the multiple and contradictory subject positions and forms of feminine identity created by these systems of meaning, and how these are located within local sites (e.g. sub-cultural contexts). Further, it was anticipated that this study would expand exploration of some of the negative consequences and implications of existing discourse, for example, by highlighting everyday examples of these, as well as how

women collectively construct strategies of resistance. To summarise, this study progresses from a consideration of the subject positions, the forms of identity and the types of social action that are invited and constrained by contemporary constructions of femininity and alcohol, to examine how these are re-constructed and negotiated by women and how these inform their identity construction.

As described and discussed in chapter five, the main method used here was informal-but-guided focus group discussions. It is the data obtained from these focus groups which forms the basis of the present and following empirically-based chapters. The results from the study are presented here in the form of two chapters due to the sheer volume of material obtained (this second study comprising the project's main study). Whereas the current chapter focuses upon joint, negotiated experiences and constructions of drinking and space, the following chapter moves on to further deconstruct the category 'women' by examining the construction and negotiation of multiple forms of femininity within the context of drinking. However, before engaging in a discussion of the findings, discussion of the methodology pertaining to this study, including a discussion of the direction that the study took and the identification and recruitment of participants, shall be expanded.

7.1 The Participants.

As the study was interested in local interpretation and the construction of multiple forms of femininity, this aimed to recruit women from different social backgrounds and localities. In short, two samples of women were recruited to take part in the study. The first was comprised of female academics living, working and/or studying in South

Yorkshire at the time the study was conducted. All of the women in this group had a minimum of a first degree (although most of the women held a Masters and/or a PhD in addition) in disciplinary areas which included psychology, sociology, geography, politics, English and biological science. These women occupied a variety of posts at local universities, including professor, lecturer, post doctorate researcher, research assistant and research student. The second group of women were all living at the time of the study on neighbouring council estates in an area of West Yorkshire close to where I grew up. These women were mostly in low paid, 'partly skilled' or 'unskilled' jobs, which included call centre worker, machine operator, administration assistant, shop assistant, cashier, retired, and cleaner.

There are number of reasons why these two samples of women were recruited. Firstly, this was done for practical reasons and issues around access. It was felt that it would be much easier to recruit women including and via colleagues, old neighbours, family friends etc., than complete strangers, especially given that no financial reward could be offered to women for taking part. Secondly, the two samples of women can be regarded as very different in terms of physical location, level of education, occupation etc. and as previously discussed, a concern with difference lay the heart of the study. This is particularly important given the pertinence of geographical location, occupational status and social class as themes in academic and recent media discussions of women and drinking (e.g. Moore, 1995; Breeze, 1985; Goddard & Ikin, 1988; Heller *et al,* 1998; Waterson & Murray Lyon, 1989; Waterson, 2000; ONS, 1998; see also previous chapter), and further, analyses which have examined alcohol consumption as an important marker of different gendered identities as mediated, for example, by social class (e.g.; Tomsen, 1997; Burns, 1980; Tomlinson, 1990). Indeed, the two samples of

women could be articulated in class terms here. For example, the definition of those working in a professional context (e.g. the women comprising the South Yorkshire sample) as 'middle class', and likewise, those in 'unskilled' and 'partly skilled' occupations as being assigned working class status, has been a long-standing feature of the Registrar General's system of classifications published by the Office of Population and Census Surveys (OPCS, 1980).

However, the problems with defining social class are well-documented (see Waterson, 2000 for a discussion of these problems in the context of a study around women and alcohol). For example, definitions of class have traditionally been based on the occupation of the male head of household (OPCS, 1980). For one, this assumes that occupation is the most important factor of stratification, but class is much more than this. History, social experiences, identity, expectations and level of education can all be regarded as equally important. Secondly, this system of classification makes the assumption that all members of the same household share the same social class, when this is often not the case, for example, wealth is not always evenly distributed between partners (Waterson, 2000). Given such problems with exisiting measurements, definitions of class used here are ones which must be regarded as broadly working, as opposed to universal or established ones. For one, the research was not concerned with the occupations of the womens' partners, or indeed, whether they were in long-term relationships (apart from where this was relevant to the context of the focus group discussions). However, the occupations of the women themselves and their level of education was taken into consideration (e.g. as discussed), in addition to women's physical surroundings (e.g. the fact that some of the women resided on council estates).

Further details pertaining to the women who were recruited to take part in the focus groups (e.g. age, ethnic background) shall be provided below when the chapter turns to discuss the actual focus group discussions which took place.

7.2 Collection of Preliminary Data and Recruitment of Participants.

It was decided that conducting a questionnaire study would be useful in order to collect preliminary data which would inform the direction of the focus groups. For example, it was intended that this would feed into the construction of the interview schedule. In addition, this was regarded as a useful way of introducing potential participants to the research and recruiting them to take part in the group discussions. The questionnaire featured eleven open-ended questions pertaining to everyday drinking habits and patterns, with considerable space beneath each one for the participants to write their response. As such, the data gained from the questionnaire survey was of a qualitative nature, and so did not represent the quantitative kind of questionnaire (e.g. psychometric tests) traditionally used in psychology.

Figure 3: Exemplary Item From Questionnaire

11. Describe your drinking habits generally and the reasons why you drink.

N.B. For a full copy of the questionnaire distributed, see appendix 8.

In addition, the questionnaire requested a certain amount of personal information from the respondents, including age, occupation, name and a contact number. However, respondents were informed, via instructions for completing the questionnaire, that

provision of their name and a contact number was optional (could complete the questionnaire anonymously if they wished). More specifically, the respondents were informed via instructions for completing the questionnaire that a further study was to be conducted (the focus group interviews), and that if they were interested in taking part, they should provide this information so that they could be contacted in respect of this. At the same time, not providing their name and number would indicate that they were not interested in taking part in the focus groups. 'Questionnaire packs' were then put together which consisted of a copy of the questionnaire, a signed letter from myself giving the potential respondent information about the research, contact details if they had any queries and an assurance of confidentiality (see appendix 9), and in the case of questionnaires distributed outside of Sheffield Hallam University, a pre-paid envelope addressed to myself at the university.

Eighty questionnaire packs marked either 'SY' (South Yorkshire) or 'WY' (West Yorkshire) were then distributed equally to the two targeted samples of women outlined. Distribution largely involved simply handing the questionnaire packs to colleagues at the two universities in Sheffield (Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Sheffield) and old neighbours, family friends etc. living in an area of West Yorkshire close to where I grew up. In total, thirty one questionnaires distributed to the West Yorkshire sample were returned completed, eighteen of these respondents providing their name and/or a contact number. Twenty six completed questionnaires were obtained from the South Yorkshire sample, with twenty of the respondents in this instance providing their name and/or a contact number. One questionnaire marked 'SY' was returned blank, but no information was provided as to why the respondent had refused to fill this in.

The data obtained from the questionnaire study was not subjected to the same kind of in-depth analysis as the material from the media text study and the focus group discussions (see subsection 5.4 for details of analytic procedure), as this was only ever intended to be used as a research tool for collecting preliminary data for the impending focus groups. Treatment of the data involved identifying the in-vivo themes present, categorising the responses under these themes and exploring differences between the two samples. As such, one could argue here that the treatment of this data largely represented the first few stages of the analytic procedure detailed in chapter four, or what is often described as a 'thematic analysis' (e.g. Burman, 1994). To briefly summarise the findings here, beverage and venue emerged as prominent themes throughout the questionnaire data, and were areas where particular differences between the two samples were evident. For example, the beverage cited most often (e.g. that consumed most often) in the questionnaires completed by respondents from the West Yorkshire sample was lager, and venue the pub, whereas the women from the South Yorkshire sample cited wine as the beverage mostly consumed in bars (as opposed to pubs), restaurants and their homes. Differences were also found with respect to the theme 'drinking partners'. The women from the West Yorkshire sample indicated that they most often drank with boyfriends or husbands, whereas the women from the South Yorkshire sample indicated that they often drank with friends or 'colleagues' (a term absent in the data obtained from the West Yorkshire sample). Certain themes were also particular to one of the two samples. For example, 'alcohol as accompanying food' was a prominent theme in the questionnaire data obtained from the South Yorkshire sample, but was absent in the data obtained from the West Yorkshire sample. Similarly, the attractiveness of certain beverages because of the image that they incur (e.g. 'trendy', 'casual') was a theme which was identified in the questionnaire data obtained from the

South Yorkshire sample, but again was largely absent from the data obtained from the West Yorkshire sample. Rather, 'the price of beverages' was a recurring theme in the data obtained from the latter sample (e.g. drinking lager because it is cheap), but not in the questionnaire data obtained from the South Yorkshire sample.

As intended, these findings informed the construction of the interview schedule to be used during the focus group discussions. For example, various venues in which drinking occurs and 'drinking partners' (not originally regarded as a particularly important theme) were in light of findings from the questionnaire study (e.g. as discussed, particular differences were shown here) considered important themes to be explored further during the focus group discussions. Also, the respondents from both samples had indicated that their drinking habits were largely inconsistent. It was intended that an item pertaining to drinking habits generally would be included on the interview schedule. However, in light of this finding, it was decided that there would be a more specific prompt for this (*'describe last week's drinking if this varies a lot'*) in addition to a more general question or instruction (e.g. *'describe a typical week's drinking'*). The items on the interview schedule were also informed by existing literature around women and alcohol, the emerging results from the media text study and my own experiences as a female drinker. In sum, the devised interview schedule featured a list of fourteen themes to covered during the group discussions, each one accompanied by at least one 'prompt' in case discussion quickly dried up or wasn't getting started.

Figure 4: Exemplary Item From Interview Schedule

6. Aggression and Violence

Prompt 1: Do you ever witness any aggressive behaviour when you are out drinking? Describe.

N.B. For a full copy of the interview schedule, see appendix 10.

Concurrent to the construction of the interview schedule was the recruitment of participants. This was done (as intended) via the respondent information provided on the questionnaires. Respondents who had provided a name and contact number were contacted by telephone. The general procedure that the focus groups would take was outlined to the women, including the intended duration of the discussions (one to two hours), and the fact that the discussions would be recorded using audio equipment (a tape recorder). At this stage, some of the respondents indicated that they no longer wished to take part, the most common reason cited being that they were too busy. If respondents said that they were still interested in taking part, then possible dates, times and venues were discussed with them. In part, recruitment of participants was done via a snowballing procedure, in that some of the women who volunteered to take part in the focus group discussions said that they had a friend, colleague etc. who was interested in accompanying them. However, where this occurred, it was ensured that the 'friend', 'colleague' etc. was from one of the targeted samples.

7.3 The Focus Groups

Six focus groups discussions were conducted in total between November, 1998 and April, 1999. Three of the focus group were conducted in South Leeds, each one at the home of one of the women from the West Yorkshire sample who was taking part in that particular focus group with their permission. The remaining three focus group discussions were conducted with women from the South Yorkshire sample at Sheffield Hallam University. Five of the focus groups arranged were comprised of five participants (including myself), the remainder six participants. However, in the case of two of the focus groups (one for each sample), a participant 'dropped out' at the last minute, and so these were eventually conducted with four participants.

The participants were all white. This was not intentional, but happened that all of the women who volunteered to take part in the focus groups were white. The implications and consequences of this for the research shall be discussed in some detail in the final chapter of the thesis. All of the participants were British with the exception of two: a woman who was born in Northern Ireland (she regards herself as Irish *not* British) and a woman from Australia. The ages of the participants ranged from twenty to seventy two, although most of the participants were aged between twenty and thirty.

The duration of the focus groups varied between one hour, ten minutes and three hours, fifteen minutes. There was little consistency in patterns of duration within each sample, and no real noticeable differences in duration between the two samples. These were recorded using a portable cassette recorder with a small, high quality microphone. At the start of each discussion, the general procedure that discussion would take (e.g. that this would be informal-but-guided by an interview schedule; that this would be recorded

using audio equipment) was again outlined to the participants (as discussed previously, this was also outlined to them at the recruitment stage). Participants were assured of confidentiality, for example, they were told that nobody's real name, including the real names of people (e.g. friends, partners) and places (e.g. pubs, nightclubs) referred to would be used. They were also informed that they did not have to respond to any of the questions asked if they did not wish to and that if they revealed anything during the discussion which they later regretted, this would be deleted from the record if so requested. Nobody made such a request.

During the discussions, it was ensured that each topic on the interview schedule was covered at some point, although quite often, the participants raised these for discussion before I did, and so the interview schedule was used as a guide only. The recorded discussions were then transcribed (using a transcribing machine) into Microsoft Word 97 on a P.C., using a modified version of the Jefferson system of transcription conventions (e.g. Jefferson, 1985; Sacks *et al,* 1974; Atkinson & Heritage, 1984 - see appendix 11 for full list of transcription conventions and appendix 12 for a sample of one interview transcript). Each transcript was then subjected to the analytic procedure detailed in chapter five (see subsection 5.4) and in addition, read in ways which were conducive to the aims of the study (see below). For a sample of the analysis applied to the text coded under a particular theme from one group discussion, see appendix 14[17].

[17] Note that a sample of one interview transcript and the analysis as applied to one theme only has been provided as to have provided an entire transcript and the analysis for even one group discussion would have rendered the appendices extremely cumbersome.

7.4 Approach to Analysis

As with the material gathered from the media text study, the data produced here was subjected to a form of feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis (see section 5.4. for a detailed description of the analytic steps involved). In addition, this was read in ways which were conducive to the aims of the study and the theoretical underpinnings and political commitments of the research. Once again, clarification of this procedure is essential here in order to render this transparent. Some major features of the talk which reading of the data was sensitive towards were as follows:

1. Themes and issues pertinent to women's alcohol consumption;

2. Reproduction and subversion of the systems of meaning previously identified (e.g. during analysis of the media texts);

3. Discourses not previously identified;

4. The active construction and negotiation of femininities;

5. Investment in multiple and contradictory subject positions created by discourse;

6. Women's use of leisure as a site for resistance;

7.5 In-Vivo Themes

The in-vivo themes identified during analysis which are discussed in this chapter include, for example, 'aggression and violence', 'drinking and space', 'pints' and 'relationships'. For a full list of the in-vivo themes identified, see appendix 13.

7.6 "Show Me a Woman Who Doesn't Feel Guilty and I'll Show You a Man": Exploring the Pathologisation of Women's Alcohol Use.

During reading and analysis of the interview transcripts, one major recurring discourse which became apparent early on was one which constructed drinking as a social activity, with talk locating consumption within a social context. This was made up with statements such as *'It's purely social, int it?'* (WY1); *'It's a social thing'* (WY 1; WY3); *'I always thought it was something you did in groups'* (SY1) and *'I associate drinking with social occasions and friends'* (SY2) which littered the transcripts. In addition, when the participants were asked questions surrounding their motivations for drinking, this more often than not, incurred responses such as *'social'* (WY1; SY2), *'for social reasons'* (WY2), *'to be sociable'* (SY1; SY2), *'joining in'* (SY2) and *'being part of the party'* (SY2). In addition, the participants talked about preferring certain venues such as '*quiet pubs*' because in such spaces, you can sit and talk without being disturbed by loud music (SY1; WY3) and preferring certain types of beverage because they *'keep me up an keep me chatting away'* (SY2) thus again emphasising the social aspect of drinking. Overall, alcohol was constructed across the focus groups as a playing an

important role in the women's social lives, talk around this highlighting the importance and significance of this as a social activity.

The strong social discourse operating here appeared to inform collective, negotiated constructions of solitary drinking, particularly in private spaces such as the home, as 'unhealthy' or 'pathological':

Extract 1

Clare: *I don't know, I, it's been drummed into me that if you drink on your own, that equals that you've got a problem with drink* [...] *because I guess I associate it with* (...)

Sara: *Alcoholism?*

Clare: *Yeah.*

(SY1)

'Clare's' language is interesting here: *'it's been drummed into me'*. This suggests that discourses which pathologise such drinking practice pervade the women's consciousness. Further than this, there was evidence in the talk that such constructions induced feelings of guilt:

Extract 2

Clare: *I can't say I've never not come in and like there's been a beer in the fridge, and I've had a beer, but when I've done it I've felt so naughty.*

(SY1)

This is one extract which is not done adequate justice in textual format. The way in which this statement was verbally expressed suggested feelings of guilt as opposed to pleasure in engaging in something so *'naughty'*. When reading such comments, I did

wonder if had the focus groups been conducted with men, would such feelings of guilt been similarly discussed? Obviously, the exploration of this is beyond the scope of the current research. However, talk did construct women's drinking as being more subject to pathologisation than men's drinking. For example, one participant remarked: *'I think society an people in general are harder on women for doing certain things, drinking being one of them'* (SY3), thus locating the pathologisation of women's drinking within a wider problemisation of women's behaviour. In addition, there was discussion around how 'problematic drinking' amongst women is regarded as more serious and treated more harshly than such drinking behaviour on the part of men (SY3), the possible reasons for which shall be discussed shortly.

Further, when accounts of engagement in drinking practices construed as problematic (e.g. solitary drinking) were offered, these were littered with discursive action (Edwards & Potter, 1992) which was aimed at justifying or rationalising such activity. Reasons or justifications which were constructed for drinking alone included if alcohol is readily available (WY1; SY1; SY3), drinking prior to an evening out to get in the mood (WY1; SY1) and drinking as an accompaniment to another activity such as eating a meal or watching television (WY1; SY1; SY2; SY3) and therefore not just drinking for drinking's sake. The participants, in conjunction with the offering of such accounts, also stressed that this was not a regular occurrence, that they did not drink large amounts in such circumstances, and that they did not get drunk alone (all). Such discursive action can be regarded as occurring 'under the eye' of a real audience, given that the discussions took place in a group context. Yet, it also possible that such justification is well practised and well rehearsed in light of the judgements of imaginary others, and in relation to discourses which pathologise such behaviour. Indeed, there was talk which supports the argument presented in the previous chapter that even when women drink

alone in private spaces, they may not escape the observations and judgements of the imagined audience:

Extract 3

Carol: *But I mean, my, one of my relatives drinks quite excessively, and she gets really, really, drunk at parties an stuff, embarrassingly so. So I have it in my mind (Hmm) that I don't want to be like that* (2.0). *An even if I'm drinking on my own, I think that, not that anybody else can see.*

(SY3)

Even though the speaker here is aware that there is no actual audience present when she drinks alone, she is constructing her drinking behaviour as being regulated by the possible, imagined judgements of others, in the same way in which she judges the drinking behaviour of her female relative. This challenges the notion that women may drink alone in private spaces in order to escape the judgements of others (as suggested by Helen Dunmore writing for The Guardian - see previous chapter).

In conjunction with the strong social discourse which surrounded women's alcohol consumption, a prominent pleasure discourse also pervaded the interview transcripts, this being made up of statements such as *'I love it* [drinking]*'* (WY1), *'I love going out'* (WY1), *'I like the taste of it'* (SY1; WY3) and *'I do enjoy drinking'* (SY1). The highlighting of this is important here because, as discussed, a pleasure discourse is currently largely absent or marginalised within the psychological literature around women and alcohol, with the bulk of this constructing women's drinking as self-medication for medical and psychological problems (e.g. Wilsnack & Wilsnack, 1995; Wilsnack, 1984; Schaefer *et al,* 1985; Scida & Vannicelli, 1979). Yet, that is not to say that these well-worn themes and discourses were not also reproduced in the talk. For

example, one participant referred to the use of alcohol as a *'coping strategy'* (SY3), and there was talk around women drinking when they're feeling *'depressed'*, *'unhappy'* (WY1; WY2; SY2), *'down'* or *'upset'* (SY3). However, much discussion around this deconstructed the notion that drinking self-medicates such feelings, with the women often arguing that drinking when you are in such a mood actually makes you feel worse:

Extract 4

Karen: [...] *cos I mean, I can go out, an everybody else can be havin a total top time, an if I, y'know, if I'm a bit depressed about sommat or pissed off about sommat or whatever, an then go out an get pissed, it just makes you fuckin worse* [...]
Joanne: *I think it* [going out] *can cheer you up more if you ant had a drink.*
Janice: *Oh yeah, totally.*
(WY1)

Similarly, there was talk around drinking as a response to stress. Two types of stress (incurred by two major sources) were discussed by the participants. The first was work-related stress, which as discussed in the previous chapter, has been presented by the media as a major reason why women (particularly those from the professional classes) are drinking more. For example, there was discussion around drinking in order to *'relax after work'* (SY1; WY2), or as a *'stress release'* (SY2) after a hard day or week at work, particularly *'if you've got a stressful job'* (SY2). However, as with drinking when feeling depressed or unhappy, such practice was often located with a social context, thus challenging an equation of drinking in private spaces with self-medicating or problematic drinking practice:

Extract 5

Mel: *I wouldn't find drinking alone relaxing at all* (\\) **Clare:** *No* (\\) **Mel:** *I find, what I find relaxing is being able to have a decent chat with someone, a social interaction with someone.*

(SY2)

Further, talk around drinking as a response to work related stress occurred across both samples of women, which suggests that this practice may be more widespread than suggested by media reports which locate this specifically within the professional classes (e.g. The Guardian, 11th November, 1999; 19th April, 2000). As argued, such location could perhaps be read as a reaction to or backlash (Faludi, 1992) against the increasing number of women occupying professional positions, for example, through the implicit suggestion that these women can't cope. A further explanation could be that there are classist assumptions in operation that working class women do not have demanding jobs which incur stress, a notion which is challenged here.

Another form of stress which was described by one participant as perhaps being a reason why women drink was the stresses associated with motherhood:

Extract 6

Bernie: *An it's like women who've got kids an stuff might take to drinking every single night to cope with everyday stress, like women who smoke, an it's like completely different reasons to men who might go out an get pissed at weekend, an chin somebody, do y'know what a mean? Women take on different things for different reasons I think, an it is, it is cos of like gender I think, expectations that you've got to live up to an you can't live up to, an you feel guilty, an guilt is a thing to make women drink* (3.0). *Show me a woman who dunt feel guilty, an I'll show you a man (laugh).*

(WY2)

The topic of masculinity and aggression is touched upon here, which will be explored at a later point in the chapter. Yet for now, the discussion will concentrate on the construction here of social expectations placed upon women (for example, those associated with motherhood) and the feelings of failure and guilt incurred by these, as being a reason why women may drink. Firstly, this competes with arguments presented by those such as Fillmore (1987) that women are less likely to experience alcohol-related problems due to their occupation of 'subordinate' social roles such as 'housewife' and 'mother', as these are simply non-conducive to drinking. Fillmore's argument can be regarded as being informed by constructions of motherhood as women's 'natural' occupation and a naïve assumption that women slip into such roles easily and painlessly. Further, the talk here places such 'problematic' drinking on the part of women within a wider social framework, something which traditional psychological approaches to understanding this, as previously argued, have largely failed to do (e.g. Schutte *et al,* 1997; Wilsnack & Wilsnack, 1995; Bedi & Halikas, 1985). Further, comments were made such as *'I think as women today, we are more stressed than we used to be historically, we have a lot more on our plates don't we?* (SY3), this additionally, locating stresses associated with women's modern lifestyles (these, as discussed, being constructed as a reason why women may drink) within a wider historical context. One possible outcome of the thesis may be to highlight the importance of understanding women's 'problematic' drinking within a wider socio-cultural and historical context, and it appears that drawing attention to such statements and remarks here is important for this reason. The stresses associated with women's modern lifestyles and the role that this plays in contemporary drinking patterns amongst women has been discussed in the previous chapter. Yet, the comments here have invoked a consideration of why the media has chosen to focus upon certain aspects of

such modern lifestyles. In short, why has the focus been placed upon women's drinking as self-medication of work-related stress as opposed to the stresses associated with motherhood and family life? One reading could be that drawing attention to the latter would invoke a questioning of a Western capitalist and patriarchal order which primarily places the responsibility of child care onto women (Dinnerstein, 1978; Chodorow, 1978). At the same time, the media focus upon work-related stress amongst professional, working women, which can be read (as argued) as ideally placing women back within private spheres, inadvertently supports this. The construction of women in Western society as carers and mothers was also constructed as a reason why 'problematic drinking' amongst women is regarded as more serious and treated more harshly than problematic drinking amongst men (SY3), thus supporting arguments presented by those such as Cooke and Allan (1984) that such constructions are an important reason why women's drinking, particularly where this is regarded as excessive, receives 'special attention' (see chapter two). As such, we appear to have a picture emerging here where women may drink to relieve or address the stresses associated with such responsibility, yet at the same time, are treated more harshly for drinking because of those responsibilities. In short, women are expected to cope with the stresses associated with their 'natural' occupations in life, in contrast to those associated with work and career, which are not regarded as such.

7.7 Public Patriarchy: The Exclusion, Surveillance and Regulation of Women Who Drink.

As discussed in the previous chapter, drinking spaces and drinking culture more generally are constructed in the media as becoming increasingly feminised. Indeed,

there was support for this notion in the women's talk. For example, whilst discussing how women's drinking has changed over time, the participants pointed to the increased amount of money that women now have to spend on alcohol and leisure activities and the increased presence of women within public drinking spaces. For example, the women made comments such as *'In loads, every club you walk into now there's a group of lasses'* (WY1), this being contrasted with previous times when *'it was really frowned upon for a girl to go into a pub'* (SY1) and when *'women weren't allowed in the pub'* (SY1; WY2; WY3). Such changes were discursively related to a change in social attitudes, the current historical context (*'the nineties'*) and women's collective, active resistance:

Extract 7

Karen: *It's accepted, yeah, but women are like finally, y'know, standin up for themselves an sayin, "Right, we're gonna go out to the pub, we're gonna go out an get pissed".*

(WY1)

As such, it is women themselves, through active resistance, who are constructed as the ones who have evoked such changes (e.g. increased availability). Yet despite this, there was much talk in the focus group discussions around public drinking spaces being male-dominated and ones from which women are sometimes excluded. Further, when women are permitted into such spaces, accounts provided described their segregation and the restriction of their movement within these:

Extract 8

Janice: *Once like me an Clare an Becky went in The Bear* [pub in Leeds] *on a Tuesday or Wednesday night. An we sat there, an it was full of blokes. An I thought, I mean, you get lads in pubs, but this place was like, y'know, totally full of blokes, like,*

thirty, forty, sixty, eighty years old. An they kept lookin at us like this [gives disapproving look] *you know, not like, "Hiya darling", but like, "What are you doin in ere?" Lookin us up an down when we went to the bar. An like, I turned round to them when I was really pissed, an went, "Why do you keep lookin at us? Are we aliens or something?" An they went, "I don't think you bleedin realise what night it is darling", like that, an I went, "No, mebby not, so what night is it?" An he went, "It's lads night". An I was thinking like, "Are they gonna ave strippers on an stuff like that?" An I went, "So what you gonna do, get stripper out or lap dancer out?" An he went, "No, it's fuckin men's night an lads night", "Well, so who gives a shit?" An he went, "Can you move from that end of the bar to that end of the bar, an once you've drunk your drink, can you sling your ook", in so many words. An it was dominoes and darts night.*

Vicky: *That wo like, one time at my old place where I used to work, they were doin like this promotion thing, an it wo like this gentleman thing to do with this golf club. An the women who were like working there were all doin stuff like waitressing and what ave yer. But they could only walk in certain parts of the corridor, an they could only go in certain parts of the room.*

Janice: *Whereabouts was this?*

Vicky: *I can't, it was somewhere, y'know, in North Yorkshire. But it was such absolute bollocks. They* [the waitresses] *were comin back an goin, "Oh, he's been slappin me arse", an stuff like this.*

(WY1)

Here, I would like to draw the reader's attention to a remark made by one of the participants in the context of a discussion around social change and the increased presence of women within public drinking spaces (as discussed):

Extract 9

Karen: *But I can't imagine a day when someone turned round to me an said, "You can't come in this pub, cos you're a woman" (Yeah) or whatever, d'y'know what a mean? That would just be complete shit.*

(WY1)

However, extract 8 constructs public drinking spaces as ones where women *are* still denied entry on the grounds of their gender. As such, there are competing constructions here around women's freedom to move within such public spaces. Extract 8 describes the continuation of 'men only' nights in certain establishments from which women are excluded. This could be read as an attempt to preserve or reclaim drinking establishments (if only on certain nights) as exclusively male. Where women are present in the accounts given, they are positioned within subserviant or sexual roles (e.g. 'waitress'; 'stripper', 'lap dancer'); are treated as sexual objects (*'They were comin back an goin, "Oh, he's been slappin me arse"'*) and their freedom of movement is severely restricted to male-designated parts of the space (*"Can you move from that end of the bar to that end of the bar"; 'They could only walk in certain parts of the corridor, an they could only go in certain parts of the room.'*). This resonates with arguments presented by those such as Thorne (1993) that boys monopolise common playground space, pushing girls and their games to the peripheries. It appears that this is not exclusive to children's leisure spaces.

Moreover, talk constructed drinking spaces as ones in which women's drinking is regulated and controlled. For example, there was much talk around the exertion of control over the types of beverage that women can consume, much of this centring around the theme of 'pints':

Extract 10

Karen: *They won't serve, they won't serve a woman a pint in a working man's club, they'll only serve a half, or give you a half pint glass to drink it out of.*

Vicky: *Won't they?*

Karen: *No.*

Janice: *Really?*

Karen: *No cos like, it's a totally, it's a masculine thing.*

Janice: *So if you go to a working men's club an say, "Can I ave a pint of bitter?"*

(...)

Karen: *If they think it's for you, then they'll say, "Do you want, don't you want a half pint glass?" An if you say "No", then it's like, you're not supposed to.*

Janice: *That's what they do though in their training though, sort of like bar owners, they'll say, "When it come to a lady, ask her if she wants a half". Cos they do that in bars, I've worked in bars an they do do that. So I don't think it's just in working men's clubs.*

(WY1)

Working men's clubs were pointed to in particular as male dominated spaces which restrict women's movement and drinking practice. For example, in one group discussion, there was talk around how the local working men's club is controlled and dominated by the male committee members who were described by one participant as *'fascists'* (WY3) and how until fairly recently, women weren't allowed in the games room (WY3). In a different focus group, one participant talked about how a working men's club which she had been to in Newcastle had a line drawn on the floor which women weren't allowed to cross (SY3). However, discussion around such control, for example over what women drink, by no means solely located this within working men's clubs (as illustrated in the above extract). For example, the women talked about ordering pints in pubs (generally constructed as another type of establishment which is male dominated) and being served a half pint instead, the central reason for the refusal or reluctance of establishments to serve women pints offered being that this is *'a masculine thing'* (see above extract) and therefore *'unfeminine'* or *'unladylike'* (SY1; WY2). In addition, such control was not always described as being exerted by bar staff, but also by 'significant others' such as male family members:

Extract 11

Rebecca: *When my mate Jemma, she went to the pub with her dad, and her erm, one of her middle brothers, they went to the bar, and he was only seventeen, and she was nineteen, twenty, whatever. And she said, "Can I have a pint of bitter please?" And they went to the bar and got two pints of bitter, and got a half for her, and she said "I'm not drinking that, I asked for a pint, and if Andrew* [her brother] *can have a pint, them I'm having a pint, I am not drinking half a pint". And it was all because her dad thought that it was not feminine for her to drink a pint.*

Amanda: *I've been to the pub and said "Can I have two pints?" And the guy has said to me "And what are you having?"* [...]

Clare: *My dad, my dad watches me, I'll go to the bar and get a round, and I'll come back with a pint, and he won't, he'll look, and I know what he thinks* (...)

Sara: *He doesn't think it's very ladylike?*

Clare: *No.*

(SY1)

The movement of the discussion here is from more direct or external forms of control and exclusion, towards more subtle forms of this (e.g. male family members responding to the purchasing of a pint with disapproving looks). More generally, drinking spaces were constructed in every group discussion as ones which are uncomfortable for women, ones in which they are subjected to surveillance and observation by an audience, particularly if unaccompanied. Indeed, whilst discussing this, the participants themselves often used terms such as *'scrutinised'* and *'observed'* (SY3). This was often cited as reason for 'self-exclusion', for example, avoiding going into drinking spaces alone:

Extract 12

Bernie: *I mean, if you walked into a pub on your own, I mean that's why I never go in a pub on my own, cos I know that as soon as I walk in that pub, the whole pub of*

people are gonna be looking at me, an you know that they're looking at you, an even if they're not looking at you, you catch them grinning, sly looks, an even if they don't do that, I'm always aware, I know, I know what they're thinking. They're thinking, "She's there, on her own in a pub, she wants to get chatted up". Whereas if that was me going in a pub, an I saw a man on his own, I'd think, an it's a gender thought, "Oh, he's out for a quiet, chilled night out, have a quiet pint, maybe meeting his mates", do y'know what I mean? Cos men are more comfortable in pubs, an men are more comfortable full stop, an pubs are just one other aspect of society.
(WY2)

Extract 13

Megan: *But lads are more likely to be in t'pub* (\\) **Freda:** *Yeah* (\\) *y'know, on a night. It's more socially acceptable for them to go in a pub on their own, or with a load of other blokes an drink, it's still like that.*
Freda: *Whereas a woman, I mean, I wunt go in a pub on me own* [...] *But a woman can't do that, you feel as though everyone's starin at yer.*
Megan: *It's more socially acceptable for men.*
Freda: *Yeah, it's still a man's world.*
(WY3)

There appears to be support here for literature surrounding the geography of public space which has demonstrated how men dominate non-verbal spaces (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). For example, it is likely that the not only observing, but also judging audience is likely to comprised mainly of men, given that most pubs were constructed across the group discussions as largely male occupied. In addition, men are constructed in both extracts as being relatively free from such surveillance, and as such, relatively free to enter such spaces, for example, alone. Note the use of the term *'can't'* in extract 13. There is an implication here that it is not that the speaker doesn't want to go in pubs alone (although this is perhaps true in light of such surveillance and judgement), but that she feels she is unable to, thus undermining women's agency. Indeed, this idea is

supported by remarks which were made in the context of discussions around going into drinking spaces alone such as *'I'd love to go sit in a pub an ave half o lager, an a cigarette, but a couldn't do it'* (WY3) and *'It's something that men can do really easily, which is annoying'* (SY2). Further, both extracts locate drinking spaces within a wider patriarchal order, or put another way, construct these as smaller patriarchal spaces within a wider patriarchal space. What is also interesting about extract 12 is that this additionally constructs women who drink in public as being subjected to the 'male gaze', and having assumptions made about their sexuality and reasons for being there (e.g. to get 'picked up' or 'chatted up'), a construction which was recurring across the focus groups. Indeed, the unwanted attentions of men was often constructed as a reason why the women avoided solitary drinking in public.

Although the bulk of the talk around this (as exemplified in the extracts provided) described *not* going into such public drinking spaces alone because of this observation and judgement, there was also talk around going into public drinking spaces alone as a form of protest, resistance or, as put by one participant, as *'a challenge'* (SY3). This highlights public alcohol consumption as a site for women's resistance. Yet, there was also talk which supported the notion that certain establishments are more 'female friendly'. For example, there was talk around certain places such as *'student places'* or *'student pubs'* being more relaxed and more comfortable for women, these being compared and contrasted with more *'traditional'* establishments (WY1; SY1; SY3). Also, when the participants talked about instances in which they had or would go into a public drinking environment alone without the intention of meeting someone there, they described accompanying the drinking with food, for example, in a café bar or a *'bar stroke restaurant'* (WY1; SY1) more than any other establishment. As discussed in the previous chapter, the serving of food is constructed as a central feature of the 'female

friendly' establishment, this being a recognised and deliberate marketing ploy by breweries to create comfortable spaces for women and get hold of their money. However, even such spaces were also constructed as ones where women are subjected to observation and judgement:

Extract 14

Carol: [after describing a scenario when she went to meet a friend in a pub and felt that she was being observed because initially, she was there alone] *An this was like a middle class pub I was in, it wasn't like a rough pub* (2.0).

Katy: *What's a middle class pub?*

Carol: *Well, that's a good question. Not studenty, erm, serve food* (1.0) *things like that y'know? Not rowdy groups of people, not like a town pub (Yeah)* (2.0). *Where everyone's quiet, y'know? Quietly having a drink. There are a few couples, but there were definitely no single women.*

(SY3)

As discussed in the previous chapter, some drinking spaces can be regarded as classed in terms of typical clientele. For example, it was discussed how the clientele frequenting places such All Bar One (constructed in the media texts as the archetypal female friendly drinking establishment) are largely professional or middle class women (the 'Bridget Jones brigade' - The Guardian, 19th April, 2000). In the above extract, the speaker refers to the serving of food as, amongst other things, defining the drinking establishment that she went to as a *'middle class'* one, thus contributing to constructions of this as a central, important feature of the female friendly, respectable place. Yet, her preceding account is one which challenges the notion that such places are female friendly. Also note her remarks that *'there were definitely no single women'* in there. Further, the notion that women feel more comfortable if they can accompany drinking with another activity such as eating in itself supports the idea presented here that women

are still subjected to observation and surveillance in such places. For example, this can be read in part as a required public display to the watchful audience that the drinker is there for a purpose, other than, for example, to get picked up. Indeed, when the participants did describe instances in which they have or would go into places such as café bars alone (these being the places, across the focus groups, which the participants pointed to as places where they would most likely do this), they collectively discussed and described engaging in other, perhaps less subtle public displays. For example, if they were meeting someone, these included *'buying two pints'* (SY1) and *'lookin at my watch, an lookin at the door'* (SY2) in order to *'make it obvious'* that they are waiting for someone, or if not intending to meet anybody, these included things like *'sitting by the window and reading a magazine'* (WY1) or *'reading a book'* (SY3). More than this, such *'middle class'* establishments were actually constructed as ones where women's drinking is subjected to greater control and scrutiny than in other establishments (e.g. those frequented by the working class):

Extract 15

Carol: *I think it's more controlled in those sort of like, erm, y'know, where there's older people or more middle class. There's sort of, I think the working classes have got a lot more freedom actually, even though they might not know that, it's* (...). **(SY3)**

The talk here contributes to constructions of the middle class as being observational and judgmental (Finch, 1993). However, Finch (1993) discusses how the drinking behaviours of the working class have come under the scrutiny of the 'middle class gaze', whereas here, the talk constructs a scenario where the middle class are subjected to observation and control from their own class grouping. One explanation here is that gender simply takes precedence over class, that the male gaze and public patriarchy

apply regardless of the class context. This is not being disputed here. Yet, further than this, the participant here constructs the working class (e.g. working class women) as having more freedom in this respect. In discussion of this I would like to refer back to the work of those such as Ware (1992) as discussed in chapter three. Ware (1992) argues that desirable normative femininity has developed as a sign based on upper/middle class ideals (e.g. surrounding 'correct' conduct) and as such, positions working class women outside of this. As such, it is possible (as previously argued) that middle class women are particularly looked to and expected to uphold these feminine ideals, whereas working class women, who are regarded as deviant anyway (e.g. Blackman, 1996; Skeggs, 1997; Hill, 1986; Kuhn, 1988; Nead, 1988) are not subjected to the same degree of expectation.

In summary, the picture which emerges here is that the extent to which social changes have resulted in the liberation of female drinking is contentious and limited. There appears to support here for arguments presented by those such as Walby (1990) that although women are no longer strictly excluded from public life *per se*, they are segregated and controlled within such spaces (what Walby calls 'public patriarchy'). For instance, it has been discussed how the exclusion of women from certain spaces and at certain times can be regarded as an attempt to preserve or reclaim such public spaces as the province of men (Edley & Wetherell, 1995), and how the control of their drinking within these can be read as an attempt to preserve certain practices (e.g. drinking pints) as male or masculine ones. This is perhaps not suprising given arguments presented by those such as Conveney *et al* (1984) that any ruling group will adopt joint strategies to protect it's position and what they regard as their sites. As such, the research appears to have identified the kind of 'micro-politics' of gendered encounters discussed by

feminists such as Henley (1973), who have argued that these kind of interactional patterns reflect status and power differences between men and women. Yet at the same, there is also evidence of female resistance, thus highlighting public drinking spaces as sites of gender struggle. For instance, note the amount of resistant talk which litters the accounts provided here and the construction of public drinking spaces as sites for protest (e.g. by going into public drinking spaces alone despite an awareness of the disapproval, surveillance and judgement that the women are likely to be subjected to). As such, although not often clearly identifying or recognising themselves as feminist, the women can be regarded as being involved in struggles which could be regarded as feminist, for example, over the use of space, the challenging of sexist behaviour etc. In the following sub-section, the chapter shall turn to a more focused discussion of the male gaze, a theme which straddles the current (can be regarded as a form of control which incurs, for example, self-exclusion) and following section, which concentrates upon constructions of gender and sex within public drinking spaces.

7.8 Sexualising Drinking Spaces: Positioning and Power

Public drinking places were constructed across the group discussions as sexually-charged spaces or as described in one focus group, as *'pick up places'* (SY3). The construction of drinking spaces as such is perhaps one reason why, as discussed, assumptions are made about a woman's reasons for being in a public drinking environment if unaccompanied. Yet, there was also talk around such assumptions not being made about men who drink in public alone, indicating the continuation of sexual double-standards:

Extract 16

Sue: *<u>They do, they do think that.</u> If you were a man stood having a pint in the pub, very rarely would a woman sidle up to yer, and start trying to chat you up, would she? You very rarely think, "Well, he's obviously out trying to pick a woman up for sex", would you? (laughing). No.*

(SY3)

One explanation for this could be the pervasiveness of discourses which position men as active and initiating in heterosexual contacts and women as passive recipients or objects of male sexual advances (e.g. Gavey, 1988; Jackson, 1978; MacKinnon, 1983), public drinking environments being arenas where such constructions are played out. Similarly, there was talk around the assumptions men make about drinking women, such as that they will be easier (e.g. than non-drinking women) for them to seduce:

Extract 17

Sara: *I think men think it's easier, if you're a girl, and especially if you've been drinking, you're a bit easier I think, to get hold of.*

(SY1)

As such, women are not only constructed as objects of the male gaze and male sexual advances, but further than this, as vulnerable in drinking spaces, thus reproducing discourses which position women as such (e.g. World Health Organisation, 1994 – also, see chapter two and previous chapter). Yet, there was some negotiation around and tension between constructions of sexual advances on the part of men as 'sexual attention' versus 'sexual harassment', thus 'blurring' the distinction. In general, the former was collectively constructed as harmless and a confidence booster or *'flattering'*

(SY3), whereas the latter was articulated as being when the attention is unwanted and persistent, and was often described as inducing intense feelings of fear:

Extract 18

Rebecca: *I remember when I was younger, I was about seventeen and at school, and me and my friends went to a club, and this guy started, you know, he was really coming up to me, grabbing hold of me, and going, "Come and dance", and I was like, "No, no, I've got to stay with my friends". And my friend Mandy came up and said, "Get off her, leave her alone", and I was quite pissed, whatever, and I was going, "No, leave me alone", and she was going, "Leave her alone". And so he just kept on and on and on, dragging me back to the dance floor, and it was really, really horrible. And he was, kind of, I was only seventeen and I'd had quite a lot to drink, and I was in a night-club and what have you, and it was quite a scary experience. But I did eventually manage to leave him and get out of the club and get into a taxi.* **(SY1)**

Further, there was talk within the group discussions which constructed such sexual harassment as a much wider problem (see Kitzinger & Thomas, 1995), in others words, as not just located within public drinking spaces. For example, following provision of the account presented here as extract 18, another participant within the same focus group described how a man had approached her in the street a couple of days previously, pointing out that *'that's got nothing to do with the booze'*. As such, once again, we can see the positioning of drinking spaces and surveillance within these within a wider socio-cultural context, as one exemplary aspect of wider culture. Such routine sexual surveillance and harassment of women in public spaces is regarded by feminists advocating an approach to sexual violence which regards this as existing on a continuum, as a form of this (Kelly, 1988; Dworkin, 1981; MacKinnon, 1982). For example, MacKinnon (1982) argues that sexual surveillance is a weapon used by men to attempt to control women and maintain male domination. Further, such harassment (as

discussed) was constructed as incurring self-exclusion and regulation of behaviour within drinking spaces. For example, the women talked about sexual harassment as a reason why they often avoided going into public drinking spaces alone, and more generally, there was a 'safety in numbers' discourse which constructed lone women as being more vulnerable to such harassment. For example, one participant remarked *'you get it* [sexually harassed] *when you're at the bar on your own'* (SY1). In addition, in light of the over-hanging threat of such harassment, the women talked about how they collectively constructed strategies in order to avoid being alone and therefore more vulnerable, such as 'sticking with your mates' and preventing separation from another:

Extract 19

Clare: *But we are really good in clubs for going, "You stay here, I'm just going to the loo"* (\\) **Amanda:** *Yeah* (\\) **Clare:** *And they will stay in that spot until you come back.*

(SY1)

What is striking here is that this was reminiscent of the strategies which women use and are advised to use in order to reduce the risk of drug-assisted rape (as discussed in the previous chapter). Indeed, another piece of advice given to women by the police in order to reduce their vulnerability to such rape is to never accept drinks from strangers, as the drink could be drugged (The Guardian – 20th June, 2000). Interestingly, there was talk around never accepting drinks from strange men, but this wasn't in light of fears of drug-assisted rape (which wasn't mentioned once), but rather because the male buyer will regard that as *'some form of contract'* (SY3) and/or *'expect sommat in return'* (WY3), the implication being that the something is sex. As such, it appears that women's concerns and fears within drinking spaces are more widespread, stretching beyond fears of rape (although concerns about sexual harassment and sexual

expectations could be related to fears of rape). Likewise, the use of prevention strategies appear more pervasive also. It was argued in the previous chapter that the use of such strategies and advice to use these can be read as the placing of responsibility for abusive and threatening male behaviour onto women (thus detracting such blame away from the men themselves). This argument applies here also, and it is something of a concern that women feel that they have to regulate their behaviour and restrict their movement in light of such threats. Further, the transcripts were littered with statements such as *'I seem to attract unwanted attention sometimes anyway'* (SY2), thus locating this problem within themselves, that there is something about them which makes men 'do this'. One extract in particular highlights how such self-attribution of blame could potentially have drastic consequences:

Extract 20

Sara: *I used to go with a different man every week when I was at university, different men all the time (laugh). I've been in that situation where, cos I've been pissed, I've got myself into trouble. I was in a difficult situation once where I had to throw a man out of my room when I was a first year at university, because he tried it on thinking I was a lot more pissed than I was. I mean, I got into bed with him with no clothes on (laugh) and when he tried to penetrate me, but he didn't get very far, I went "Oh my God, fuck off, get out of my room, oh my God", and things like that.*

Katy: *Did he leave then? What happened next?*

Sara: *Well, yeah, he left but he was in a foul mood. He felt that I had turned him on too much, not turned him on* (\\) **Clare:** *Led him on* **Sara:** *Led him on too much. I suppose I had. I mean, I was in the first year at university and I didn't really realise that you can't get into bed with a man with no clothes on and not allow him to have sex with you.*

(SY1)

Firstly here, once again, there is reproduction of a discourse which constructs men as taking advantage of women whilst in a vulnerable, intoxicated state, thus positioning women as potential victims in sexually charged, alcohol fuelled situations. For example, note the remarks *'he tried it on thinking I was a lot more pissed than I was'*. However, the speaker does not position *herself* as a victim in the event, but rather places the responsibility for the incident upon herself. There is also reproduction of a discourse here which constructs men as having a strong sexual drive (Hollway, 1984) which women are responsible for arousing (note the terms *'turned him on'* and *'led him on'*). However, more than this, boundaries are constructed around when, given the extent to which this has occurred, the woman has the right to refuse sexual intercourse, the implication here being that there are instances in which a woman has relinquished her right to say no. For example, note the statement *'you can't get into bed with a man with no clothes on and not allow him to have sex with you'*. Such discourses may be of concern to feminists and women's rights campaigners who argue that 'no means no', and those such as Julie Bindle (The Guardian, 20th June, 2000 - see previous chapter) who are concerned that the placing of responsibility onto women allows men to perform what she describes as *'appalling'* sexual acts on women whilst in a vulnerable state. As such, discourses which construct women as relinquishing their rights to say 'no' and which place responsibility onto women (as exemplified here) become a possible site for intervention, for example, through the active deconstruction of such discourse and generation of alternatives (e.g. no means no whatever the circumstances). What is worrying about this particular account is that had the man refused to leave, and had he forced the speaker to have sexual intercourse with him, would she have forever felt that the rape was her fault? Would she have reported it to the police? Would the case have been dismissed because of the circumstances (involvement of alcohol, her getting into

bed with him naked)? I suspect that there are many similar stories when this has been precisely what has happened. This is especially given constructions of drinking women as sexually promiscuous (Ridlon, 1988; see also chapter six) and as placing themselves at unnecessary risk from sexual assault (Lindqvist, 1991), the responsibility here being placed upon the victim and therefore taken away from the attacker. Moreover, as demonstrated by those such as Abbey and Harnish (1995), such discourses may be operationalised in legal proceedings surrounding rape, whereby victims are much less likely to receive support from the police and judicial systems if the woman had been drinking.

Yet, there was a competing discourse which positioned women as sexual aggressors in public drinking contexts, and men as the objects or even victims of female sexual aggression:

Extract 21

Joanne: *Have you ever been to a women's strippers night though? (No). They are just wild, aren't they Vic? An every bloke who enters that building, whether it be a stripper or a bar man must feel that big* [indicates with her fingers that they must feel small]. *So we're capable of doin it as well.*

Vicky: *Yeah but, yeah but the trouble is that's not norm to them is it? Y'know what a mean?*

Karen: *Yeah but I think, I can seriously, honestly say that women are worse than men in some respects* (\\) **Joanne:** *I do* (\\) **Karen:** *Cos* (...)

Vicky: *Yeah, but they don't get the opportunity to do it, do they?* (\\) **Karen:** *Course they do* (\\) **Vicky:** *So they do it ten times worse when they do.*

(WY1)

Here, we have a dialogue between the participants which contains conflicting statements. For example, here, women are constructed as sexual aggressors who can

treat men like sexual objects and subordinate or undermine them. This is further exemplified by another statement: *'An they* [women] *can belittle a bloke more easily than a man can a woman'* (WY1). The talk here appears to contain a degree of phallic imagery. Indeed, there was further talk which more directly addressed phallocentricism. For example, in one group discussion, the women talked about how threatened men are by female conversations around penis size because this defines masculinity, or as put by one participant, *'their tackle is them, isn't it?'* (SY3). This was also constructed as a reason for the objectification of women in patriarchal society, for example, large breasts as defining desirable femininity (see Whelehan, 2000) – *'An I think that's why they try to make our tits or whatever us, because their willy is to them their most important thing'* (SY3). The talk here positions women in ways which attributes them with more power and agency, competing with discourses which position women as the victims or as being on the receiving end of male sexual aggression and objectification. However, 'Vicky' is arguing that such domination of space and sexual aggression is, in her own words, 'not the norm' or is not as normalised and widespread as male sexual aggression. For one, the specific location of female sexual aggression within a particular context (i.e. that of going to see male strippers) in itself supports this idea. Indeed, participants in other focus groups also referred to male stripping events in the context of discussions around female domination of space and sexual aggression, the talk again reproducing the idea that such female sexual aggression is context specific and not as normative or pervasive as male sexual aggression (SY3). As such, we appear to have another recurring discursive pattern emerging here in that once again, women are constructed as sexual aggressors, whilst at the same time, this construction is undermined (see previous chapter). Further, female sexual aggression was again constructed as less threatening than male sexual aggression:

Extract 22

Karen: *The only thing about it is that men don't feel as threatened as women do, cos like if a bloke comes up to a woman, an starts comin on to her an shit, an avin, y'know, trying it on with her, an like, always, part of a woman's psyche says, "Right, he could be fuckin dodgy, an he could, y'know* (...)".

(WY1)

In sum here, the construction and simultaneous discursive undermining of female sexual aggression occurs in a relational context (in relation to male sexual aggression), for example, as less normative and less threatening than male sexual aggression. It is possible that 'Karen's' remarks in the above extract around women's fear of men are informed by discourses which construct violence as male or masculine (e.g. Wilson, 1975 - see chapter two), which White and Kowalski (1994) argue contributes to a climate of fear for women, such fear being evident in public drinking contexts. Indeed, the same participant reproduces such discourse when she refers to *'male aggressive tendencies towards women'* in a different section of the transcript. It is to the subject of male aggression and violence that the discussion shall now turn.

7.9 Aggression and Violence: Considering Gender and Class

Talk in the focus group discussions around drink-related aggression and violence and aggressive drinking spaces raised two major issues: gender and class. As discussed in chapter four, and as shall be illustrated in the following chapter which examines the role of aggression and violence in the construction of working class femininities, gender and class identities are inseparable, each one feeding into the other. However, for ease of presentation and discussion here, gender and class shall be dealt with in turn.

Gender

Some of the accounts around drink-related aggression and violence which were provided, not suprisingly, described male aggression. Many of these described such action towards the women themselves by their partners or ex-partners. The role of alcohol in instances of male violence in intimate relationships is well-documented (see Leonard, 1993 for a review) and also, aggression and violence have been discussed as being tied up with constructions of masculinity (e.g. Moane, 1997; Burns, 1980; Tomsen, 1997; Felson & Steadman, 1983; see also chapter two). Further, accounts of male aggression were offered in the focus group discussions conducted with both samples of women, which supports arguments that such violence is found across 'socio-economic class' (e.g. Hyde, 1994; Hester *et al,* 1996; Rollins, 1996). What is particularly interesting is how the participants collectively construct and simultaneously deconstruct accounts and discursive techniques which justify male violence.

Extract 23

Joanne: *That night, there was a big massive fight. I was in bed, an he'd been out all day, an he come in pissed out of is face, an I wo laid in bed an he came in, "You fuckin whore", right in me face like that* [holds her hand up close to her face to demonstrate proximity]. *Ave you seen Rita, Sue and Bob Too?* [1980s film set nearby in Bradford] *(Yeah). Have you seen the dad in that?* [drunken, aggressive character] *(Yeah). That's what he was like, "You fuckin bitch", like that in me face* [holds hand up to her face again]. *An a thought, "Eh up, I'm gonna get me ed kicked in ere" (laughing)* (\\) **Janice:** *Oh no* (\\) **Joanne:** *I got up an got dressed an ran down to me mate's, but he had me in t' kitchen, and he was holding me back an dragging me all around t' kitchen.*

Janice: *Did he hit yer?*

Joanne: *He did that night, he punched me, but it was in the back, he'd never hit me in the face.*

Karen: *But the only reason that he'd ever hit yer is because he knew that you didn't want im* (\\) **Joanne:** *Yeah* (\\) **Karen:** *But to be onest with yer right, she once kicked the fuck out of im in Blackpool. They went away for a nice weekend, and er, she ended up kicking the fuck out of im* (..)
(WY1)

In this extract, 'Joanne' plays down the attack on her by her then partner in light of whereabouts on her body he hit her (namely her back as opposed to her face). There appear to be similarities here with newspaper reports on the Stan Collymore's attack on Ulrika Jonsson (discussed in the previous chapter), which constructed this as particularly serious due to, amongst other things, the fact that he struck her in the face. As argued in the previous chapter, this competes with principles of zero tolerance, constructing male violence in hierarchical terms, with some actions been articulated as 'more' or 'less' serious. Further, another participant who took part in the same discussion ('Karen') presents a justification for the incident, arguing that this was due to fact that he knew Joanne wanted to end the relationship. To extend this argument further, the construction of events presented appears to be one in which Joanne's ex-partner felt that he was losing control over Joanne and the relationship, and as such, the attack can be read as response to this, for example, an attempt to reassert control and power. This idea is supported by literature which contends that power is central to male violence (Walby, 1990; Cullen, 1989; Scully & Marolla, 1993; Dobash & Dobash, 1994). Further, once again, we see the attribution of responsibility here onto the victim of the attack (Joanne), this being a pervasive and recurring theme in the empricially-based chapters. Finally, the attack on Joanne is played-down or excused by the participant known here as 'Karen' in light of the construction that patterns of violence within the relationship are dynamic as opposed to one way, this being presented as a reason for the refusal on Karen's part to position Joanne as the victim of the assault.

Also, as outlined earlier, Karen makes reference to *'male aggressive tendencies towards women'* in another section of the transcript and thus reproduces discourses which construct male violence as a given, in-built predisposition (e.g. Wilson, 1975 - see chapter one). In sum, there is an overall failure here to challenge male aggression and violence.

In addition, alcohol itself was cited in the discussions as an excuse or justification for male violence, in a similar way to which drugs that are associated with drug-assisted rape such as Rohypnol often become the site of blame (The Guardian, 20th June, 2000 – see previous chapter). However, at the same time, the use of alcohol as such was also deconstructed, and so not all of the women's talk failed to challenge male violence:

Extract 24

Bernie: *Well, the thing that made me leave him in the end wo, I'd put up with it for four years, and the last time he ever hit me right, was the first time he'd ever done it sober, an I thought, "If I don't get out I'm gonna die" (Yeah) and I literally thought that, and I left him* (2.0). *So maybe if he'd carried on doing it whilst he was drunk, I still might have been with him, I don't know (Yeah). Do y'know what I mean? But it got to a point where, and women, women justify it to themselves as well to keep themselves sane, do y'know what I mean? They say, "Oh he was drunk, he was angry, I fucked him off" or whatever, but once he hit me sober, I thought "Right, that's it!"*

(WY2)

Extract 25

Bernie: *But I don't agree with this argument about violent, I really don't agree with this* (2.0) *argument about like men being violent when they're drunk, because if a man's violent when he's drunk, then he's a violent man.*

(WY2)

Once again here, we can see the attribution of blame for male violence onto women (*'I fucked him off'*). Yet, as outlined, the rationalisation of male violence in terms of alcohol consumption is also deconstructed. For example, the speaker constructs violent as something that some men are, as opposed to violence being something that they simply do when they have been drinking. In sum, the talk here demonstrates not only how victims of male violence, but also those who surround them everyday (e.g. friends, family members etc.) often construct accounts of this, tap into discourses and use discursive techniques which rationalise, justify and excuse male violence. One possible way forward here, as suggested by Kitzinger & Thomas (1995) in respect of their research around sexual harassment, is to understand and deconstruct the discursive techniques used to deny or excuse male violence. However, this raises further problems and issues which shall be explored in the final chapter of the thesis in the context of discussion around possible implications and consequences of readings presented in chapters six to eight.

However, accounts of female aggression were also offered by the participants, this being a much less documented area of investigation than male aggression and violence (Campbell *et al,* 1998; Bjorkqvist & Niemela, 1992; Paul & Baenninger, 1991). For example, note the following extract:

Extract 26

Wendy: *We've only ever been out once and had, Bernie got beaten up by two girls.*
Katy: *Tell us about that.*
Wendy: *That was just because she was talking to this bloke who she knew, and one of these girls got a bit* (\\) **Bernie:** *They didn't know I knew, they thought that I was trying to get off with him* (\\) **Wendy:** *And they both beat her up* (\\) **Bernie:** *Twice,*

not once, twice (\\) **Wendy:** *And we got thrown out of the club* (\\) **Bernie:** *I had a big bald patch on me ed where they ripped me hair out. It really shook me. I was terrified to go out afterwards, do y'remember? If I heard a noise I was just like* (\\) (..)
(WY2)

One explanation for the lack of attention which has been paid towards female aggression and violence, particularly in comparison to male aggression and violence, could be that this is a relatively recent phenomena with which the literature has simply not caught up yet. However, there was talk in the group discussions which challenges this notion. For example, note the following account provided by a participant ('Maggie') who was aged sixty-two at the time the study was conducted:

Extract 27
Katy: *What about when you an Maggie were young? Do you think things have changed?*
Maggie: *No, no, there were still drunken fights.*
Megan: *So what about you when you were younger? Did you get into fights?*
Freda: *I ant.*
Megan: *I've been in a couple of fights, yeah.*
Freda: *I can't ever say that I ave.*
Katy: *So what's happened Maggie? In the past when you've got into fights?*
(3.0)
Maggie: *I can't really remember* (2.0). *I remember when I gave one lass a good idin* [hiding – means to beat up] *cos she'd gone out wi our Jim* [her brother], *an been with our Jim all night, an then went ome with one of is mates* (\\) **Megan:** *So you give er a good idin?* (\\) **Maggie:** *So I followed er outside an grabbed er, an give er a good idin* (2.0) *an made er give me half a crown for all drinks she'd drunk (laugh). She said, "I aven't got any tram fare ome". I said, "Walk".*
(WY3)

Again here, we can see a reproduction of the idea (as discussed earlier) that accepting drinks from men represents a form of sexual contract, this being supported here in practice or played out by women themselves. However, to return to the central point of discussion, given that the last tram in Leeds did it's final run in 1959 and references to the then monitory system (*'half a crown'*) one can gain an idea of how long ago this described incident took place. An alternative explanation for the lack of analytic attention which female aggression has received is that this is due to constructions of aggression as male or masculine (see chapter two). Moreover, it has been argued by those such as White and Kowalski (1994) that this lack of attention is a deliberate ploy to reproduce masculinising constructions of aggression and perpetuate the myth of the 'non-aggressive woman', a discourse which has been perpetuated in the interests of positioning men and women within unequal relations of power and justifying and maintaining those relations (see chapter two). Further, such discourses normalise, rationalise and justify male aggression and violence (Campbell, 1993; Lees, 1997; Larkin & Popaleni, 1994). For example, as discussed in chapter two of the thesis, those such as Thornhill and Thornhill (1992) have drawn upon evolutionary and biological discourse to construct sexual violence as a natural, in-built male disposition. In contrast, aggression and violent action on the part of women is less likely to receive social support, is more likely to be deemed pathological and irrational, and is more likely to be punished more severely (White and Humphrey, 1994). As discussed in the previous chapter, this is exemplified, for instance, by historical, cross-cultural reviews of adultery law, which have shown that 'jealous rage' on the part of a husband whose partner has been unfaithful is treated with more leniency than the reverse situation (see de Weerth & Kalma, 1996). In light of such arguments, I would like to argue here that the highlighting of female aggression and violence is an important part of the research, this

being an area of investigation described by Burbank (1994) as a *'critical area of research with vital social implications'* (p. 169). Perhaps most centrally, drawing increased attention towards this area of research will contribute to a deconstruction of discourses which masculinise aggression and violence and the myth of the non-aggressive women, the political importance of which has been outlined. Indeed, there was talk around gender and aggression and violence in the focus groups which appears to do this:

Extract 28

Karen: *I know absolutely sound blokes who can go out an get pissed* (2.0) *an wunt say anything to anybody, an I know lasses that can get out, an they're like, "Yeah, come on then", y'know what a mean?*

(WY1)

Yet, there are problems around taking female aggression out of the context of male aggression. For example, men's aggression still remains far more lethal, as evidenced by official statistics (Home Office Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System, 1999). Indeed, there was talk in the group discussions which constructed drink-related male violence as more lethal than female violence:

Extract 29

Karen: *I mean like obviously, if a man loses his rag through beer, he's gonna do twice as much damage as a fuckin woman.*

(WY1)

A further argument which has been presented is that much female aggression and violence which occurs within the context of intimate relationships, this becoming a more popular area of investigation (see Steinmetz & Lucca, 1988; O'Leary *et al,* 1989;

Bookwala *et al,* 1992; Straus *et al.,* 1980; White & Koss, 1991), commonly takes the form self-defence or is a response to abuse (e.g. Roscoe, 1985; Makepeace, 1986; Saunders, 1986; Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Referring back to extract 23, it was discussed how the participant known as Joanne's previous relationship was characterised by violence which worked both ways, this being presented as a justification for the refusal to position Joanne as a victim of her ex-partner's violence. However, another reading could be that violent action on Joanne's part was a response to her then partner's abuse. As such, female aggression and violence here appears in part to be relative to male aggression and violence, thus supporting existing arguments. Yet, one feature which does distinguish the thesis from existing research around female aggression (e.g. that which locates this within the context of intimate relationships) is that here, this is also located within public spaces demonstrating that this doesn't just occur 'behind closed doors' (or what Burbank, 1987, describes as 'domestic aggression'). In addition, the thesis has also highlighted female to female aggression (see extracts 26 and 27), a much less documented area still and further, accounts of female aggression and violence towards men other than the women's partners were offered, thus again taking such action outside of the context of intimate relationships:

Extract 30

Joanne: *I'm alright unless somebody starts coming on to me* (2.0) *other than that I'm always alright. Like there was this time when I was dancing away, an this fat geezer with this like, what was it?* [question directed to another participant]

Vicky: *He was pushing against us all the time, an Tess just sort of turned round and said, "What's your fuckin problem", sort of, an you know what Tess's like, "Don't fuckin mess wi me mate" (laughing), "Don't give me attitude", an all that crap* (...)

(WY1)

The man involved in the incident described above was a stranger. Further, although the entire account has not been provided here because this is rather lengthy, the speakers do go on to describe how this altercation resulted in the speakers and their friend 'Tess' being ejected from the establishment by bouncers. Those such as Campbell (1993) argue that such evidence of female aggression and violence makes men extremely uncomfortable, as this is regarded as *'an ugly sign of potential resistance'* (p. 143) against male control and power, this being presented as an additional reason for deconstructing the myth of the non-aggressive women. The actions described in the above extract can be regarded as such. For example, these can be read as resistance towards the treatment of women by men within public drinking spaces as sexual objects (as previously discussed) who's personal space they can invade, this account contributing to the picture being constructed here of such male control over women within public drinking spaces.

Class

In addition, particular spaces were collectively constructed by the participants as aggressive and violent ones. Notably, such spaces, and drink-related aggression and violence more generally, was located across the focus group discussions within working class drinking culture:

Extract 31

Katy: *Are there any places which you just never go to?*

Karen: *Yeah (laugh)* (\\) (..) *pubs round here, cos you want to go for a drink, not get your head kicked in.*

(WY1)

Extract 32

Mel: *I mean, I've got, my housemate Mick's from Carlisle, right, and he's had a mixed up background anyway cos he's from a really rough council estate in Carlisle, an he's covered in scars from being bottled in pubs an God knows what.*

(SY2)

In addition, numerous accounts were offered by the participants from the West Yorkshire sample of aggressive incidents which had taken place in their local pubs, these being incidents which the participants had witnessed or actually been involved in themselves (such accounts were largely absent in the transcripts obtained from the group discussions conducted with the South Yorkshire sample). As such, there appears to be support here for the idea that working class drinking cultures are often characterised by aggression and violence (e.g. Tomsen, 1997; Burns, 1980; Moore, 1990; Canaan, 1996). Indeed, the participants themselves often discursively related aggression within drinking cultures and indeed, more generally, to social background or social class:

Extract 33

Bernie: *I think a lot of it's got to do with class as well, do y'know what I mean? Cos you get people right, an they're on like council estates an stuff, an they've got fuck all to look forward to, so, do y'know what I mean? They're in a shit job, and their only like* (3.0) *creative outlet for want of a better word, is to like go out and get pissed, and kick somebody's ed in, do y'know what I mean? Bit it's not, I don't think it's, it's just like a release of aggression. Where other people who have been brought up in kind of like environments where you pick up a guitar, or you learn how to draw, or you play the piano, and that's an outlet of aggression in so many words, int it? (Yeah). Whereas you get people off The Churwells* [name of council estate in South Leeds] *and they haven't been taught anything else, do y'know what I mean? They're in crap jobs that they hate* (2.0) *and it's like, they live for the weekend, cos*

that's their only outlet of tension, do y'know what a mean? (Yeah). I think that is a lot to do with it. That's why there are certain pubs in Leeds that you avoid, cos you know that it's a certain kind of people that go there, an it's always from like council estates (3.0). *I mean look at me brother (laugh). Half of Leeds was cordoned off cos of his mates the other week.*

(WY2)

The speaker here constructs aggression and violence in working class drinking contexts as being due to the tension and frustration invoked by, for example, having '*a shit job*' and having '*fuck all to look forward to*', which to an extent echoes 'frustration-aggression' discourse (Dollard *et al,* 1939). Also, the speaker points to alternative outlets of tension or frustration which people from different backgrounds (e.g. middle class) have, such as playing a musical instrument or drawing. This is interesting, as Tomsen (1997) argues that aggression and violence within working class drinking culture can be read as a rejection of the leisure habits and lifestyles or practices of the middle class. However, what we appear to have in this extract is a construction of such pass times or leisure activities, which can act of release of aggression, as simply unavailable to working class people, and so this is not so much rejection as lack of access.

As outlined, the location of aggression and violence within working class drinking cultures is not new (e.g. Tomsen, 1997; Burns, 1980; Moore, 1990; Canaan, 1996). However, existing research has concentrated almost exclusively upon men and masculinity, whereas the current research draws attention to female aggression within working class drinking culture, thus offering a new and refreshing approach (in addition to the political benefits of highlighting female aggression and violence – as discussed). Class or 'socio-economic status' has been referred to in existing discussions of female

aggression. For example, Campbell *et al* (1998) argue that female on female assault is more likely to occur amongst women of a 'lower socio-economic status' because such women are more likely to be dependent on men for resource provision, and so competition for men who can provide for them will be more fierce in such sections of society. In addition, 'resource-rich' men within working class contexts are likely to be in rather shorter supply, and so competition for them will be greater. What is encouraging about Campbell's analyses of female aggression is that she locates this within a wider patriarchal framework, for example, one which encourages female dependence on men (see also Smuts, 1995), thus apparently moving away from prevailing individualistic, biological analyses (see Fishbein, 1992 for a review). For example, much of this has focused upon faulty or unusual physiological activity and the role of sex hormones (e.g. Hart, 1974; Reinisch, 1981; Suchowsky *et al*, 1971; van de Poll *et al,* 1982; Cooke, 1945; Dalton, 1964, 1966; D'Orban & Dalton, 1980; Ellis & Austin, 1971; Morton *et al,* 1953). Once again, this has meant that discourses which masculinise aggression and violence have been reproduced, contributing to constructions of this as fairly normal behaviour for men yet abnormal or pathological behaviour for women. For instance, a common feature of this literature is that female aggression and violence is linked either to exposure to abnormal levels of the male hormone testosterone and/or reduced levels of the female hormone oestrogen.

However, there are a number of problems with Campbell's analysis. For one, this is set against a backdrop of biological explanation. For example, Campbell draws upon evolutionary explanations and narratives such as 'strategic mate selection' and describes her perspective as an evolutionary one (Campbell *et al,* 1998). As such, the extent to which her approach can be regarded as a more genuinely social one is limited. Further,

there is an assumption (and normalisation) of heterosexuality in her account, and an assumption that women necessarily strongly invest in heterosexual relationships and are geared towards material gain and competition with one another. Does this mean that women of non-heterosexual orientation and women who are happily single do not 'do' aggression and violence towards one another? It seems unlikely. Further, accounts of female to female aggression were elicited during the focus group discussions where no man was (or appeared to be) involved.

Rather, the current thesis turns towards a more socially contextualised analysis of female aggression within working class drinking contexts, which considers and examines the systems of meaning operating within these and how they feed into identity construction. Having introduced the reader here to the relevance of social class in the current analysis of female aggression, and as such 'setting the background', the following chapter moves on to examine more closely the role of aggression and violence in the construction of working class femininities.

7.10 SUMMARY

The discussion and analysis presented in this chapter has made a number of achievements. For one, there has been a further deconstruction of the notion that drinking culture in Britain is becoming increasingly feminised (see previous chapter). Rather, the discussion here has drawn attention to public patriarchy (Walby, 1990) as specifically located within public drinking spaces. This has highlighted public drinking as a site for women's resistance against their (direct or more subtle) exclusion from such space, their segregation and the control of their drinking behaviour within these, and their subjection to surveillance, the male gaze and sexual harassment. This chapter has

also drawn attention to discourses and discursive techniques which are employed to excuse or rationalise abusive and threatening behaviour on the part of men in drinking contexts or alcohol fuelled situations, for example, through the attribution of blame for such actions onto women. As argued, this indicates the deconstruction of such discourse and discursive techniques as a site for feminist intervention.

Further, this chapter has provided further evidence for the pathologisation of women's drinking and provided support for the previous argument presented that even when drinking in private spaces, women do not escape the observation and judgements of the imaginary audience, thus indicating a much wider and more pervasive surveillance and regulation of women's alcohol consumption. In addition, this chapter has pointed to the importance of understanding pathologising constructions of drinking practices amongst women within a much wider socio-cultural, historical and political context than has been achieved to date in psychology. Finally, this chapter has drawn analytic attention towards female aggression in drinking contexts, as well as arguing the political importance of doing so, pointing to social class as being of particular analytic relevance. As outlined, this topic shall be explored further in the following chapter, which turns to examine alcohol consumption as a site for the construction and negotiation of multiple and contradictory forms of contemporary femininities.

CHAPTER 8 – EXPLORING WOMEN'S ACCOUNTS (PART 2): DRINKING AS A SITE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND NEGOTIATION OF FEMININITIES

Introduction

The previous chapter focused upon women's joint negotiated constructions of drinking and space. The focus of this chapter is upon how alcohol consumption and talk around this was used by the study as a site for examining the construction and negotiation of multiple and contradictory forms of femininity in the U.K in the current historical context, thus contributing to the postmodern deconstruction of the category 'women' as a homogeneous one and a problematisation of the notion of feminine identity as unified and coherent. In addition, the chapter further examines negotiated understandings of gender relations and how these impede upon identity construction and investment. In short, the focus of the present chapter is placed more explicitly upon feminine subjectivities.

The early sections of the chapter focus upon women's differential and contradictory investments in traditional versus more contemporary forms of femininity, and how this investment is informed by discourses surrounding gender and alcohol consumption, thus pointing to femininities as multi-faceted and shifting as opposed to unitary and static. For example, the chapter considers how drinking practices are understood as gender-appropriate or as the enacting (and re-enacting) of received gender norms (Butler, 1990) or as purposefully gender-inappropriate (West & Zimmerman, 1991). However, a particular focus upon contemporary femininities (e.g. the ladette) here complicates the

picture by considering, for example, how investment in these and associated practices can be regarded as protest or resistance. In addition, the chapter examines different femininities in the context of talk around drinking, such as the 'good girl' versus the 'whore' and femininity as mediated by social class. A central theme here is the relational construction of femininities, not simply in terms of difference from masculinity but also other forms of femininity. In addition, as outlined in the previous chapter, the discussion examines the role of aggression and violence in the construction of classed femininities, locating this process within the women's surrounding sub-cultural context. In summary, this chapter examines the construction and negotiation of multiple and contradictory forms of femininity in contemporary Britain and differential investment in these in the context of talk around drinking and nights out.

8.1 In-Vivo Themes

The in-vivo themes identified during analysis which are discussed in this chapter include, for example, 'body image', 'class', 'femininity', 'masculinity' and 'sex and sexuality'. For a full list of all in-vivo themes identified, see appendix 13.

8.2 Investments in Traditional Femininity and Heterosexual Relations: Validation and Regulation of Drinking Practice

There was much talk in the focus group discussions which linked investment in heterosexual relations and traditional images of femininity (e.g. as characterised by moderation) to alcohol consumption. Two competing discourses were identified: one which constructed alcohol as a facilitator of heterosexual relations and one which

constructed drinking women as being sexually unattractive to men. To take the former first, note the following extract:

Extract 1

Wendy: *Yeah* (1.0) *I mean sometimes if you're nervous, you tend to drink, say like if like, when you first start a relationship, and you first start going out with someone, you do tend to get drunk, y'know, and you do think, "Oh well, I'm gonna get really pissed"* (\\) **Bernie:** *Yeah, but I think that still comes down to the fact that men and women ant got much in common, I really do.*
Wendy: *Yeah, cos sometimes you don't know what to talk about, but if you've had a lot to drink, you'll talk more.*
(WY2)

Here we can see reproduction of a discourse identified in the media texts gathered which constructs alcohol as a facilitator of heterosexual relations (e.g. The Guardian, 16th November, 2000 – see chapter six). Further, talk situated this function of alcohol specifically within the context of heterosexual practice. For example, in one group discussion, a contrast was drawn with gay sexual practices which were constructed as generally more disinhibited and being without the need for alcohol as a 'crutch' (SY3). This can be read in part as a problemising of heterosexuality or a challenge to the normalisation of this, because if heterosexual relations are so natural and normal, then why is the facilitating role of alcohol constructed as being so important?

One response to this question can be seen in the extract provided above. Here, the participants are tapping into an essentialist discourse which constructs men and women as being different and as having nothing in common. This is collectively constructed as a reason here why 'Wendy' uses alcohol as a facilitator in the early days of a new

relationship, for example, a facilitator of conversation. Indeed, similar talk was evident in the other group discussions. For example, whilst discussing how noisy drinking venues can kill the conversation, one participant remarked *'It depends who you go out with, cos if you go out with blokes then there's nowt to talk about anyway'* (WY3). In contrast, men and women were constructed as always having common ground and as being more at ease with members of the same gender group. For example, men were described as always having an area in which to relate to each other and to talk about, the most frequently cited example being football (WY2; SY3). Similarly, there was talk around how the sameness between women is *'nice'*, *'appealing'* (SY3) and generally more comfortable (WY2) and that women are *'more attractive than men'* (SY3).

Despite such talk, there was evidence that the participants invested strongly in heterosexual relations. A central reason which was constructed in the group discussions for such investment (the participants' own and that of women more generally) was that heterosexual relationships validate femininity, thus being pivotal to how this is viewed by the women themselves and others. For example, comments were made such as *'You've been conditioned to feel like you've got to have a partner'* (WY2) and *'Like* (4.0) *you're not a whole self unless you're going out with someone'* (WY2). In addition, there was talk around how lesbianism is viewed so negatively in our society and, as put by one participant, *'we're so scared of not being heterosexual'* (SY3). The participants themselves located such constructions within a capitalist and patriarchal order which is dependant upon heterosexuality for it's maintenance and perpetuation because *'marriage is what keeps society together'* (WY2). In sum, women's investment in heterosexual relationships, like heterosexuality itself, was constructed as compulsory, as a socio-political necessity (Rich, 1980; Kitzinger, 1993) which alcohol facilitates.

As outlined earlier, a somewhat competing discourse to one which constructs alcohol as a facilitator of heterosexual relations was one which constructed drinking women as sexually unattractive to men. This is largely informed by, as discussed throughout the thesis, gendered constructions of alcohol consumption which define this as an essentially masculine and therefore unfeminine activity. Indeed, such constructions were reproduced in the participants' talk. For example, alcohol consumption was discussed across the focus groups as being tied up with social constructions of masculinity, and comments were made such as *'drinking really is like a masculine thing int it?'* (WY2). In turn, there was talk which constructed contemporary drinking practices amongst women (particularly, for example, where this is 'excessive') as being 'unfeminine' or as *'detracting from your femininity'* (SY3). As such, investments in traditional forms of femininity and heterosexual relations were constructed as competing with or being inconducive to drinking practices. For example, note the following extract:

Extract 2

Veronica: *I went to The Mercury* [pub in Sheffield] *on Sunday night, an I never go in there normally. An there was a gaggle of rugby women, an they were obviously just trying to act* (...). *There was a gaggle of rugby women, and there were some rugby men just waiting at the bar, an the sort of language. I mean, I thought, "God, I must be getting really old", because I felt really embarrassed to be a woman by these women. An it was obvious some sort of thing, y'know thing. They were trying to surpass the rugby blokes, an I thought, "God, I bet they wouldn't touch that lot of women with a barge pole". Do you know what I mean?*

(SY3)

Once again here we can see the recurrence of a discourse which constructs contemporary feminine drinking practices as competitive or in terms of inter-gender competition, a concept which shall be explored further throughout the chapter. Interestingly here, we have an account which describes female entry not only into one traditionally masculinised sphere (the pub), but in another also (rugby), supporting the idea presented by the thesis that female entry into or 'invasion' of drinking space and culture can be located within a more general female move into other traditionally masculine spheres. In addition here, masculine (drinking) behaviours are not only constructed as being unfeminine, but further, as down-grading traditional, respectable femininity defined around not using swear words and perhaps not being rowdy in public places. 'These women', who transgress such established norms of femininity are therefore acting in an undignified manner (as in 'gaggle' of geese) and socially embarrassing, and also, as outlined, as being sexually unattractive to men. Further than this, there was talk around discourses constructing drinking women as sexually unattractive as being operationalised during drinking, for example, by way of regulation or restriction:

Extract 3

Amy: *I must admit I have, I have gone out, like been on a date with someone, and I've thought that they've wanted to, I've thought they would want me to* (...)

Bernie: *Say that again Amy.*

Amy: *Well, if I'm going out on a date, and I mean if I don't, I probably wouldn't drink as much.*

Bernie: *Yeah, I've done that before.*

Amy: *Yeah because, I want him to think differently of me.*

(WY2)

The regulation and restriction of women's drinking practices has been a theme which has pervaded the thesis. In extension here, it also appears that investment in traditional forms of femininity and heterosexual relations can incur 'self-regulation' of drinking practice (Foucault, 1977). For instance, in the above extract, the speaker's investment in the (potential) heterosexual relationship means that she wishes to project a certain image, one imbued with traditional, desirable femininity which could be threatened by her engaging in 'masculine', excessive alcohol consumption. For example, as remarked by one participant, *'we don't want them* [men] *to think that we're not feminine'* (SY3), alcohol consumption (or certain drinking practices e.g. excessive consumption) being one activity which could incur such assessment.

In addition, as previously discussed, certain beverages are constructed, for example through advertising, as masculine or feminine. Indeed, this was a theme which re-emerged during analysis of the focus group transcripts. For example, as succinctly phrased by one participant, people regard *'masculinity as a pint of beer, and femininity as a glass of wine'* (SY3). Indeed, pints (e.g. of lager and bitter) were constructed across the focus group discussions as the ultimate masculine drink, the drinking of pints being an activity constructed as unfeminine or *'unladylike'* (SY1). Another drink which was constructed as particularly masculine was whiskey (SY3). In contrast, those beverages regarded as feminine tended to be brightly coloured and sweet tasting (as opposed to bitter and 'dull' coloured) thus supporting Moore's (1995) observations around gendered constructions of beverages. For example, beverages described as feminine or *'girly'* included Martini, Archers, Taboo, white wine spritzers, alco-pops (such as Hooch and Bacardi Breezers), Bacardi, and gin and tonic (*'particularly if you ask for a slimline tonic'* – SY2). In addition, these drinks were discussed as being ones which

men would not drink because of the feminine image associated with them (SY1; SY2; WY3), thus challenging the notion that female and male tastes are in a state of convergence (The Guardian, 12th May, 2000 - see chapter six). The marketing of such drinks specifically at women was discussed by the participants as being informed by and reproductive of objectifying constructions of normative, desirable femininity. For example, there was discussion around how the underlying messages of adverts for such drinks are often that the *'drink makes you look sexy'* or *'makes you look beautiful'* (WY2). Further, the participants discussed the notion of prescription or the idea that women should drink certain drinks. One comment in particular, interestingly, related this to feminism:

Extract 4

Janice: *I think it's traditional, traditional sort of thing. I mean, when people talk about feminism, a lot of it's about tradition, "You should drink these kinds of drinks, you should do this."*

(WY1)

As such, the consumption of certain types of beverages becomes an important site where traditional forms of femininity can be played out or resisted (as shall be discussed further in the following section). This supports arguments presented by those such as Moore (1990) and Moore (1995) that this is a significant site for exploring the construction and enacting of social identities (e.g. gender [Moore, 1990] sub-cultural and racial [Moore 1995]). This was often discussed as occurring in a relational context, thus again emphasising the importance and relevance of heterosexual investment and the notion of competition here. For example, referring back to the masculinising construction of pints, female intrusion into such masculine practices was constructed as posing a threat to or undermining masculinity:

Extract 5

Karen: *I mean, it's a fuckin drink, it comes down to the size of a glass. Does it make them any less of a man, cos a woman's drinking out of a pint glass?*
(WY1)

Firstly, this statement constructs (and simultaneously undermines) the size of a pint as being the central, masculinising feature. As discussed in the previous chapter, such talk conjures up phallic imagery. Secondly, this suggests, as outlined, a strong relational element to the construction of gendered identities (e.g. Burman, 1995). For example, this supports arguments that hegemonic masculinities are often constructed relationally, for example, in relation to femininity[18] (see Gough and Edwards, 1998; Connell, 1995; Edley & Wetherell, 1995; Dicks, 1991 for relevant discussions). Here, the construction of such masculinities is represented in part as relative to certain female (drinking) practices which can be regarded as legitimating hegemonic masculinities (Skeggs, 1997) or potentially undermining these. The picture which emerges here is that drinking represents a site where complex gender dynamics are in play, and where investment in traditional forms and images of femininity, and further, in heterosexual relations, means not intruding upon masculine preserves such as drinking pints and engaging in competition with men. For instance, despite contending that they often drank pints (indeed, some of the participants even described themselves as a 'pint drinker' or a *'pint supper'* – WY1), some of the participants did discuss instances in which they would not drink a pint in public:

[18] Such findings are an important progression, as a major criticism levelled at previous accounts of male subjectivities (e.g. Foucauldian) has been that these have neglected the construction of this in relation to femininity (e.g. McHoul & Grace, 1993).

Extract 6

Joanne: *But then again if you think, if I went out wi ma family, or there was someone there I was trying to impress, then I wunt sup a pint.*

(WY1)

Here, drinking pints is constructed as an activity which is 'gender inappropriate' for women, as sending out certain messages about the drinker and incurring the risk of 'gender assessment' (West & Zimmerman, 1991), for example, that she is 'unfeminine' or is in some way rejecting femininity. 'Joanne's' described in-context action here can be read as a choice to 'do gender' or femininity here in a normative, prescribed way, due to an investment in traditional forms of femininity and heterosexual relations. For example, it is likely that the imagined 'other' who Joanne wants to impress is male as she is heterosexual. In addition, it is likely that some members of her family she is referring to here are also male, thus again contributing to the construction (as discussed in the previous chapter) of male family members as being complicit in the control and regulation of women's alcohol consumption. Although Joanne's actions here are described as a 'choice', such considerations undermine the concept of agency. In sum, such action can be regarded as part of a wider self-regulation in the presence of men or in the field of vision of the male gaze.

Further, there was reproduction in the data of a 'male as protector' discourse, and evidence that the women sometimes positioned themselves as vulnerable or potential victims. This can be read, in part, as evidence of investment in traditional images of femininity, for example, the traditional notion that women are weak and in need of male protection (White & Kowalski, 1994). For example, there was talk around feeling

unsafe on nights out unless the women were in the company of men, and similarly, avoiding going out or going to certain places unless accompanied by men:

Extract 7

Karen: *I'm really conscious of everybody an everything when I go out, unless I'm with are John* [speaker's brother] *an that lot, I feel quite safe then cos there's like a big group of lads, but a wouldn't, I wouldn't go around town with these lot* [referring to her friends present].

(WY1)

Such positioning and investment was discussed in the focus groups as competing with contemporary discourses and meanings surrounding femininity which celebrate female autonomy and independence. For example, the speaker known here as 'Karen' goes on to comment *'an in the same breath your thinkin, "Well, fuckin ell, y'know, I can't do that because I'm weak then, an like I should be standin up, I should be a nineties woman, an it's fuckin bollocks*' (WY1). The speaker here not only locates such discourse within the current historical context, but also refers to a particular form of contemporary femininity which she describes here as the '*nineties woman'*. There is also a suggestion here that more contemporary discourses around femininity can be as prescriptive and restrictive as traditional discourses, the latter and the associated forms of feminine identity being partly rejected by the speaker. Similarly, in the context of the same discussion, another participant remarks: *'I'm sorry, but I still, I still like somebody to come up an sweep me off me feet, wine an dine me'* (WY1). The apology here is particularly significant, as it indicates that the speaker is conscious that such comments (which again are reproductive of traditional forms of femininity) compete with more resistant, contemporary (e.g. feminist) discourse around gender, thus potentially making her statement problematic and again, incurring the risk of assessment. As such, there

appears to be support for the argument that often, women know that to invest in traditional forms of femininity is often regarded as a form of submission (Skeggs, 1997).

Finally, there was talk in the group discussions around body consciousness in the context of women's drinking, for example, what and how much they drink. This theme has already been touched upon here. For example, note earlier that low calorie drinks were constructed as particularly 'girly' (*'particularly if you ask for a slimline tonic'* – SY2). As such, concerns with weight are constructed as feminine concerns, and indeed, women were constructed across the focus group discussions as being more body conscious than men. Yet, there was talk which critically addressed this (as opposed to taking such consciousness as a given), locating body consciousness on the part of women within a Western culture where images of the feminine ideal pervade the media (WY2; SY3). Further, chapter six discussed how media texts around women and alcohol are often littered with 'warning messages' to women about the possible detrimental effects of consumption to health and beauty (e.g. Daily Mail, 1st September, 1998). Interestingly, concerns with the effects of alcohol consumption on appearance were discussed in the focus groups, but health issues were barely mentioned. This could be taken as evidence of the pervasiveness of body fascism in Western culture and the pressures placed upon women to be thin and attractive, as discussed by many feminist authors (see Orbach, 1986; Hepworth & Griffin, 1995). The data from the focus groups demonstrates how this pervades women's consciousness and how investments in normative, prescribed images of femininity (e.g. the thin, 'attractive' woman) and heterosexual relations which require women to take care of their appearance (Holland *et al,* 1991) regulates or restricts the women's consumption and leisure activities:

Extract 8

Sara: *I worry about putting on so much weight though from alcohol, and therefore, I don't, if you drink every night, a pint or a pint and a half, it's like the equivalent to four Mars Bars, three Mars Bars or something, cos there's four hundred calories in a pint, and therefore I always think "Oh, that's one and a half Mars Bars". Erm, I know that's crap of me, and that's why sometimes I have a big binge on a Saturday, because I just think "Oh fuck it", I can, whatever. But mid week, I just think if I'm gonna have a pint and a half at the pub, which I'd probably enjoy, but I'd prefer to have a pineapple juice personally, which is a crap reason, but I think well what's the point of having that one and a half pint, I may as well have a pineapple juice and a bag of crisps, which in calorie terms if still less so* (...)

(SY1)

The speaker's knowledge of the calorie content of certain drinks in this extract is quite impressive, and is obviously something which she has and does consider carefully in the event of consumption. Once again, I did wonder if male participants would have had the same degree of knowledge and concern. Similarly, there was also talk around trying to eat healthily and exercise in order to address or counter weight gain as a result of alcohol consumption (SY1); around not going out, for example, if the women had a spot (SY1); and around avoiding certain drinks such as bitter because these are bloating and *'make your belly stick out'* (SY2). What is interesting about the extract above is the speaker's remarks such as *'I know that's crap of me'* and *'which is a crap reason'*. Again, this indicates conflict between investment in normative, prescribed images of femininity and resistance to these. Such conflict could be located within the current socio-cultural climate where there are multiple and competing meanings and messages surrounding femininity. This complexity is explored further in the next section of the chapter.

As discussed in chapter six, contemporary forms of femininity and associated drinking practices have been characterised in part by the adoption of traditionally masculine leisure practices. There is also an implied rejection here of those drinking practices traditionally associated with femininity or imbued (e.g. through advertising) with images of normative or traditional femininity. In the group discussions, there was talk around such rejection, for example, deliberate non-consumption of those drinks regarded as *'girly'*:

Extract 9

Clare: *I think all those strawberry Hooches, I hate them, cos I think they're totally marketed at women, and I wouldn't drink them, cos I think they're* (\\) **Sara:** *When I was in Nottingham* (...) **Clare:** *and I get cross.*
(SY1)

Here the talk constructs the deliberate marketing of such drinks at women as having the reverse of the intended effect, the consumption (or rather non-consumption) of such drinks becoming an activity or site of protest and resistance. Similarly, one participant remarked that such prescription makes her *'rebellious'* and further, commented that this makes her *'want to drink the strongest beer, and pints of it an things'* (SY3). Here, in contrast to non-engagement in inter-gender drinking competition (which undermines masculinity), there is talk around taking up the challenge. Also, note the following extract:

Extract 10

Amanda: *But that's the thing about girls you see. You want to look like you can keep up, and you can, you're drinking a proper drink.*

(SY1)

One reading here is that such activity could be regarded as an active attempt to disprove or challenge beliefs about women that they can't drink like the boys can (see Kaminer & Dixon, 1995), and as such, is a form of protest. However, a slightly different (but not incompatible) reading is that this is more closely related to investment in contemporary forms of femininity. For example, note the following extract taken from the same discussion:

Extract 11

Amanda: *Mind you I won't drink, if I was going out with a big group of, I wouldn't order a Baileys, and like, if everyone's going out for a big night, I wouldn't order, I'd try not to order a really girly drink either, I wouldn't order Archers, I wouldn't order Taboo.*

Sara: *White wine spritzer.*

Amanda: *I wouldn't order a white wine spritzer.*

Katy: *That's really interesting. So you think that they're girly drinks?*

Amanda: *I'd call that a girly drink. I'd wanna be more like one of the boys.*

(SY1)

Here, the speaker talks about how her choice of beverage is mediated by wanting to be *'more like one of the boys'*, rather than as a form of protest or resistance as such. But why have contemporary feminine practices become characterised as such? One answer to this question is evident in the above extracts. For example, note that in extract 10, pints (the context of the discussion from which this extract was taken was about drinking pints) are described as *'proper drinks'*, a description which was not exclusive

to this particular discussion. This validation, it would appear, is closely linked to the masculinisation of pints. Further, the participant's remarks in extract 11 that she wants to be *'more like on of the boys'* similarly validates masculinity and masculine practices, constructing these as desirable. As such, there appears to be support for arguments presented by those such as Burman (1995), Gilligan (1982) and Walkerdine (1988) that masculine qualities (and all things masculine more generally) are much more highly valued in our culture than femininity. Indeed, there was evidence for this notion in the interview transcripts, where the participants made remarks such as *'I'm not some big fuckin girl'* (WY1). Further, I would suspect that had the research been conducted with men, there wouldn't have been talk around 'trying to be like one of the girls'. As such, it is perhaps no surprise that women want to invest in such forms of identity and engage in such practices, distancing themselves from that which is undervalued in our culture: femininity. Moreover, the women from the South Yorkshire sample whose comments have been cited here can be regarded as working in a male-dominated sphere (i.e. higher education) where women feel that they have to 'hold their own' and compete with men, which can extent to after-work drinking (see Waterson, 2000) and where traditional femininity is particularly devalued (see Skeggs, 1997).

There was further talk in the group discussions which undermines the notion that investment in such contemporary forms of femininity can be taken as a form of protest or resistance. For example, the participants' talk often constructed movement into such masculine spheres and adoption of masculine leisure activities as meaning that you have to 'fit in':

Extract 12

Patricia: [discussing an incident when she went out drinking with a group of male friends] *And the conversation with am was all kind of machoism, and fighting, an they were on about Pamela Anderson, an that. An I mean, if you dint tek offence, if you just went with it were, it were really fun. Quite fun.*

(SY2)

The picture which emerges here is that talk around contemporary feminine drinking practices and identities preserve rather than challenge alcohol consumption and drinking spaces as masculine. This, once again, seriously undermines the notion that drinking culture is becoming increasingly femininised. Women can enter such spaces and engage in masculine leisure activities, but they do this on men's terms. They put up with the sexist remarks and machoism or they get out. Indeed, there was talk which more directly dealt with the issue of laddism and the extent to which this can be regarded as resistance or as politically progressive for women. This is one of most central and revealing extracts from the focus group data in it's entirety:

Extract 13

Sue: *Well my opinion is right, that, it's, we don't need to be like lads to define ourselves (Hmm). I think by drinking pints, and being louder than they are, an swearing more than they do, is not about, it is in a way, it is in a way about fighting against the oppression of women in society (Yeah), but I think in a way, it's the wrong way to do it. Because we can be, we can celebrate our difference, an we can be proud of our difference, and how we are different, an we are different, an diverse, without having* (...). *To me it's just essentially, we're falling under patriarchy, we're just behaving exactly like, we're just being, y'know? Like men.*

Carol: *It doesn't work anyway.*

Sue: *It isn't, yeah, it's not like defining our own identity, it's about just doing what they do, as good as they do it, or as much as they do it, or as loud as they do it,*

rather than, "No, let's not do that, let's do what we want to do, let's define our own way of doing it".

Carol: *But the only problem with that argument, I agree, but the only problem with that is that all the things that women do are like* (2.0) *not thought of as equally important* (\\) **Sue:** *Hmm* (\\) **Carol:** *Or equally good. So we haven't got any weapons or tools then. At least if women try to imitate what men do, there's the big* (..) *y'know? They might somehow come out of it unscathed. But there isn't anything else that they can do, cos if they do girly things, well there are girly things, an they're not as important, they don't count.*

Sue: *But even girly things, things that are assigned that label of being girly, are assigned that essentially by men.*

Carol: *Yeah, an by that token they're automatically inferior, so women can't win that way (Hmm). You're probably not gonna win the way, trying to copy men either.* **(SY3)**

This extract sums up many arguments being presented here. For instance, again, we can see reproduction of the idea that those things associated with masculinity are more highly valued and validated in our culture than those associated with femininity, this being a central reason why women are adopting masculine leisure activities and behaviours. Yet, as argued here, this does not mean that drinking culture is becoming femininised (as suggested by the media) – this remains a masculine domain, within which women are without the means and resources (e.g. discursive) to understand and articulate their experiences and construct identities which are independent from masculinity. As argued in chapter six, this can be regarded as detrimental to feminist struggles in light of arguments presented by those such as Moi (1986) and Kristeva (1986) that one of the central aims of these has been to establish an independent feminine identity. As suggested in the above extract, one possible strategy is for women to celebrate their difference. However, as argued by the participant known here as 'Carol', those things which are and which become defined as distinctively feminine also

become undervalued. As such, it would seem that women can't win – to invest in distinctively feminine forms of identity and practices and to invest in those traditionally defined as masculine, either way, is to, as articulated here, *'fall under patriarchy'*. This further highlights how contempoarary language surrounding leisure in Britain which has been evident in the media in recent years, and which defines this in 'gender neutral' terms (e.g. the 'CK One approach' – The Guardian, 12th May, 2000) serves to mask processes of power in leisure contexts, as if all consumption and leisure practices are now regarded equivocally and as if men and women have equal access to these. They're not and they don't. The following section of the chapter extends discussion around power differentials by examining discourse around gender and sexuality and how these inform understandings of different types of femininity.

8.4 The Drunken Slut: Good Girls, Slags and the Negotiation of Power

Constructions of feminine sexualities as deviant have been discussed throughout the thesis, for example, drinking and working class women as sexually deviant (e.g. Ridlon, 1988; Weeks, 1981; Gilman, 1992; Ware, 1981). Indeed, such disourse was both reproduced and resisted by the women's talk, and further, there was evidence that discourses constructing certain sexual practices on the part of women as deviant impeded upon the women's understandings of themselves and their sexual behaviour. For example, note the following extracts:

Extract 14

Bernie: *Cos there's always this thing of like women* (2.0) *women who the make the first move are slags* (1.0) *or forward* (1.0) *or, "God, you can't be like that it's too aggressive, how can you be like that with a man".'*

(WY2)

Extract 15

Sara: *Yeah, I get up and think "Oh my God, I feel so dirty and such a slag", whatever, and I think "Oh I can't do that again", and feel horrible for doing it, but I quite enjoyed it at the same time* [...]

Amanda: *But you must of enjoyed it and wanted to do it.*

Sara: *Yeah.*

Amanda: *I mean, you might think "Well, I wouldn't do that if I was sober", but* (...)

(SY1)

Here, there is a reproduction of derogatory constructions of 'promiscuous' women and the use of discursive labels such as 'slag' and 'whore' which the participants sometimes attached to themselves (e.g. *"Oh my God, I feel so dirty and such a slag"* – extract 15). In addition, there was dichotomising talk which positioned women within one of two categories: those who men have casual sex with and those with whom men have more meaningful, long-term relationships (good girls versus whores), or as put by one participant *'they can use that woman for sex, but they wouldn't want her to be the mother of their children'* (SY2). In contrast to the construction of sexually promiscuous femininities in deviant, derogatory ways, perhaps not suprisingly, there was reproduction (and simultaneous deconstruction) in the talk of biological discourses which normalise male 'promiscuity', for example, the notion that men have a biological disposition to pass on as many copies of their genes as possible (e.g. Thornhill & Thornhill, 1992) or *'sow their seed',* which was described as being used by men to justify or rationalise their promiscuous behaviour (SY3).

Such constructions of deviant sexuality appeared to be informed by a discourse (as previously discussed) which positions women as the passive recipients of men's sexual advances (e.g. Gavey, 1988; Jackson, 1978; MacKinnon, 1983), as illustrated in extract 14 which features a description of women who *'make the first move'* (who are active and initiating as opposed to passive) as *'slags'*. Men and women can be regarded as being positioned within unequal relations of power here. For example, Lees (1997) argues that such disourse and discursive labels are often used as a form of policing to control women's sexuality, a strategy which Edley and Wetherell (1995) argue has been dominant in patriarchal societies. Indeed, there was evidence to support this idea in the women's talk. For example, note comments made in the extracts provided above such as "*God, you can't be like that* (extract 14 - emphasis added) and *'I think "Oh I can't do that again"'* (extract 15 – emphasis added), which emphasise the prohibitory aspects of female sexuality. However, these were also negotiated by the speakers in terms of the pleasure associated with promiscuous or casual sex (*'but I quite enjoyed it at the same time'; 'but you must of enjoyed it'* – extract 15), thus again highlighting a pleasure discourse surrounding women's leisure and sexual practices. Also, note the following extract which was taken from a discussion around 'one night stands':

Extract 16

Carol: *I mean secretly, I'd quite like to, to be able to do that* [have a one-night stand] *without, erm, berating myself, d'y'know what a mean? The next day. Secretly* (\\) (..)

(SY3)

The construction of casual sex as pleasurable competes with constructions of women who engage in this as deviant and so appears to present a dilemma for the women. This

was addressed by constructing and negotiating strategies in order to resist being positioned in derogatory ways, which importantly highlights how the women refused to be rendered powerless in this process (Skeggs, 1997). For one, as outlined, the women discussed how men can draw upon available biological discourse as a means of rationalising or justifying their 'promiscuous' behaviour. However, the women also drew upon biological discourse in order to rationalise or justify *their* sexual behaviour. For example, in one group discussion, the participants talked about how women become *'more gregarious'* around the time of ovulation which was described as *'part of the mating strategy'* (SY3). This demonstrates that women can also use essentialist biological discourse to their advantage. The problem appears to be that such discourse is more marginalised than rationalising discourse around men's sexual promiscuity, as demonstrated by reviews of this literature in chapter two. Another strategy was to use alcohol or drunkenness as a justification or excuse for their 'promiscuous' behaviour. For example, note the following extract:

Extract 17

Amanda: *I think it's more a case of if you really like someone, and you get a bit drunk, then you can kind of use that as an excuse.*

Sara: *If they say no (laugh).*

[...]

Amanda: *And you can sort of, you can do silly things, things you wouldn't dare do when you're sober, like just act like a real tart, and you can do that even though you wouldn't do it when you were sober, and you sort of use the drink as an excuse, cos the next morning you can wake and think* (...)

Sara: *You can say* [sarcastic tone] *"Oo, I can't remember what I did" (laugh).*

Clare: *I've definitely used that one before.*

Amanda: *Definitely.*

Rebecca: *Very often, you were really pissed, but then sometimes you make it into a total, you use it as a total excuse.*

Sara: *"What was I doing last night?"*

Amanda: *It's like you needed it in order to do what you did, you could, you needed the booze.*

Sara: *You wanted to do it anyway, but you needed the alcohol to do it.*

Rebecca: *It's like if you were going out with someone and you got off with someone, you could use the excuse that you were so pissed, you didn't know what you were doing. But it would always be debatable that you wanted to do that, and cos you were pissed, you did it, you wanted to do it.*

(SY1)

Here, we can again see reproduction of a discourse which constructs alcohol as a sexual facilitator, and secondly, one which constructs drunken sex as disinhibited but intentional, thus supporting arguments presented by writers such as Nigella Lawson (The Observer, 12th November, 2000 – see chapter six) that in contrary to what recent surveys have concluded, women when drunk do not engage in sexual activity which they do not want to, but rather use alcohol as a disinhibitor or facilitator of heterosexual relations. Further here, we can see the strategic, discursive use of alcohol as an excuse or justification for sexual behaviour which may be branded promiscuous or deviant, a discursive defence against the positioning of the women as slags and whores, thus emphasising the action-orientated functions of the women's talk (Edwards & Potter, 1992). As argued previously, such discourses and discursive action highlight women's use of power and agency, in contrast to, for example, those discourses which construct women as the passive recipients of men's sexual advances and men's use of alcohol as a means of seduction, as discussed in chapter six.

In addition, there was further talk in the focus groups which constructed female sexuality in more powerful ways. For example, note the following extract:

Extract 18

Bernie: *I went out with Alan for like four years, and he was violent, and it was like, because, because* (3.0) *because I couldn't physically, well I did physically hit him many times, but, because I felt like, mentally, in less control than he did, I was openly aware of what I was doing, and I knew I were like going out an sleeping with somebody, and getting control of the relationship in that way (Erm). Cos I was thinking to myself, "This is worst insult I could ever give him".*

(WY2)

The account can be regarded as contributing to constructions of heterosexual relationships which problematise these, for example, as repressive and destructive (Jeffreys, 1990), by characterising these in terms of male violence (also, see previous chapter). In addition, there is support here for the argument, as also discussed in the previous chapter, that female aggression and violence within intimate relationships can often be understood as a response to abuse (see Roscoe, 1985; Makepeace, 1986; Saunders, 1986; Dobash & Dobash, 1992). However, in addition to this, and relevant to the discussion presented here, female sexuality is constructed as being used by women in powerful ways, for example, as a means of negotiating and regaining control and power within a relationship. This is informed by a discourse which constructs female sexuality in the context of intimate relationships as owned by or as the property of male partners, because having sex with other men is an insult (*'worst insult'*) to masculinity, a means of rejecting or denying this ownership.

In sum, the discussion here has highlighted the reproduction of dichotomising constructions of femininities as informed by discourses surrounding deviant feminine sexualities, these being ones which position men and women within unequal relations of power. However, this has also demonstrated how the women negotiated such

positioning and power in the context of the group discussions. One feature which has become apparent throughout discussions of the findings of the two research studies is that there is a recurring discursive pattern here in that the disinhibiting effects of alcohol are very much located within the female drinker. One area of potential future exploration would be to see if similar constructions were evident in men's talk around alcohol consumption as a sexual disinhibitor. For example, it would be interesting to see if men construct alcohol as disinhibiting women sexually rather than themselves. Although the women's talk around sex here does challenge constructions of women as passive and vulnerable, positioning them in more powerful ways, it appears that it is still women who are constructed as needing the alcohol, and needing the disinhibition. However, it seems that this would not be the case if women were not positioned within unequal relations of power in the first place, for example, with regards to restraints placed upon female sexual activity, for example, through the denigration of women who are regarded as 'promiscuous'.

8.5 Exploring Classed Femininities: 'Class Consciousness' and the Construction of 'Others'.

The chapter continues it's exploration of different femininities here by examining the construction of femininities as mediated by social class. As discussed in the previous chapter, the two samples of women who were involved in the second research study differed in terms of geographical location, occupation and income, the South Yorkshire sample being comprised of female academics who were working at universities in the region, the West Yorkshire sample being comprised of women who were living on neighbouring council estates at the time the study was conducted. As outlined, the two

samples could be regarded as a professional or middle class sample, and a working class one respectively. Discussions around social class took place early on during the focus groups, when I explored with the participants how the two samples could be articulated by the research in terms of class. One of the first important findings which emerged was that the women from the South Yorkshire sample were visibly more uncomfortable talking about this, with many of them commenting on the 'ambiguity of class'. However, seven of the participants from this sample did defined themselves as 'middle class', with the remaining five describing their social class status as 'ambiguous'. This does raise issues around the power of the researcher to impose such definitions and labels, a point which will be returned to and discussed in the final chapter of the thesis. In contrast, all of the women from the West Yorkshire sample described themselves as 'working class'.

This contradicts the findings of many research studies and literature around social class. For example, based upon her research with working class women, Skeggs (1997) found that her participants often made efforts not to be recognised as working class, to disidentify with this category, or even try to pass as middle class. This did not appear to be the case here. Also, Fraser (1989) asked two groups of girls (working class and middle class) to discuss social class, finding, in contrast to the findings here, that it was the working class girls who were reluctant to talk about this, finding this embarrassing, ambiguous and vague, whereas the middle class, public school girls were well practised in discussing class. Similarly, Phoenix and Tizard (1996) found that young people who are white and working class were more likely than those from the white middle classes to say that they did not know which social class they belonged to. In light of such findings, those such as Gorz (1982) and Wieviorka (1994) argue that in modern times,

the 'working classes' no longer have a class identity, and so this no longer confers a tenable identity position. The findings of the current research would suggest otherwise.

But why the difference in findings here? A plausible explanation could be that the women from the South Yorkshire sample, many of whom were working in the field of social science, had access to and were well versed in 'ambiguity of class' narratives (as was in evidence). In addition, the current socio-political context is one in which the notion of a 'classless society' is promoted by those in power, such as the current Prime Minister Tony Blair. Such discourses or narratives can be read as serving the interests of those in powerful positions (e.g. the middle and upper classes) through a refusal or failure to acknowledge and address their positioning within unequal relations of power, and by disguising social stratification through the use of discourses of individualism. In short, it is possible that such discourse was drawn upon by the participants from the South Yorkshire sample due to a reluctance to identify themselves as belonging to the 'oppressive classes' or invest in a problematic identity position. In contrast, the 'ambiguity of class' discourse is one that women from the West Yorkshire sample possibly did not have equal access to and so they cannot think of themselves in terms other than 'working class'.

However, the women from the South Yorkshire sample (as well as those from the West Yorkshire sample) did often construct themselves as different from others from different sections of society and spheres, for example, those from other class backgrounds. The relational construction of gender identities has already been discussed by the thesis, and indeed, there was a great deal of evidence in the interview transcripts to support the notion that femininities are constructed relationally. This supports arguments presented

by those such as Skeggs (1997) that the category 'woman' is occupied, resisted, experienced and produced through processes of differentiation. As would perhaps be expected, and as previously discussed, femininity was often constructed and articulated in opposition to masculinity (e.g. Marchant, 1980; Turner, 1987), with the interview transcripts being littered with essentialist discourse around gender. However, this did not occur on the basis of gender alone. For example, there was talk in the focus groups conducted with the women from the South Yorkshire sample constructing difference between themselves and certain groups of men which appeared to centre around or be related to class, and likewise, sameness between themselves and certain groups of men on similar grounds. For example, whilst discussing the 'kind of men' whom the participants tend to be attracted to and engage in relations with, comments were made such as *'I like to stick to those who are in my bracket of life'* (SY1). When such comments were followed up (i.e. by asking 'why?') reasons given included sameness (SY1), that these are the men whom they tended to socialise with and so have more access to (SY1) and interestingly, because *'there wouldn't be any inequality in terms of income, and stuff like that'* (SY1). Further, such men were discursively compared to an imaginary male other, constructed differences being that men from their bracket of life are not likely to be *'staking out the joint, they're not offering to buy you drinks and been flashy'* (SY1), that generally, such men are *'less threatening'* (SY1) and that *'you might actually have a decent conversation with them'* (SY1). Although the terms 'class' or 'working class' were never actually used (again, possibly due to a reluctance on the part of the women to position themselves as 'superior' on class grounds), it appeared that this imaginary other could be regarded as working class men, such men being constructed here as more threatening and less interesting or intelligent than men from their bracket of life (professional or middle class men).

In addition, femininities were also constructed relationally against other forms of femininity, this being a much less discussed issue in the literature. Indeed, despite the pervasiveness of essentialist discourse within the group discussions (i.e. the notion that men and women are essentially different), women were also constructed as a diverse category. In addition, in one group discussion, there was talk around how women are more likely than men to differentiate themselves from each other because competitiveness between women is encouraged in patriarchal society (SY3). Indeed, women from both samples often 'othered' themselves from groups of women constructed as different. Differences were largely constructed on the basis of geographical locality (WY1; SY2); accent (which is closely related – WY1; SY2); occupation (WY1; WY2; SY2) and style of dress (WY1; SY1; SY2). As shall be explored, these can be read as markers of class, and as such, there appears to be support here for the idea that classed femininities are constructed relationally, that is, against femininities from other class groupings (see Skeggs, 1997). The extract below touches upon three of four outlined markers of difference here.

Extract 19

Mel: *Why wouldn't I go to Yate's or Berlins? Well, you're gonna get some <u>real</u> cheesy blokes in there (laugh). They're just revolting. No, if I was going out for a real laugh, I'd go in to be quite rude to people* (..) *bad experience guaranteed* (2.0). *Erm, cheesy blokes and a bit of animosity off local girls I think.*

Katy: *Why?*

Mel: *Because I speak very differently, it's something I've always been aware of for the whole of my life, and erm, it doesn't help being in a northern city. I mean, I don't exactly have a Sheffield accent.*

Katy: *There are a lot of people in Sheffield who don't have local accents though, aren't there?*

Mel: *Yeah, but you don't find them in Yate's wine lodge. I don't want to say, "Oh, townie bars", but that's it. Erm, particularly now I work, there are quite a few people, the secretarial staff at university are all locals, and I get on great with them now. But I'm sure that if I just bumped into them in the pub, there would be like a kind of friction there. But once you get to know them* (...)
(SY2)

The speaker here describes animosity on the part of local women towards her being due to the fact that she is not local, her accent or rather lack of a local accent (the participant spoke with 'received pronunciation') being a marker of this. Such animosity is cited as a reason why she avoids certain places (described by her as '*townie bars*'), these being places typically frequented by locals. However, as suggested earlier, such animosity may not simply be resigned to the fact that 'Mel' is not local, this being evidenced by the way in which she talks – this may also be taken as a marker of her social class status. For example, note the following extract:

Extract 20
Janice: *Cos it's like Tina, this girl who I used to live with. Cos I moved from Carcroft* [area in South Leeds] *to Sandhill* [area in North Leeds] *an they've got like, North Leeds accent is a bit like, southerny int it? An she goes* [received pronunciation] *"Oh hi, how are you? Oh yeah, it's going real-ly well", an she talks like that, an it's, it's fuckin annoying.*
Karen: *Yeah, but we talk rough though. We do talk rough.*
(WY1)

The talk appears to be constructing strength of regional accent as a marker of class, given that 'Sandhill' is a more affluent area than the one which the participants were from, this being reflected, for example, in the relative cost of property in these two areas. In addition, the speakers here appear to be 'othering' themselves from women

from this side of the city on this basis. As argued, it is possible that 'Mel' experiences animosity because the way in which she talks marks her as different on a class as well as or as opposed to a regional basis, considering that not all local women from Sheffield and Leeds do have strong, easily identifiable regional accents (as discussed in the above extract).

As can be noted in extract 19, occupation is also brought into play. For example, the speaker describes the local women whom she works with as being employed in positions which are lower down the occupational hierarchy to her (she is employed as a researcher), such women clearly being constructed as different. What strikes me upon reading this extract is it's rather patronising, even contemptuous tone. For example, note that even though the speaker contends that she avoids *'townie bars'* because these are frequented by locals, she also says that she would go in them *'if I was going out for a real laugh, I'd go in to be quite rude to people'*. Here, the clientele of such places are constructed as 'game', people to be ridiculed and laughed at. The speaker appears to be actively trying to 'play down' *her* animosity towards such people in the extract by contending *'and I get on great with them now'* when referring to the secretarial staff at her place of work. Yet, it appears that she is describing relationships which she has had to establish for work reasons, these being women whom she wouldn't otherwise normally associate with. As such, there appears to support here for Finch's (1993) argument that it is likely that middle class women will differentiate themselves from working class women.

Indeed, the tension between local and non-local women (e.g. students) was a discussion topic which was raised by participants in other focus groups. For example, note the following extract:

Extract 21

Vicky: *Students are just weird I think.*

Joanne: *Yeah, we were dancing away in t' night-club, an this girl came from nowhere with like a tea cosy on er ed (laughing) an a back pack.*

Janice: *Where were this?*

Joanne: *T.C.s* [Leeds city centre night club]

Janice: *Oh yeah.*

Joanne: *An a can of Red Stripe, an she wo coming up to us dancing like this* [mimics her dancing] *(laughing) an we were like, "God, who the fuck are you? Does anybody know her?" (laughing). An she was going* [posh voice] *"Are you together, is this a girl's night out then?" An she ad like square glasses on, an she was just weird.*

Karen: *Yeah, she's the kind who wants to be mates with everybody.*

Janice: *I ate, I ate it when y'know it's fresher's week, an like, I know it sounds a bit awful and a bit unfriendly, but when you go to pubs an stuff in town an you know it's fresher's week, an like, you get some really stupid cow hugging everybody* [high pitched posh voice] *"Oh hyer, hyer, how are yooou?" An they're so fucking annoying.*

[...]

Joanne: *This girl was saying to me that night, I found it really patronising, she was asking me what I did for a living, so I said, "I'm a machine operator, that's it", so she went* [posh voice] *"Right, great", so I went* [sarcastically] *"Oh yeah, it's fab int it?" So she went* [posh voice] *"And what do you produce?" (laughing) So I said* [posh voice] *"Oh, packets of pasta and sauce", and she said* [posh voice] *"Oh that's great, next time I have a packet of pasta and sauce I shall think about you", and I went* [sarcastically, posh voice] *"You do that love". I was a bit fucked off about it actually. I should have asked her what she was doing.*

(WY1)

Although there is no outright statement here that girl who 'Joanne' met in the night-club was a student, this is strongly implied given the context of the conversation (which was about students) and certain markers such as the description of how the girl was dressed. For example, students were described in other focus group discussions as 'dressing down' or, as put by one participant, as women *'who don't bother getting dressed up or anything'* (SY2). Further, such anti-fashion or 'dressing down', according to Skeggs (1997), is often taken as a mark of 'non-working classness'. She describes how the working class women who took part in her study argued that only the well off can get away with looking scruffy because they clearly aren't poor, whereas if a poor person dressed like that, it would be taken as a mark of their poverty. For example, in the case of middle class women, there are additional signifiers of class which 'cancel out' the scruffiness, such as a posh accent. Indeed, as can be noted in the above extract, the girl here is described as having a 'posh accent' through 'Joanne's' mimicking of this, and so once again, accent or speech is being taken as a marker of difference. Further, this also indicates that the girl is being represented as middle class, given that the 'posh accent' is taken as a marker of middle classness or non working classness. Another important feature of this extract is that this demonstrates that the type of ridicule previously discussed and illustrated in extract 19 works in a dynamic rather than linear movement. This supports arguments presented by those such as Skeggs (1997) that the middle class are often a source of ridicule and contempt for the working class, for example, in light of their pretensions, this being something which is carefully monitored for within working class social groups. For example, note the ridiculing of the student in the above extract and the references which are made to the way in which she was dressed, danced and her overall persona. Further, the speaker describes finding the girl's remarks about her job, in her own words, *'patronising',* even though the girl did appear to be making

considerable effort to be friendly. One explanation for this, as presented by those such as Bakhtin (1984) is that working class women are often conscious of the judgements of the real or imaginary 'superior other', which not only position them as different, but also as inferior and inadequate. The girl in question here could have been regarded by Joanne as representing this superior other, and so a sensitivity towards imagined or actual judgement could account for Joanne's hostility. Further, the student's comments, which appear to be an attempt to construct Joanne's job as important could be read as an active, discursive attempt to counter an alternative (Edwards & Potter, 1992), specifically that Joanne's employment skills are not valued in the current socio-economic climate, particularly in relation to the skills or future skills of the student, something which Joanne is conscious of and therefore 'not convinced'. The construction of femininities as mediated by social class is explored further in the next section of the chapter.

8.6 Working Class Femininities: The Role of Drinking and Fighting

The previous chapter discussed how working class drinking culture is characterised in both the literature and by the participants as aggressive. This final section of the chapter shall progress from this standpoint by merging previous dichotomised discussion around class and gender to explore the role of aggression and violence and meanings surrounding these in the construction and negotiation of working class femininities.

Talk around female aggression and violence was one of the main distinguishing features of the talk between the two samples of women. For instance, talk around this figured much more prominently in the focus groups conducted with the women from the West

Yorkshire sample, and accounts of aggression and violence were generally offered here before this topic was raised. In contrast, this often had to be introduced during the discussions conducted with the women from the South Yorkshire sample, and talk around this often remained quite brief, swiftly moving on to another topic. For example, note the following extracts:

Extract 22

Sara: *I wouldn't say I was ever really aggressive to the extent that I would hit someone, but I will shout (Yeah).*

(SY1)

Extract 23

Mel: *I'm probably more open about bitching about people (Yeah), but it's not really in me to be particularly aggressive* (..) *I think, I haven't had a fight with anyone since I was about eleven, so* (2.0) *I don't know. Violence? I wouldn't know how to deal with it (laughs) so I'm like, "Alright, okay, I'm not really sure about this" (laughs).*

(SY2)

Clearly physical aggression is defined outside these speakers' experiences, with accounts focusing on verbal practices such as arguments (mostly between themselves and their partners); *'giving people jip'* (SY1); *'being stroppy'* (SY1) or *'bitching about people'* (SY2), which may or may not be classed as aggressive. In contrast, the subject of aggression was raised regularly by the working class women, often embedded in rich narratives about 'nights out' in local pubs, wherein the speakers featured as principal protagonists:

Extract 24

Karen: *It's like in The Crown* [pub in South Leeds] *that night, me, you an what's her face?* (\\) **Joanne:** *Cathy* (\\) **Karen:** *Yeah, an that big fat mad fuckin wrestling woman and her daughter, that night we went into The Crown with her fuckin stupid mate, Cathy, an* (\\) **Joanne:** *Have you quite finished going on about me fuckin stupid chaps an me fuckin stupid mates (laugh)* (\\) **Karen:** *She'd been arguing with this girl the week before, Cathy, what was her name?* (\\) **Joanne:** *Sarah Smith* (\\) **Karen:** *Yeah, she'd been arguing with Sarah Smith, an she was related to this woman an her daughter, wont she? An we were sat at this table an we were a bit pissed weren't we? An er* (2.0) *it was the fucking daughter wont it? Fat little daughter just kept throwing us evils all night, an we were sat there, an Joanne was telling me this tale about what was going on an stuff, I can't remember what happened. How did it all end up getting kicked off?*

Joanne: *We just walked over an said, "What do you think you're giving us dirty looks for?"*

Karen: *Who to? The fat little daughter?*

Joanne: *Yeah.*

Karen: *Yeah, she said this to the fat little daughter, an she was like, "I aren't doin nowt", an she went an sat back down, an then the fucking mother came up who was a big scary fuckin bitch, wont she? You know, one of these people who has like short spiky hair on top, an then long at the back (laugh).*

Janice: *A mullet ed.*

Karen: *Yeah, a mullet ed (laugh). An daughter must of been telling her an stuff, an she came over didn't she? The fuckin mother. So Joanne got up an started havin a go at daughter, telling her to get outside (laughing). It was so funny. I can't remember much about it, but we were stood there, weren't we? Yellin. I was going, "You fat bitch, what do you keep lookin at us for?" An she* [Joanne] *was like, "Come on, outside, now" (laugh). It was so funny, wont it?* (\\) (..)

(WY1)

Extract 25

Janice: *Some girl came up to me an basically poured a drink all down me dress. Like, she didn't go, "Oops, sorry that was an accident", she just kind of laughed, an I went, "You fuckin bitch you can pay for that dress". An I was all over the place, an*

I was really pissed, an I had hold of her hair an stuff. An Nigel [speaker's partner] *was trying to grab me an pull me off (..) an I just ran at her, an I remember grabbin her by the neck an pullin her the full length of the dance floor, an I banged her an punched her. I think I cut her eye open, an' I stood back an went, "Oh my God!" (laughs). You know when you don't know your own strength? (..) But she turned round and went "deech"* [makes hitting sound] *and I was like, "Ow you fuckin' bitch" (laughing). An' everyone was going, "Cat fight, cat fight"* [stamps her foot on the floor when she says this].

(WY1)

By initially presenting the drink-pouring incident as unprovoked in extract 25 (no preceding context is described), intentional (direct, not an accident) and potentially humiliating (accompanied by laughing), 'Janice' provides the grounds for her subsequent violent retaliation. The tale is recounted in vivid detail, enhancing its status as a true story. However, this is not to say that such accounts are taken at 'face value'. It is possible that some of the described incidents are exaggerated or, particularly if recounted by a single participant, possibly even fictional. Yet, the accuracy of such accounts according to 'an objective reality' (which is impossible anyway, as the telling of such stories is always interested) is not what is considered important here. What is considered particularly important is how the stories are told, for example, how the speakers position themselves within the accounts. What is noticeable is that the accounts are provided with great relish (indicated by the laughter), suggesting a normative or even desirable turn of events. Indeed, enjoyment in sharing such fighting stories was marked in the women's talk. A further feature was that although as illustrated previously, the participants did occasionally position themselves (and each other) as victims of aggressive and violent acts (e.g. see extract 26 in previous chapter), there were many more accounts provided, particularly those surrounding woman-woman aggression and violence (as illustrated by the above extracts), in which the

participants positioned themselves and each other as playing a more active, willing and/or initiating role. Again, contrasts can be drawn here with accounts and comments provided by the women from the South Yorkshire sample:

Extract 26

Mel: *If I'm angry at someone I tend to immediately diffuse the situation to the point where sometimes I get frustrated with myself, cos I think, "Why didn't I tell that person how much they'd annoyed me? Or how hurt I am", or whatever. I tend to just walk away, and, erm, I'm that alarmed at confrontation that erm* (...)

(SY2)

The construction of accounts such as those presented here as extracts 24 and 25 can be read as a form of discursive action (Edwards & Potter, 1992), an active attempt to present a certain type of image to the speakers' actual (and possibly imagined also) audience, that is, a 'hard' image. Discussions around whether or not people are 'hard' (i.e. can inflict and endure physical pain in a fight) were evident in the talk amongst the women from the West Yorkshire sample, thus suggesting the importance of possessing such a reputation in the local community, whether relating men, women or families:

Extract 27

Karen: *But Dave wont right ard though was he?*

Joanne: *No*

(3.0)

Katy: *But his family are?*

(3.0)

Vicky: *But then again, I don't know, I've only ever really seen im in that one fight. I don't think that he was ard, but he had a reputation dint he?*

(WY1)

Extract 28

Karen: *She's not ard, Mandy is she? She's just a slapper. But Sam is.*

(WY1)

Drew (1984) and Pomerantz (1984) argue that such accounts (i.e. those describing fights and confrontations involving the women) are drawn upon in everyday talk when there is a sensitive or controversial issue at stake. In this instance, this could be whether or not the participants can lay claim to having a hard reputation or deserving one. Interestingly, the talk was littered with disclaimers (Edwards & Potter, 1992) such as *'I mean, I wunt say that I were ard'* (WY1). This appears to contradict the argument being presented here. However, these can be read as action-orientated statements aimed at achieving the same goal. For example, such statements could be read as an attempt to down-play stake and thus construct a version of events which appears disinterested and factual (and thus is more difficult to undermine), especially given that such disclaimers often featured as a prelude to a further articulation of the favoured hard image (e.g. an account describing a fight in which the speaker was victorious). In other words, it is as if the speaker is saying, "Look, I'm not trying to present myself as being hard here, but look at the evidence" (indicated by her subsequent fighting tale). One should note that an outright statement claiming hardness would render the speaker vulnerable to challenges from the other participants, this perhaps posing a particular concern in those focus groups in which some of the participants already knew each other. Another (but not necessarily incompatible) reading is that such statements represent a discursive attempt to 'soften' the construction of such 'hard' femininities, in the interests of investment in more traditional forms of femininity (as previously discussed). Yet at the same time, historical discourses of femininity, promoted by privileged groups, which have positioned women as passive and respectable and which have conversely

positioned working class women as 'other' (Poovey, 1984; Ware, 1992) could also be regarded as instructive here. For example, an awareness of this positioning (Skeggs, 1997) and the relative availability of such discourse to working class women implies that differential restraints and expectations are placed on working class and middle class women in terms of aggressive action.

But why are such reputations important in the local community? Marsh *et al* (1977) and Armstrong (1998) who studied aggression and violence between soccer supporters argue that aggression and violence feed into the construction of desirable identities imbued with power, this being particularly important amongst groups (e.g. working class youths) for whom more normalised or culturally prescribed routes to achieving status and power (e.g. through material gain) are blocked. Although these authors focused (as is common in such existing accounts around aggression in social context) on men, a similar analysis could be applied here, particularly given the presence of women in public arenas previously reserved for men (and where the rules have been established by men) and the adoption of traditionally masculine forms of identity and behaviours by women in contemporary society (as discussed throughout the empirically-based chapters). In addition, this could be regarded as a necessary survival strategy (Walkerdine argues that survival is always a key issue for working class women - 1996a; 1996b), especially in light of the women's occupation of social contexts (e.g. drinking ones) characterised by aggression and violence and social networks of people (e.g. families) who are constructed as 'sticking together':

Extract 29

Karen: *But that's the thing though when you're living somewhere like Glenville* [district in West Yorkshire] *you've got to think, "If I chin them, how many members of their family are then gonna come after me?"*

(\\) **Joanne:** *Yeah.*

(\\) **Karen:** *It's never just a simple fight, "Right, I'm gonna fight with you", "Oh alright", bang, bang, bang.*

(WY1)

This constructs a picture of the kinds of social networks operating in working class cultural contexts, notably large extended families whose members protect each other. The incident described by 'Maggie' in the previous chapter (extract 27) wherein she recounted an incident in which she physically attacked a woman for insulting her brother by leaving the pub with another man is also illustrative of this. As Karen notes above, violence is likely to be reciprocated by family members, particularly those of the 'victim' or the person who has come off worse in a physical fight. In this respect, one's family and their local reputation bears directly on the individual and her/his status (see extract 27 where 'Dave's' family's reputation is construed as significant). Indeed, aggression was often defined in terms of interdependent networks rather than lone individual behaviour:

Extract 30

Vicky: *If something happens, an you're not involved, or the people that you're out with are not involved in it, then you don't, you fuckin walk away don't you? (Yeah).*

(WY1)

The implication here is that you *do* respond if your friends are perceived to be involved. Burns (1980) suggests that men's aggression within drinking contexts plays an important role in the establishment of group solidarity among working class men and

the construction of validated masculinities. A similar analysis could be applied here. For instance, it is likely that drinking contexts provide an arena within which the negotiation and demonstration of hard reputations can be accomplished, with the respect and approval of others. Yet, the systems of meaning and social networks described here appear to exist above and beyond the drinking context, whereby, for instance, the women risk marginalisation and social disapproval if they do not conform. In this respect, the women's agency in such situations becomes a problematic issue.

In addition, the previous extract challenges the notion that aggression and violence is haphazard, lawless or random, constructing this, rather, as being governed by socially agreed rules and boundaries around this (see Marsh *et al's,* 1977). Other conditions for entering a fight were sufficient provocation by another, and in addition, boundaries were constructed around the fight itself, concerning, for example, the infliction of harm. Referring back to extract 25, 'Janice' remarks, *'I think I cut her eye open, an I stood back an went, "Oh my God (laugh) You know when you don't know your own strength'* (WY1). Janice appears to view her actions here as crossing the boundaries of what is justifiable, on the grounds that she caused the woman serious physical injury. This suggests a form of policing which draws upon shared norms around responsibility and acceptability to help control fights.

Further than this, it appears that hard reputations can be constructed and defended without actually having to engage in physical violence. As such, this often appeared to exist at a verbal, discursive or symbolic level. For example, note the in extract 27, 'Dave' is described as having a reputation for being hard even though he has rarely been witnessed in actual fights. In addition, once again here, we can see the importance of

families, the implication being that the reputation of a person's family has an important bearing on the individual's reputation and standing within the community. Also, note the following extract:

Extract 31

Joanne: [...] *I think most of the time, I manage to shout me way out of it, d'y'know what a mean? (Yeah) Cos am a big lass, an if someone starts, al say, "Come on then", an I offer em out straight away, an I think cos of me size, they think twice.* **(WY1)**

Here, the speaker appears to be describing an avoidance or negotiation strategy ('shouting your way out of trouble'). Of course, this avoidance strategy may not work (Joanne could end up getting beaten up), but if this is successful (and this also appears to apply to other described avoidance or survival strategies), she achieves the double benefits of avoiding a physical fight, whilst not jeopardizing her hard reputation. The latter point is particularly important, and indeed, the participants simply didn't talk about 'backing down' in situations of confrontation (in contrast to extract 26). As such, it is the construction and maintenance of a desirable social identity which appears crucial rather than the aggression and violence itself.

In sum, whilst the women from the West Yorkshire sample positioned themselves as perpetrators and/or supporters of both verbal and physical abuse, the women from the South Yorkshire sample constructed physical aggression as something alien to themselves and respectable in the process. It therefore appears that aggression and violence play a more pervasive role in the construction of (some) working class feminine identities. More specifically, it appears from the talk that aggression informs the construction and negotiation of desirable social identities which are imbued with

power ('hard reputations'), ones which can be regarded as located within (but not necessarily peculiar to) the participants' local community. As such, the issues of power and identity are brought to the forefront here and in addition, this data responds to Walkerdine's (1996) invitation to deconstruct stereotypical representations of working class femininities centred on conservativism and passivity.

8.7 SUMMARY

In sum, the discussion here has used talk around alcohol consumption and 'nights out' to highlight the multifaceted, contradictory, multiple and contextually bound nature of femininities (e.g. Wilkinson, 1996; Lorber & Farrell, 1991), thus contributing to feminist endeavors to deconstruct the category 'women' as a monolithic one (see chapter four). This has been achieved in a number of ways. For example, the chapter began more generally by exploring investment in competing forms of femininity available to women, for instance, those characterised by moderation, respectability and passivity (traditional) versus those characterised by excess, inter-gender competition and aggression (contemporary). Investment wasn't strictly an 'either, or' event, thus highlighting feminine subjectivity at any given moment as complex and contradictory (e.g. Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1987). Further, the discussion here has challenged the notion that contemporary female drinking practices and investment in associated forms of femininity can be characterised as resistant or politically progressive, as this largely entails the adoption of masculine identities and practices. It also appears at this time of writing that such contemporary forms of femininity (e.g. the 'ladette') have been re-appropriated somewhat back into the mainstream, and rather than a significant alteration of drinking culture occurring, contrary to recent media constructions (as discussed in

chapter six), this remains a masculinised domain within which women are without tools (e.g. forms of language) to forge and articulate independent (e.g. non-masculine) identities. Likewise, this chapter has explored the construction and negotiation of 'different' femininities, with particular attention to femininities as mediated by sexuality (good girls versus sluts) and social class. With respect to the latter in particular, the chapter has explored the relational construction of femininities and has demonstrated that processes of power between working class and middle class women can be seen to work in dynamic (as opposed to linear) ways, thus constructing and supporting a Foucauldian view of power as dispersed (e.g. McHoul & Grace, 1993). Additionally, the chapter has explored the role of aggression and violence in the construction and negotiation of working class femininities, thus supplementing existing problematic, individualistic accounts of female aggression (as discussed in the previous chapter) with often divorce this from context.

The final chapter of the thesis shall now turn to discuss the project in it's entirety, with a particular emphasis on reflexivity, for example, what the implications and consequences of the findings discussed in chapters six to eight are, and what possible directions can now be taken in order to build on this work.

CHAPTER 9 - SUMMARY, REFLEXIVITY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Introduction

The first aim of the current chapter is to revisit the aims of the research. As discussed, this intended to progress from existing individualistic, deterministic, over-simplistic and pathologising accounts of women and alcohol which have been presented (particularly within psychology) to locate and explore this within a wider socio-cultural context. More specifically, the research aimed to produce socially and politically meaningful analyses of discourses surrounding femininity and alcohol and identities that these feed into, this being assisted by the adoption of a feminist social constructionist approach and the use of discourse analysis. The remainder of the chapter considers the overall success and value of the thesis in light of these aims. This is achieved, firstly, by summarising the main findings, 'bringing together' discussions presented throughout, but with a particular emphasis on the empirically-based chapters. Following from this, the chapter embarks on a reflexive journey into the entire research story. Aided by the keeping of a detailed research diary throughout the entire project, reflexive discussion is conducted on a number of different yet inter-related levels. Generally speaking, these can be seen to mirror those described by Wilkinson (1986) as 'personal' (reflections upon the researcher's identity and motivations for conducting the research); 'functional' (reflection on methodological processes) and 'disciplinary' (critical reflections on the approach adopted). In addition, the reflexive analysis presented explores the implications and possible consequences of the readings and analyses produced, concentrating in particular on the thesis's use as a critical tool. Finally, the chapter

considers how the accounts and analyses presented here may be built upon, for example, possible future directions for research and implications for intervention.

9.1 The Problemisation of Women's Alcohol Consumption

The research has explored the generation of discourses within institutions such as psychology and the media which pathologise and problemise women's drinking. Discussion around this shall be expanded throughout the forthcoming sections of the chapter devoted to summarising the main findings. However, here, the chapter recalls some of the major systems of meaning which have been identified in the literature. Firstly, there has been a particular focus within psychology upon women as 'abusers' or 'misusers' of alcohol, and a reproduction of discourses which construct women's drinking as self-medication of medical and psychological problems (Wilsnack & Wilsnack, 1995; Wilsnack, 1984; Olenick & Chalmers, 1991; Grover & Thomas, 1993; Rubonis *et al,* 1994; Schaefer *et al,* 1985; Scida & Vannicelli, 1979; Bedi & Halikas, 1985; Midanik, 1983; Schutte *et al,* 1997). Secondly, discourses surrounding women's drinking have constructed this as being at odds with traditional, normative femininity, thus positioning drinking women outside of this. Yet, rather than women's drinking being interpreted as an active rejection of or resistance to such forms of identity and subject positions, drinking women are often constructed as 'abnormal' types (see discussion around sex-role orientation in chapter three). In addition, recent media output has been littered with warning messages to women about the consequences of drinking for their femininity, for example, that this may result in the loss of their feminine good looks and may mean that they relinquish their ability to have children through damage to their reproductive capacities (e.g. The Daily Mail, 1st September, 2000 – see chapter

six). Thirdly, a further major system of meanings which has been identified positions drinking women as vulnerable and exposed to danger, for example, from male assault (World Health Organisation, 1994; Lindqvist, 1991; see chapter six). All of this is in spite of reported findings that men still generally consume more alcohol than women and are more likely to report drink-related problems (see Plant, 1997; Wilsnack & Wilsnack, 1995).

Such discourses can be regarded, firstly, as being positioned within wider and more long-standing systems of meaning. For example, as discussed throughout the thesis, alcohol consumption and those activities closely associated with this (particularly aggression and sexual 'promiscuity') are defined both historically and currently as essentially masculine. Further, as argued by Cooke and Allan (1984), women are constructed in Western culture as responsible carers (e.g. wives and mothers) who should not indulge in such male vices. Similarly, Foucault (1979) argues that historically, in Western society, female pleasures have been typically undervalued. All of this means that a pleasure discourse surrounding women's drinking has been largely absent or marginalised and that women's drinking is not as normalised as men's. Consequently, this has given rise to the view that women's drinking should receive 'special attention' (Cooke & Allan, 1984), particularly within a discipline which is preoccupied with female pathology (Wilkinson, 1996). Secondly, the reproduction of such discourses can be regarded as interested. For example, it has been argued that such discourses are often drawn upon as an attempt to preserve or reclaim activities such as alcohol consumption and public domains as male or masculine ones, positioning women within private spaces whilst excluding (and justifying their exclusion) from public life. For instance, chapter six discussed how Quentin Letts, writing for the Daily Mail, draws

attention to the detrimental consequences of drinking to women's health in the context of an article about the increasing numbers of women entering into the world of wine quaffing and expertise, a movement which he is openly opposed to (29th August, 2000). Finally, such discourses can be seen to have a number of problematic consequences and implications for women. For example, as discussed in chapter seven, pathologising discourses surrounding women's alcohol consumption can be seen to feed into women's consciousness and practice, incurring feelings of guilt and shame about drinking and self-regulation of this under the judgmental gaze of the real or imaginary audience (e.g. *'when I've done it* [had a drink on getting home from work] *I've felt so naughty'* – SY1).

The thesis has attempted to challenge and deconstruct the pathologisation of women's alcohol consumption. For example, the thesis has i) highlighted how research evidence to support the idea that women drink to self-medicate problems is contradictory and inconclusive (chapter two) ii) brought a pleasure discourse surrounding women's drinking into greater visibility (chapters six and seven), and iii) highlighted participants' talk which deconstructs the notion that alcohol is an effective medication for psychological and medical problems (chapter seven). Although discourses which problematise and pathologise women's alcohol consumption (e.g. construct this as self-medication) were reproduced in the research data, the thesis has reframed these within a critical social framework, the ways in which are subjected to exploration shortly.

9.2 Drinking Spaces and Culture as Problematic for Women: Positioning, Power and Identity Construction.

The thesis has highlighted how public drinking spaces, and drinking culture in modern day Britain more generally, are problematic for women. This occurs on a number of different levels and in a number of different ways, many problems centring around the masculinisation of alcohol consumption and the male domination of drinking spaces. Indeed, the thesis has challenged more recent constructions within the media of drinking culture as becoming increasingly feminised. Further, drinking space and culture can be (and often was by the participants themselves – chapter seven) located within a wider patriarchal context, in other words, smaller patriarchal spaces within a wider patriarchal space.

For one, within drinking culture, women are without tools (e.g. discursive) which allow them to construct independent (e.g. non-masculine) identities. This may be of concern to feminists such as Moi (1986) who have argued that one of the main aims of feminist struggles has been to attribute women with an active agency and independent identity. As outlined, one reason why this has been denied is because meanings and language surrounding alcohol consumption as so deeply gendered in ways which position women as other or outside of this, and which construct them as intruders into a masculine world and fakers of a masculine identity. For example, this was demonstrated in chapter six which examined recent media discourse and language which has been used to construct contemporary drinking practices amongst women in modern day Britain, and the forms of identity that these are taken as representative of or as feeding into (e.g. 'laddism'; 'ladettes'; 'geezer birds' – e.g. The Express, 9th July, 1998; The Observer, 12th

December, 1999; The Sun, 19th April, 2000). This was explored further in chapter eight, which examined how such meanings fed into the participants' identity construction, and how they understood and negotiated drinking practices. For example, it was discussed how the participants of the study constructed those practices associated with femininity (and femininity more generally) as inferior, and those associated with masculinity as superior and coveted. Further, the chapter discussed how the women were often unable to articulate and construct valued identities and practices in non-masculine ways, and moreover, the frustration that was often discussed by them due to this (e.g. *'so we haven't got any weapons or tools then'* – SY3). In short, it appeared that if the women invested in practices and forms of identity associated with traditional femininity, then they risked being positioned as inferior and submissive. Yet at the same time, if the women invested in contemporary feminine drinking practices and forms of identity (characterised as masculine), then they also risked being positioned as inferior, for instance, as fakers and intruders, as well as being positioned outside of a desirable, normative femininity imbued with virtues such as sexual attractiveness and moderation.

The thesis has attempted to deconstruct such discourse by bringing alternatives into greater visibility. For example, chapters six and eight have highlighted alternative discourse which has been generated by female writers in the British media in recent years, and by the women who took part in the group discussions. This has, amongst other things, deconstructed the whole concept of the 'ladette', for example, by challenging the notion that drinking women in Britain today are trying to be and act like men, and which have deconstructed the notion that drinking women necessarily compromise their femininity. Further, the thesis has highlighted the generation of more recent forms of language which deconstruct the masculinisation of alcohol consumption

and essentialist discourse surrounding gender and drinking such as 'regendering', 'gender neutrality' and 'the CK One approach', these being particularly evident within broad-sheet newspapers. However, as critically discussed, such language serves to mask the operation of power, disguising the continuation of double standards and the differential access that men and women still have to different forms of leisure practice and drinking space.

In addition, the thesis has discussed constructions of drinking spaces (e.g. as generated and reproduced within the social sciences, the media and the group discussions) as problematic ones for women in other, more direct ways. For example, these are spaces in which women are subjected to surveillance and scrutiny, in which they are segregated (and often excluded altogether) and their drinking behaviours controlled and regulated (including self-regulation under the eye of a real or imagined watchful audience). Further, drinking spaces are constructed as potentially dangerous for women, with discourses positioning women as vulnerable within these. The risks and dangers which women are constructed as being exposed to in drinking spaces can be regarded, by drawing upon arguments presented by feminists such as Kelly (1988), Dworkin (1981) and MacKinnon (1982) as existing upon a continuum of male violence. For instance, these include the male gaze, sexual harassment, sexual coercion and rape. Such discourse and the positioning of women as vulnerable, as discussed, has a number of problematic implications and consequences. Firstly, this denies women power and agency, positioning them as victims, such positioning being a concern for many feminists (e.g. Roiphe, 1993; Paglia, 1992). Secondly, these contribute to constructions of heterosexual practices as problematic for women, for example, ones in which they are necessary engaged in relations of dominance and subordination, which again has

been a concern for feminists (e.g. Hollway, 1995). Thirdly, this can be regarded as an implicit 'warning' to women to stay out of drinking spaces (particularly when such discourses are reproduced within institutions such as the media) maintaining a climate of fear (e.g. of male aggression and sexual violence) and dependence amongst women (White and Kowalski, 1994) and, as previously argued, reclaiming drinking spaces as masculine domains. Indeed, there was evidence to support the idea that such discourses pervaded the women's consciousness and regulated their drinking practices. For example, as discussed in chapter seven, the women who took part in the group discussions often described self-exclusion from public drinking spaces (e.g. not going into these alone, even if they want to) because of this surveillance, the male gaze and overhanging threats of male sexual aggression.

Yet, the thesis has also drawn attention to alternative (e.g. less mainstream) discourses and accounts which position women in different ways. For example, chapter seven included discussion of discourses which construct drinking spaces as sites for women's resistance, for example, by defiantly entering into public drinking spaces, particularly alone, despite an awareness of potential disapproval. In addition, the thesis has discussed discourses which position women as sexual predators in drinking situations (chapters six and seven), and which construct drunken sex as normative heterosexual practice, for instance, alcohol as a facilitator of sexual relations which is used as such by both men *and women* (chapters six and eight). Such discourses and the subject positions that these create attribute women with more power and agency. However, the picture here is more complicated. For example, constructions of women as sexual predators are less normalised and undermined, for example, female sexuality as relatively unthreatening (in comparison to male sexuality – chapters six and seven) and women

who do behave in sexually aggressive ways do so at the risk of incurring certain costs and consequences, such as being labelled as 'slags' or 'whores' and as such, positioned in derogatory ways (chapter eight). Further, the construction of alcohol as a sexual facilitator, as discussed in chapter eight, can be regarded as further contributing to a problemisation of heterosexual relations, by constructing these as often partly dependent upon the facilitating role of alcohol. Numerous statements and accounts were also provided by the participants which reproduced constructions of women as vulnerable in drinking spaces, for example, accounts of instances in which the women had been sexually harassed in public drinking spaces (chapter seven). However, a major concern of the thesis here has been where the problem, the responsibility and the blame for such problems are situated, which is now explored.

9.3 Blaming Women: The Location of Responsibility

In sum, it became apparent from reviewing the literature and analysing the media texts collected that problems associated with consumption and responsibility or blame for these are often situated within the female drinker herself. For example, mainstream psychological and medical literature around alcohol abuse or misuse amongst women has typically searched for 'causes' of this within the individual, for instance, as outlined, a host of psychological and medical problems including things like sexual dysfunction (Wilsnack & Wilsnack, 1995); negative mood (Olenick & Chalmers, 1991; Grover & Thomas, 1993; Rubonis *et al,* 1994) and sex-role conflict (Beckman, 1978; Wilsnack, 1973, 1974; Scida & Vannicelli, 1979). Other studies have pointed to phenomena such as 'problematic personality types', for instance, 'the alcohol personality' (see Plant, 1997). As such, there is a failure to consider problematic drinking within a wider socio-

cultural framework. This is exemplary of a politically interested discipline which often serves to maintain the status quo. For example, Fox and Prilleltensky (1997) argue that the individualism inherent in Western, mainstream psychological accounts, which emphasises, amongst other things, personal responsibility, serves to detract attention and scrutiny away from wider cultural and historical conditions. Moreover, as argued by Foucault (1978), there is strong relationship between politics and medicine, and indeed, such discourse does not remain at an academic level, but rather informs therapeutic practices, wherein women are encouraged to take personal responsibility for their problems (Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993). What was interesting and important here is that the participants themselves challenged such individualism with regards to problematic drinking amongst women. For example, this was located by their talk within a Western capitalist and patriarchal order which places the primary responsibility for childcare onto women, expects them to cope with such responsibility, and which expects women in Britain at the turn of the century to be 'superwomen' (e.g. be good mothers; good wives; have successful careers and so on). As argued, contrary to arguments presented by those such as Fillmore (1987) that women are less likely to engage in problematic drinking because of their occupation of 'subordinate' roles such as housewife and mother (which are non-conducive to drinking), such talk points to the importance of considering the positioning of women in such ways, and more generally, of taking a more critical social approach to understanding 'problematic' patterns of consumption amongst women.

Further, as outlined, psychology and the media have focused attention upon the risks that the female drinker is *exposing herself to*. This location of responsibility within the female drinker is interrelated with and informed by a matrix of discourses. These

include, as discussed, those which construct female drinkers (particularly those who drink 'excessively') as abnormal and deviant (e.g. sexually promiscuous) and those which normalise male aggression (Goldberg, 1973; Wilson, 1975; Thornhill & Thornhill, 1992) and sexual promiscuity (Wilson, 1975; Thornhill & Thornhill, 1992; Hollway, 1984), or as put by Stanko (The Guardian – 20th June, 2000) a natural state of predatory maleness in men. This means that i) male aggression and promiscuity are taken as given ii) attention and blame are drawn away from men iii) there is a failure to question and explore *why* men commit violent and despicable acts against women iv) men all too often get away with committing such acts.

This can be seen, as discussed throughout the thesis both in it's reviews of the feminist literature and in the empirically-based chapters, as feeding into problematic practices which are at the least unsupportive towards women and often, down-right dangerous for them. For example, Stanko's (1985) research into the judicial systems of the United Kingdom and United States found that those women regarded as leading 'unorthodox' lives who do not obey codes of 'suitable behaviour' (e.g. do not conform to normative femininity) are sometimes seen as deserving a violent response from their male 'protectors'. This could include women who drink, as such women are often constructed as deviant and as not subscribing to normative femininity. Indeed, Abbey and Harnish (1995) found that women who have been raped are less likely to receive support if they had been drinking because of this view that drinking women place themselves at unnecessary risk, and especially in cases where the drinking woman was regarded as having 'sexual intent' (in other words, she went out the night the rape took place with the intention of engaging sexually with someone). Further, as discussed in chapter six, recent battles against drug assisted rape have focused upon the potential victims rather

than the perpetrators, issuing warnings to women and advising them that they should take precautionary measures whilst out (e.g. closely guarding their drink; drinking out of bottles only; never accepting drinks from strangers) in order to reduce their risk. This not only contributes to the emerging pattern here that women often have to regulate their behaviour in public drinking spaces, whereas men are allowed freedom of movement, but further, attributes a degree of responsibility for sexual violence onto women by suggesting that if they are cautious, this is less likely to happened to them (and thus, as argued, detracting responsibility away from the perpetrators of such violence).

Indeed, the thesis has highlighted how discourse which locates responsibility for male sexual behaviour and violence with women was reproduced by the participants. For example, chapter seven discussed how the participants, whilst discussing sexual harassment in public drinking spaces made remarks such as *'I seem to attract unwanted attention sometimes anyway'* (SY2), thus suggesting that it is something about *them* which *makes* men do this. Further, the women discussed the collective construction and use of strategies in order to reduce the risk of sexual harassment or assault, such as staying close to your friends and never accepting drinks from strangers. Again, this would imply that the women take a certain degree of responsibility on board for such behaviour. Also, this suggests that women's fears within public drinking spaces are more pervasive, stretching beyond fears of drug-assisted rape, as the description of such strategies was not made in the context of discussions about this (which wasn't once mentioned), but rather, was informed by concerns surrounding sexual harassment, aggression and sexual expectations (e.g. that buying a woman a drink forms a sexual contract). Moreover, chapter seven presented and discussed a worrying account

provided by one of the participants in which, in an intoxicated state, she was very nearly coerced into having sex against her will. Her construction of the account was one in which she took responsibility and blame for the incident because she had gotten into bed with the man in question with no clothes on, arguing that *'you can't get into bed with a man with no clothes on and not allow him to have sex with you'* (SY1).

As argued, such discourses become an important site for feminist intervention, for instance, their deconstruction and the generation of alternatives. To some extent, the thesis has engaged with this project. For example, this has highlighted a number of interrelated discourses and accounts which i) challenge the normalisation of male violence and promiscuity, for instance, exposing such discourses as politically interested ones (chapters two and six) ii) deconstruct accounts which justify and rationalise male violence (chapters six and seven) iii) shift the responsibility and blame for male aggression and violence onto men and away from women and substances such as alcohol and Rohypnol (chapters six and seven) iv) deconstruct the myth of the passive, non-aggressive women, thus challenging women's easy victim status and signaling women's potential for resistance against male violence, control and power (chapters seven and eight). This is important and necessary if society's understandings of female drinking and male violence in drinking contexts and associated practices are to change.

9.4 Social Class: Drinking as a Site for the Construction and Negotiation of Different Femininities.

As argued (see chapter four in particular) the feminist post-structuralist approach taken by the thesis is one which regards femininity as a diverse category, gender being

intersected with race, ethnicity (e.g. Bhavnani & Phoenix, 1994), class (e.g. Walkerdine, 1996a, 1996b; Skeggs, 1997) and sexuality (e.g. Kitzinger, 1987; Kitzinger *et al,* 1992; Johnston, 1973) to produce multiple and multi-faceted forms of femininity. In particular, the research explored the construction and negotiation of femininities as mediated by social class. The usefulness of alcohol consumption as a site for exploring the construction of classed identities has already been highlighted by writers such as Tomsen (1997) and Burns (1980). However, these studies have concentrated upon men and masculinity, and so to date, similar analyses of femininity have been omitted from the literature. The research has produced a number of major findings surrounding femininity, class and alcohol consumption, which shall now be summarised.

One major finding has been the differential investments in the category class between the two samples of women who took part in the main study. As discussed in chapter eight, the women from the West Yorkshire sample described themselves as 'working class', whereas the female academics comprising the South Yorkshire sample often tapped into a 'class as ambiguous' discourse. This is an important point which shall be revisited later in the chapter when the discussion turns to issues surrounding the power of the researcher to impose such definitions. However, there are a number of points regarding this finding which shall be reiterated here. As discussed in chapter eight, this finding competes with the findings of many studies around social class that it is working class women and girls who are more uncomfortable talking about class and who actively try to disidentify with the category 'working class' (Skeggs, 1997; Frazer, 1989; Phoenix & Tizard, 1996). An explanation which has been presented for the findings here is that the 'ambiguity of class' discourse is one which the women had differential access to, this being more available to the women from the South Yorkshire

sample who were all academics, many working in the social sciences, and so were perhaps more familiar with debates surrounding the definition of class. Further, this may have been drawn upon by these arguably 'politically informed' women due to a reluctance to position themselves within unequal relations of power or identify themselves as belonging to the 'oppressive classes', this being presented previously as an explanation for the reluctance of feminists to discuss class (e.g. Skeggs, 1997 - see chapter four). Yet despite this, the women from the South Yorkshire sample 'othered' themselves from different types of women and men on grounds other than gender (e.g. on social class grounds), as did the women from the West Yorkshire sample (chapter eight). This supports arguments that classed femininities are constructed relationally (e.g. Skeggs, 1997) and contributes to a further deconstruction of essentialist discourse around gender and the category 'women' as a monolithic one.

There was evidence in the interview transcripts that drinking (or talk around this) not only represents a site where classed identities are constructed and negotiated, but also, that public drinking spaces are ones where class tensions are evident (as discussed in chapters seven and eight). Interestingly and importantly, animosity, ridicule and contempt directed at women and men from other social backgrounds worked in a dynamic rather than linear way, thus supporting a Foucauldian view of power as dispersed. Animosity of other was constructed as a reason why participants avoided drinking in certain places and often, references were made to the 'kind of people' who frequent these (e.g. people from council estates, locals), these people, as argued in chapter seven, being ones who can often be regarded as working class. A further reason which was constructed for the avoidance of such places, mostly amongst the women from the West Yorkshire sample who were council estate residents themselves, was that

these were violent spaces, thus the thesis can be seen to contribute to a body of research which has identified violence as an important characteristic of working class drinking culture (e.g. Tomsen, 1997; Burns, 1980; Moore, 1990; Canaan 1996). However, as already stated, such studies have concentrated upon men and masculinity, and so the research here provides a rather new, refreshing angle by drawing attention to female aggression and violence also within working class drinking culture. The benefits of bringing female aggression into greater visibility for feminist struggles have been argued in chapter seven. In addition, the location of female aggression within context (i.e. drinking sub-cultures) marks a progression away from individualistic, biological accounts which have dominated the body of existing literature around this (e.g. Hart, 1974; Reinisch, 1981; Suchowsky *et al,* 1971; van de Poll *et al,* 1982; Cooke, 1945; Dalton, 1964, 1966; D'Orban & Dalton, 1980; Ellis & Austin, 1971; Morton *et al,* 1953).

In terms of providing explanations for *why* working class drinking culture is characterised as such, the research participants themselves constructed their own theories. For example, the participants constructed such aggression and violence as an outlet or expression of the frustration and anger experienced by working class people as a result of their social positioning, particularly as other means of expression and releasing aggression which are more characteristic of middle class culture, and hence more normalised (e.g. playing a musical instrument or drawing) are unavailable to them (*'They're in a shit job, and their only like creative outlet for want of a better word is to like go out and get pissed, and kick somebody's ed in'* – WY2). This is similar to Cohen's (1972) argument that young working class men are excluded from middle class leisure pursuits and provides a rather different take on Tomsen's (1997) interpretation of

aggression and violence within working class drinking culture as a form of symbolic protest or resistance towards such pursuits, as here, the issue is not so much one of rejection, but one of access. Yet, in addition, such explanations have been supplemented through an examination of the role of aggression and violence in the construction of working class femininities. As illustrated and discussed in chapter eight, the women from the West Yorkshire sample often constructed accounts describing aggressive and violent instances in which they positioned themselves as active and initiating as opposed to positioning themselves as victims, a positioning which was often resisted by these women (e.g. see accounts of male aggression and violence discussed in chapter seven). As argued, this was done in the interests of constructing and defending social identities imbued with power and status, or what is described by the thesis as 'hard reputations', this being similar to findings of other studies which have explored the construction of identities and power within sub-cultures (e.g. Marsh *et al,* 1977; Armstrong, 1998). The construction of such identities can be regarded as particularly important in working class cultural contexts for a number of reasons which have been suggested by other writers. For example, those such as Marsh *et al* (1977) and Connell (1989) argue that the construction of such desirable and powerful identities can be regarded as important in sub-cultural contexts (i.e. working class) where more normative or culturally ascribed routes to achieving status (e.g. through material gain) are blocked or unavailable. Further, this has been discussed by writers in the context of employment wherein hegemonic working class masculinities have been bound up with physical prowess through physical labour and opportunities to drink and fight (see Canaan, 1996) and also deinstrustrialisation which has meant that such masculinities have had to find affirmation through alternative sources, for example, fighting (e.g. Murray, 1989; Connell, 1989). One reading here is that as a result of women's movement into

traditionally masculinised spaces such as the work place and drinking cultures, and the so-called 'masculinisation' of women as evidenced, for example, by the emergence of the 'ladette' (see Whelehan, 2000), women have adopted what Whelehan describes as *'the most anti-social of "male" behaviour'* (2000: 9). However, an analysis of this as pure choice or irrational is an oversimplistic one – rather, working class drinking contexts are ones in which the 'rules' such as standing up for significant others, as discussed by the participants (*'you've got to think, "well how many members of their family are then gonna come after me"* – WY1) have already been established, and the women risk disapproval and marginalisation if they don't comply. As such, female aggression is meaningful in such contexts. This can also be supplemented with an understanding of the wider positioning of working class women outside of a normative middle class feminine ideal which emphasises respectability, restraint, calm and generally those attributes anti-thetical to aggression (e.g. Poovey, 1984). For example, an awareness of this positioning (Skeggs, 1997, argues that working class women are often aware of this positioning) and the relative investments in such forms of femininity made by middle class and working class women in respect of their proximity to this, could mean that the identities and actions of working class women are less restrained or mediated in this respect.

Finally, the thesis has explored how the focus of attention has shifted in recent years (particularly evident in the media) from the drinking behaviours of working class women to middle class women (see chapter six). The thesis has presented a number of explanations for this. Firstly, as argued by those such as Blackman (1996), Skeggs (1997), Hill (1986), Kuhn (1988) and Nead (1988), historically, working class women have been defined as deviant and pathological. As such, one reading here is that society

expects working class women to behave in deviant and unfeminine ways, for example, by engaging in 'laddish' drinking behaviour. Yet, when it is middle class women behaving in deviant (e.g. laddish) ways and investing in related forms of identity, then hysteria is generated (e.g. by the media) because it is this group of women who are looked to to uphold standards of desirable femininity or put another way, 'they should know better'. Indeed, there was talk in the group discussions which supports this idea. For example, one professional woman argued that middle class women are subjected to greater control in public drinking spaces, in terms of, for instance, expectations around 'appropriate behaviour' (*'I think it's more controlled in those sort of like, erm, y'know, where's there's older people or more middle class. There's sort of, I think the working classes have got a lot more freedom actually, even though they may not know that, it's* (...) – SY3).

A second explanation which has been presented for the shift in class focus is that this is a backlash response to the increasing number of women within this section of society (the middle class) who are entering into the professions and highly paid occupations (and in turn, it has been argued that women's occupation of positions within such spheres where traditional femininity is devalued may explain their investment in contemporary masculinised forms of identity). This reading is one which is informed by arguments presented by those such as Foucault (1972) that the circulation of knowledges can be related to social and economic arrangements in a particular historical context. For example, from studying the media texts collected (chapter six), it soon became apparent that a theme running through articles pertaining to female drinking within middle class culture was 'work-related stress' (i.e. drinking as a response to this), the suggestion implicit in these texts being that 'women can't cope' with these

positions. The argument presented by the thesis is that it is no coincidence that attention has been paid to this as opposed to other forms of stress which may be related to drinking, for example, as discussed by the participants themselves, such as those associated with the demands of motherhood (chapter seven). To focus attention upon this may invoke a questioning of a patriarchal, capitalist order which places the primary responsibility for childcare onto women. In sum, not only the discourses in operation here, but also that which is not said or brought to attention, can be seen to ideally place women back within private, domestic spaces and out of the public arena. A pattern also seems to be emerging in that it is those women who are regarded as a threat to social order in one way or another who have the analytic spotlight placed upon them and whose behaviours and identities become subject to scrutiny. As discussed in chapter four, historically, it has been the deviant sexualities of working class women that were regarded as a threat to the liberal humanistic pursuit of a more civilised and ordered society (Skeggs, 1997; Weeks, 1981; Gilman, 1992; Ware, 1992). Whereas in modern day Britain (as argued), the focus has now turned towards middle class women who pose a threat to the masculinisation of spaces, including the professions and public drinking space. This reading is supported (as illustrated in chapter six) by recent media texts which have constructed women as competing with men for jobs (or, as argued, the jobs that matter), drawing attention to the increasing number of women occupying highly paid positions and the increasing number of unemployed men in Britain (chapter six). What is particularly interesting here that this was discussed by the authors in question in the context of an article about women and alcohol, as only articles, commentaries etc. pertaining to women and alcohol were collected (see chapter six).

9.5 Motivations and Political Agendas

The preface of the thesis discussed some of the major reasons why I was interested in exploring women and alcohol. At this point in the chapter, I would like to take this up further by embarking upon a reflexive journey into the entire research story. As argued in chapter five, the aim here was not to produce a disinterested, objective account (which as argued, is an impossibility anyway), but rather, in the interests of a 'politically informed relativism' (Gill, 1991), the whole research enterprise shall be examined. I shall begin at beginning, in other words, expand upon my reasons for investigating this particular subject area and in the ways in which this was investigated, in order to render political agendas transparent.

In recent years, I have become both interested in and irritated by the extent of media coverage around women's drinking patterns and habits in Britain, and the generation of hysteria or moral panic around this. I became resentful at being made to feel guilty about drinking and examine my 'motivations' for this, a guilt that I often detected in female but very rarely male friends and colleagues. In addition, this made me think back to an incident which happened to one of my housemates when I was in my first year at university. She arrived home in the early hours of one morning bruised and (to say the least) highly distressed after being sexually assaulted by a strange man on her way home from a night-club in South Yorkshire. When the police eventually arrived, they were far more interested in how much she had had to drink that evening than they were in the man who had attacked her. Needless to say, no further action was taken. Then, as outlined in the preface, I began to survey the literature around women and alcohol and was dismayed (if not surprised) by the bulk of psychological literature which presented

a host of discrete and individualistic explanations (mostly, as discussed, psychological and medical problems) for women's alcohol 'misuse' or 'abuse', and the relative scarcity of literature which dealt with the kinds of issues discussed by the thesis. This finding appeared to support arguments presented by critical social and feminist psychologists that psychology has a preoccupation with female pathology, and that the individualistic focus of mainstream psychology detracts attention away from the wider socio-cultural context in which practices surrounding women's drinking occur. In sum, this was a feminist project from the outset, one which aimed to explore alcohol consumption as a site illustrative of the continuation of 'double-standards' and which is fraught with problems for women which are related to gender discourses.

A second major research decision was to include women from different social backgrounds and contexts in order to explore the construction of different forms of femininity, thus further deconstructing the category 'women' as a homogeneous one. As a woman from a working class background, my entry into higher education invoked an acute awareness of my social class in a predominantly middle class, academic context which became all the more pronounced when I began my postgraduate studies. In short, I felt *different* and my sense of having little in common with many women who taught me and whom I studied alongside made me feel strongly that *women are different.* Here I would like to cite a quotation which I feel sums up these feelings:

'I read a woman's book, meet such a woman at a party (a woman now, like me) and think quite deliberately as we talk: "We are divided. A hundred years ago I'd have been cleaning your shoes. I know this and you don't."'

(Steedman, 1986: 2)

As such, although interested in feminism from an early point in my academic career, I often failed to relate to and understand feminist narratives of 'sisterhood', and similarly, the 'men as oppressors' discourse left me slightly confused, especially as (like Sandy Brewer, 1996) I grew up surrounded by men like my father who appeared so powerless. In addition, feminist voices largely appeared to be white, middle class ones, and there appeared to be a lack of sensitivity towards the (what appeared to me) obvious multiplicity of feminine subjectivities. Yet the discovery of feminist poststructuralist works and the writings of feminist authors interested in class such as Valerie Walkerdine, Beverely Skeggs and Lisa Blackman (and others referenced throughout the thesis) struck a chord. I had a new found enthusiasm for feminism and felt that I could confidently position myself within existing debates (although this positioning is my no means final). In short, I felt that I could do feminist work and still argue the importance of difference and local context. The aim of the project was to achieve both.

9.6 Reflections on Methodological Processes and Researcher Positioning

This section of the chapter embarks on a reflexive discussion of the methodological processes involved in the research, my positioning within these processes, and my occupation of social positions outside of (but not separable from) the research. This begins by focusing upon the first study (the media text study), moving on then to explore the processes involved in the thesis's main research study: the focus group interviews.

Study 1: Media Text Study

A major issue for discussion here is the selection of material or sampling. As described, decisions were made surrounding this which placed restrictions on the type of material for collection. For example, it was decided i) that articles, features etc. on or around women and alcohol only would be collected, and, due to the practical reasons outlined in chapter four, that ii) collection of material would be restricted to printed media output and iii) material featured in national newspapers only. However, it is acknowledged that collecting a more diverse range of material, for example, media output of different formats and from other sources would have expanded the study. For instance, collecting material from gender-targeted magazines would have enabled the study to explore, for instance, how women's alcohol use is constructed within the feminised spaces of women's magazines compared with other types of publication, such as national newspapers and/or men's magazines. Similarly, it may have been beneficial to the study to collect material around men and alcohol, again for comparative reasons, such as the cross-referencing of themes and discourses and, perhaps more interestingly, the exploration of difference. Yet, it was found that because of the practical reasons outlined in chapter six, initial informal attempts to collect such material proved highly difficult. For example, back-editions of gender targeted magazines are highly difficult to obtain as generally speaking (with the exception of specialist titles such as 'Vogue' and 'Good Housekeeping') these are not archived. Further, articles devoted to the topic of 'men and alcohol' were pretty much non-existent which in itself is analytically revealing (further points to the normalisation of men's alcohol consumption). As such, it seemed that it would have proved difficult to collect such material in any consistent and systematic way. Further, this was to an extent beyond the scope and aims of the research, which were to explore constructions and femininity and alcohol, and there was

also something of a concern not to continue in the tradition of cross-gender comparison research.

Further, the study was limited by it's time-span (January 1998 – December 2000). The BNI (British Newspaper Index) does make it possible to search for material which dates earlier than 1998, and it would seem that the collection of media output from a wider time-span would have provided the study with a greater historical angle, allowing for an exploration of how constructions of women and alcohol have changed over time. However, I do feel that the thesis has paid some attention to the historical backdrop of contemporary constructions of femininity and alcohol, particularly in the earlier chapters, for example, by including discussions of the temperance movement and literature which has paid attention to historical legacies and practices (e.g. wine drinking by women as punishable by death in early Rome – Ridlon 1988). Yet, such past constructions are not located specifically within the space of the media. One major problem with attempting to collect and analyse media material taken from a wider time-span would have been that this would have increased the scale of the study to such an extent that it would have become unmanageable for a lone researcher working within a limited time-frame, and with another major study to conduct, unless a limited amount of material was collected from each identified time-frame, which may have reduced the richness of the analysis. Also, the focus of the research was upon *contemporary* discourses around femininity and alcohol, and although the historical background is regarded as important, this wasn't regarded as absolutely central.

Finally, as described in chapter six, the number of meaning units collected was restricted to thirty (fifteen in each analytic group). This was necessary in order to render the study manageable. However, this does mean that the study did not comprise a

review and analysis of *all* printed media output on or around women and alcohol featured in national newspapers in the identified time-frame. Useful material will have been missed. For example, as described in chapter six, archive searches involved the 'sifting through' of a large amount of material by briefly consulting the information held on the BNI (e.g. abstract), and it is possible that some articles and commentaries not considered relevant and useful were. Yet, efforts were made to sample material in an inclusive way, and as such, I feel confident that those articles not collected were of limited use (e.g. only mentioned women and alcohol in passing in the context of a discussion about something else). However, further than this, as described in chapter six, some features and commentaries which were collected but were regarded as 'less useful' were eventually excluded in order to balance the sample groups. In defence of the study, the aim was to identify available discourses around women and alcohol in the British media within the stated time-span, and this has been achieved. Further, I found that whilst analysing the material gathered, a number of in-vivo themes and discourses were appearing again and again, and as such, I suspect that had the number of meaning units collected been doubled or trebled, the discourses identified would have largely remained the same, only there would have been more illustratory examples of these.

Study 2: Focus Groups

The first issue which I would like to discuss here is the recruitment of participants and my own positioning in relation to them. As previously described, all of the women recruited to take part in the focus group discussions were white. It is acknowledged that this may be cause for concern, especially as those such as Bhavnani and Phoenix (1994) and Cannon *et al* (1991) have criticised feminist and qualitative research for ignoring the experiences of women of colour *as well as* working class women. Further, Skeggs

(1997) argues that a major failure of her research around class is her lack of responsibility for studying the category of race and paying it the same attention as she did class. Although as discussed in chapter seven, the recruitment of all white participants wasn't intentional (it happened that those women who volunteered to take part in the group discussions were all white), greater efforts to recruit women from different racial and ethnic backgrounds could have been made, and so some justification is warranted here.

For one, race or ethnicity were not particular foci of the research. That is not to say that being white and being British does not constitute a racial and ethnic identity – to suggest so would be to further normalise this, to suggest that this does not require examination. But the ways in which discourses around femininity and alcohol feed into, for example, the leisure activities and identities of black women is a somewhat different research project, and one which I feel I would not have been the most suitable person to conduct. As I have argued throughout the thesis, women do *not* represent a unitary category and sometimes gender is not enough (Kohler Riessman, 1991). As argued by those such as Michaels, (1985), in the research situation, a *'lack of shared cultural norms for telling a story, making a point, giving an explanation and so forth can create barriers to understanding'* (p. 51). This is one reason why I felt that my background as a working class woman, who grew up in the same locality as the participants from the West Yorkshire sample, was a great asset to the research. For example, I suspect that a researcher from a middle class background and different locality may have had difficulties understanding the women's language (e.g. use of colloquialisms) and tapping into their systems of meaning and frames of reference. This is not to mention the likelihood that a middle class researcher may have had a lack of empathy,

understanding of and sensitivity towards issues affecting many working class women (for a comprehensive discussion of some of these issues – see Palmer, 1996). By the same line of reasoning, I feel that the best people to conduct research with women of colour are women of colour. I know what it is like to be a working class woman, but I do not know what it is like to be a Black woman (working class or otherwise) living in modern day Britain - reading literature around this can raise ones awareness of the issues involved, but real insight and motivation comes from having experienced such positioning first hand.

I have already approached my 'sameness' with the women from the West Yorkshire sample who took part in the study. In addition, I am also an insider of the professional, academic context from which the South Yorkshire sample was drawn, and so have access to the shared systems of meaning in operation here also. As such, I could be regarded as straddling the two social contexts. To summarise here, this positioning can be regarded as an advantage to the research in terms of practicalities such as recruitment (as discussed in chapter seven), and in terms of understanding (e.g. shared frameworks of meanings, shared experience, familiarity with language including academic terms and colloquialisms), this applying to both samples of women. Yet, the extent to which I can be considered an insider to either context is debatable. For example, although I am originally from the district in West Yorkshire from which one sample of women was recruited, this is a place that I have, to some extent, moved on from, not only in terms of physical relocation, but also in terms of my investments in the systems of meaning operating within this context and the identities these incur. In short, my experience of higher education has generated enough difference to make me dissimilar from these participants. Yet at the same time, as previously discussed, I have often felt (and do still

feel) like an outsider within middle class, academic contexts. This relative 'outsider' status in terms of either context can also be regarded as an advantage or 'epistemic privilege' (Wolff, 1995), for example, in terms of aiding respite from normalisation (Skeggs, 1997), and so it could be argued that overall, my positioning here was an advantage.

However, a major concern is my positioning within unequal relations of power with the women from the West Yorkshire sample. There is no escaping the fact that ultimately, I am the one who will benefit from the research in terms of increased academic recognition and qualification, a point which is by no means exclusive to this particular project (Day, 1999). But what did particularly concern me here is that the research was of no obvious benefit to the women from this sample who were in low-paid jobs, who gave up their time and who often arranged childcare at short notice to take part (the women could not be paid as university funds - or the lack of these - would not allow for this). On the whole, the participants did report that they had enjoyed taking part in the discussions, making comments such as *'I really enjoyed being in an all woman situation'* ('Bernie', WY2)[19], and so in this respect it could be argued that the experience was rewarding for them. In addition, the research 'gives voices' to women (around this topic at least) who often go unheard within academic spaces (i.e. working class women). However despite this, my acute awareness of my power and positioning within the research (due to my education and political views) did mean that the research was underpinned with a certain amount of anxiety and guilt.

[19] At the end of each group discussion, the participants were given the opportunity to write comments (anonymously if they wished) in the research diary – the example given here is one such comment.

Another issue surrounds the power of the researcher to impose definitions and an interpretative framework on the participants' responses (see chapter five). For example, as discussed in chapter eight, some of the women from the South Yorkshire sample appeared to be uncomfortable with the label 'middle class', commenting, as outlined, on the 'ambiguity of class'. This raises issues around a description (explicit or implicit) of these women as such (representation of 'the other'). As acknowledged by the thesis, there is no exact measure or definition of class (see Phoenix & Tizard, 1996 for a discussion). There are problems associated with any definition, and this is not an issue which will be resolved here (if ever). In addition, people have their own interests in and motivations for rejecting subject positions (as explored in chapter eight; see also Opie, 1992), this being a major reason why self-definition (i.e. how the participants described themselves in terms of class) was not taken here as absolute. Further, there is a concern here that the 'ambiguity of class' discourse is a politically interested one which can serve to push social class out of the academic agenda through fears that this cannot be defined and measured accurately. Indeed, those such as Crompton (1993) and Skeggs (1997) have cited this as one important reason why social class has disappeared from such agendas. In sum, disindentifications with the category 'class' and the ambiguity of this does not mean that this is a redundant concept, in the same way that the postmodern deconstruction of the category 'women' does not mean that they cease to exist as a group.

As discussed in chapter five, an aim of the main study was to maximise the participants' contributions to the research. However, the extent to which the data from this study can be regarded as co-produced is debatable. For one, although it was intended that the questionnaire study would provide the respondents with the opportunity to feed their

ideas, thoughts etc. into the direction of the impending focus groups, the extent to which this occurred is questionable. For example, it was argued in chapter seven that a major finding of the questionnaire study was that 'beverages', 'venues' and 'drinking partners' emerged as prominent themes, yet there were items on the questionnaire which were based around these topics. As such, it can be argued that, in part, these themes had been introduced from the outset (although these themes did reoccur within the responses for other items). Yet, it was the finding that there were notable differences in the responses of the women from the two samples which brought these themes in particular to the forefront, for example, because the responses indicated different drinking cultures, particularly surrounding these themes.

Further, the participants' responses in the focus group discussions can, to an extent, be regarded as directed by the use of an interview schedule (a pre-determined agenda). Again, this raises problems and issues around the power of the researcher to impose an interpretative framework and brings the 'naturalness' and democracy of the research situation into question. However, in defence of the study, and to reiterate many of the arguments surrounding methodological decisions and tools discussed in chapter five, it was felt that it was necessary to use an interview schedule (thus rendering the focus group discussions 'informal-but-guided' ones) in order to prevent the discussions becoming conversations about anything and everything. Further, the items and questions featured on the interview schedule were of an open-ended nature, which ensured that the participants had the freedom and space to talk about these themes/issues in *the ways in which they wanted,* which as chapters seven and eight demonstrate, were variable. In addition, the amount of discussion which took place around each theme was collectively determined by the participants. For example, it was not requested that discussion around

each item continue for a set amount of time – in short, if the participants did not appear to view this issue as relevant to their concerns and experiences, and responses indicated this (reluctant, limited amount of discussion), then we moved on. One example here is the topic of drink-related aggression and violence. When this was raised during the focus groups conducted with the women from the South Yorkshire sample, this was often quickly dismissed by them as not applicable, not a subject where they felt they could contribute or one which they were simply not interested in engaging in in-depth discussion around. Moreover, in general (although difficult to illustrate here) the participants did take control of the discussions. For example, they often raised topics before I did, returned to topics which had already been discussed, because, as often expressed, they felt that these were 'more interesting' than what we had moved on to talk about (the most common example here been 'sex') and even introduced topics which were not on the interview schedule. For instance, there was discussion around 'regional identity' during one particular focus group conducted with the women from the West Yorkshire sample, an issue which was not included on the interview schedule.

Also, on a more general level, there are discrepancies between the original aims of the research and the final analyses presented. For example, it was intended from the outset that this would *not* be a research project about alcohol abuse or misuse for a number of reasons, such as that the bulk of the psychological literature around women and alcohol concentrates it's focus upon misuse and abuse and the thesis aimed to take a somewhat different angle. Also, I did not want the thesis to further contribute to the pathologisation of women's drinking. However, during the group discussions, there was talk around what can be described as 'problematic' drinking patterns (e.g. drinking to self-medicate stress or depressive feelings), and so this was paid due attention (chapter

seven). In light of this, I would like to argue a couple of points. Firstly, this challenges arguments presented by those such as Squire (1995) and Widdicombe (1995) that researchers working with discourse analysis will often 'gloss over' inconvenient material, for example, that which is inconsistent with their political goals and agendas. Secondly, this is further evidence to support the idea that the participants redirected the research, and as such, it can be argued that the data here *was* co-produced.

9.7 Implications and Consequences of Readings: A Reflection on the Usefulness and Limitations of Feminist Poststructuralism and Discourse Analysis

As discussed in chapter five of the thesis, researcher reflexivity should journey beyond simple declaration of theoretical and political commitments and reflections on methodological processes to explore the possible social and political consequences of readings presented, thus taking responsibility for those readings (Gill, 1995; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995; Code, 1987, 1988). In doing so here, features of feminist poststructuralism and discourse analysis which have both assisted and placed limitations upon these readings are examined.

Amongst those analyses and readings presented in the empirically-based chapters, the ones that are perhaps the most problematic and have incurred the most criticism to date are those surrounding aggression and violence. The discussion shall begin with a consideration of the interpretative treatment of data around male aggression and violence. As the reader will recall, chapter seven included accounts of male violence provided by the participants, highlighting in particular discourses which they drew upon and discursive techniques they used which rationalised and excused male aggression

and violence. The problem with such an analysis, as argued by Kitzinger and Thomas (1995) is that this positions women as complicit in the process, which can in turn be read as placing blame onto the victims of male violence. Yet this raises an additional issue, in that the participants, often, *did not* position themselves as victims of male violence. As such, there are tensions here between the feminist injunction to let women's voices be heard and the feminist injunction to analyse problematic gender relations (Chodorow, 1996). For example, to impose an interpretation on the data which did position the women as victims (as can sometimes be seen to be the case – see chapter seven), suggests that the researcher has an epistemic privilege that the participants lack, and again, raises problems and issues around researcher power. Further, women often invest in discourses that can be regarded as detrimental to feminist struggles which are too powerful to be simply dismissed as 'false consciousness' (e.g. Gavey, 1989; Squire, 1995). Also, as argued in chapter four, the relativism inherent in poststructuralism made it difficult here to assert truths, such as the reality of women's victim status at the hands of male aggressors, and so can lead to a denial or deconstruction of many of the realities of gender relations for which feminists have struggled to gain acceptance. Indeed, Gill (1995) and Grint and Woolgar (1994) point specifically to attempts to challenge domestic violence when discussing the negative implications of relativism and poststructuralism for feminism. For example, a failure to assert truths or meta-narratives such as male abuse can be regarded as contributing (albeit not intentionally) towards the backlash against feminism which has become a feature of contemporary social life (Gill, 1995) and undermine feminist action (Soper, 1991; Braidotti, 1988). This is a debate which will not be resolved here. However, I would like to argue that the readings presented by the thesis are not inconsistent with feminist struggles. For one, as argued by Kitzinger and Thomas

(1995) in respect of their research into sexual harassment, examining ways in which this is constructed does not necessarily lead to a denial of the existence of this *per se*, but rather, leads to an exploration of, as argued, discourses and discursive techniques which render this invisible or which rationalise and justify this. Moreover, such discourses and discursive techniques become a site of deconstruction. Indeed, chapter seven highlighted the participants' own active deconstruction of such discourses (e.g. alcohol *does not make* men be violent) and their generation of alternatives (e.g. a man who is violent is a violent man). Of course, the generation of such alternative discourses does raise other problems (e.g. pessimistic views for change), but the location of blame within men and not alcohol is a positive step, because, as argued in chapter six, substances are often used a means of taking the blame for violence away from men.

A second major area of discussion within the empirically-based chapters has been female aggression and violence. The usefulness of highlighting this for critical research and feminist struggles has been argued in chapter seven. However, it is important to note that not all feminists support a move to bring female aggression and violence into greater visibility. In fact, those such as Campbell (1993) have criticised feminists for further perpetuating the myth of the non-aggressive woman, which, she argues, has been done in the interests of reproducing constructions of women as victims. It does seem however that such arguments and evidence which may fail to support a shift in focus here require further exploration. For one, official statistics have consistently shown that the majority of violent crimes are committed by men. For example, recent Home Office statistics have reported that in 1997, just over 49, 500 of convicted or cautioned offences which involved violence against another person in England and Wales were committed by men, compared with just over 8,500 committed by women (Home Office,

1999). Such figures are taken as evidence that female aggression and violence is not as common, not as serious a 'problem' and therefore not as worthy of investigation as male aggression and violence (Buss, 1961). Further, drawing attention towards female aggression and violence may distract focus away from men's far more lethal aggression, thus doing damage to feminist struggles (see Campbell, 1993). For example, although a number of reports have concluded that rates of violent behaviour as directed towards partners are similar for both men and women (Straus *et al.,* 1980; White & Koss, 1991; Home Office, 1999), women are found to be more likely to suffer injury, or even die as a result (Eagly, 1987; White & Kowalski, 1994; Home Office, 1999). Finally, an additional problem with the highlighting of female to female aggression and violence in particular for feminist struggles is that this can be regarded as disrupting the 'sisterhood' narrative.

Here, I would like to attempt a response to these arguments by means of defending the thesis. For one, there are a number of problems associated with such official statistics and what these appear to imply. For instance, it is highly probable that female aggression and violence is more prevalent than such official figures show (although prevalence is not a central concern here). As argued in chapter seven, women who are aggressive are much more likely to be labeled pathological or mentally ill rather than criminal, and so violent crimes committed by women are less likely to be incorporated into such statistical data (Anderson, 1993). Also, what about those incidents which go unreported to the police and/or unprosecuted? For example, female aggression and violence within intimate relationships (see Steinmetz & Lucca, 1988; O'Leary *et al,* 1989; Bookwala *et al,* 1992) is often likely to go unreported because of, for example, lack of perceived seriousness and the fear of stigmatisation (White & Kowalski, 1994).

Further, much aggression and violence which occurs in everyday contexts more generally (not just within intimate relationships), on the part of both women and men, appears often to be regarded by those involved as a relatively normative aspect of their lives or culture, and so once again remains unreported. Also, the thesis is not challenging or contesting the idea that men's aggression is far more lethal, and by drawing attention to male aggression and violence *also,* attention is not being detracted away from this. Further, talk in the group discussions and readings of this presented have located female aggression and violence within the context of male aggression and violence. For example, accounts provided in chapters seven and eight and discussions around these, to some degree, provide support for arguments that female aggression and violence within intimate relationships often takes the form of self-defence against male violence or is a response to abuse (e.g. Roscoe, 1985; Makepeace, 1986; Saunders, 1986; Dobash & Dobash, 1992), thus placing male aggression and violence at 'centre stage' so to speak. In light of this and in light of feminist arguments supporting a move to bring female aggression into greater visibility as discussed in chapter seven, I would like to argue that the readings presented here are not inconsistent with feminist goals and agendas. Finally, with regards to the 'sisterhood' narrative, this had been disrupted by the thesis already, due to it's poststructuralist approach and deconstruction of the category 'women' as a homogeneous one.

A further concern is the location of female aggression and violence within working class (drinking) culture. There was a concern not to reproduce pathologising constructions of working class women (e.g. the working class as base and unruly), and there is a concern that a surface reading of the data could incur such an interpretation. As such, there are a number of points that I would like to make here. Although

aggression and violence was included as a topic for discussion on the interview schedule, it wasn't anticipated that this would produce such an abundance of discussion and accounts around this. But it did, particularly in the focus groups conducted with the West Yorkshire sample, and to have ignored or skimmed over this would have been an injustice to the research and the participants' accounts. Again, this challenges criticisms which have been levelled at discourse analysis, as previously outlined (e.g. Squire, 1995; Widdicombe, 1995). Indeed, it may have been easier to have 'glossed over' this data, because for one, I wouldn't have had to engage in this discussion here. But this wasn't glossed over and I am. Further, I would like to defend the readings around this, arguing that the location of female aggression within a social context and the use of discourse analysis assisted the production of analyses which don't pathologise working class femininities. Firstly, aggression is often constructed as symbolic or discursive and the focus here is upon sub-cultural meanings, identity and power as opposed to actual physical violence. Secondly, the thesis has drawn attention towards critical accounts of aggression and violence within working class drinking contexts (produced by both the participants and social scientists) which construct this as a result of the frustration and anger experienced by working class men and women as a result of their social positioning, as a symbolic resistance to middle class leisure pursuits and lifestyles etc., as opposed to, for example, 'incorrect' socialisation processes. Finally, the thesis has discussed how aggression and violence within working class cultural contexts is not lawless or random, but rather carefully governed by socially agreed and negotiated rules and boundaries, therefore challenging constructions of 'mindless' or 'primitive' working class violence. Overall, as argued previously, aggression 'makes sense' and is meaningful in context. Yet, this raises another, slightly different criticism which is that the thesis 'romanticises' working class drinking culture, a criticism which has been

applied to accounts of white, working class masculinities (see McRobbie & Garber, 1976; Griffin, 1985; Skeggs, 1992, 1994). Indeed, this was a criticism which was made of the research on one of the occasions that this was presented publicly. What exactly does this imply about the research? That this constructs working class culture as superior? Fails to challenge and criticise working class violence? To take the former point first, the poststructuralist orientation of the thesis means that this doesn't subscribe to notions of 'superior' and 'inferior' or 'wrong' and 'right' with regards to cultural meanings, just 'difference'. Secondly, to frame working class violence here as mad, bad, dangerous and in need of 'correction' would be to pathologise this, and so we return, in something of a circular manoeuvre, back to the discussion presented previously around this. Also, it is more difficult to romanticise working class femininities, as these (as discussed) are much more undervalued than working class masculinities, which are often constructed as 'authentic' (see Tolson, 1977).

Finally, as discussed in chapter four, one of the issues of debate and concern within feminist poststructuralism concerns the status that is afforded the 'extra-discursive', for example, the exterior world of social practices and real material effects and the interior world of subjectivity. For instance, the poststructuralist contention that there is no real world which is external to discourse (see Jackson, 1992) has been criticised for being reductionist and leading to a neglect of, for example, inequalities which exist above and beyond language (Gill, 1995). The research has ventured somewhat into the world of the 'extra-discursive' and so I shall now return to a discussion of this as grounded within the readings presented by the thesis. For example, it has been discussed how the focus which has been placed recently in the media upon the contemporary drinking behaviours of (middle class) women and discourses around this can be located within

wider changes in social and economic arrangements, in a similar way to those authors (e.g. Moore, 1995; Cardenas, 1995; Kua, 1994; Medina-Mora, 1994) who have located changes in women's drinking patterns across the globe to changes in local educational, social and economic structures and arrangements. As such, it could be argued that the analysis presented here is one which is perhaps more conducive to critical realism (e.g. Parker, 1992a) than it is to a relativist feminist poststructuralism. Further, the reader will recall that chapter seven explored women's constructions and experiences of drinking and space, which included accounts of 'extra-discursive' events and practices, such as the subtle (and not so subtle) surveillance and control of women within drinking spaces. This, additionally, could be regarded as a slide back into, for example, liberal humanistic feminist approaches which place a high priority upon women's experiences and which often treat language as a vehicle for studying asymmetrical power relations which reside elsewhere (e.g. in public spaces). As such, it could be argued that analyses presented have i) strayed away from the feminist poststructuralist approach of the thesis, and ii) that this is illustrative of the limitations and problems of feminist poststructuralism.

However, I would like to argue against these points. For one, as discussed in chapter four, those such as Wetherell and Potter (1992) argue that drawing ontological distinctions between the discursive and extra-discursive is both a methodological and epistemological mistake, because, for one, the two are so closely interrelated and distinctions are blurred. Indeed, the distinctions between relativist approaches such as feminist poststructuralism and more realist[20] approaches such as critical realism themselves appear to be blurred, as many feminist poststructuralist analyses do attempt

[20] Although critical realism is being described here as a 'more realist' approach, it must be noted that this also incorporates relativism.

to locate discourses and power relations within wider institutional and structural arrangements and practices which give rise to and maintain these (e.g. Gavey, 1989). Yet, there are some identifiable differences between feminist poststructuralist and, for example, critical realist approaches, which, when considered in relation to the analyses presented by the thesis, do illustrate that these have remained (so to speak) faithful to a feminist poststructuralist perspective. For example, the social positioning of women within institutions (e.g. a patriarchal order) is not regarded as fixed here. Rather discussions presented in the empirically-based chapters have illustrated how women can and do negotiate and resist those positions, particularly when these are regarded by them as denying them access to power and agency. Further, accounts of extra-discursive practices and arrangements are regarded as *constructions of events which are interested.* For example, the notion that women are increasingly entering into powerful positions in Britain (e.g. in the professions) and as such, social and economic arrangements are changing, is regarded here as a construction of events which has aims and consequences. Such constructions could be regarded (amongst other things) as reassuring women that they now have equality and so there is no further need for feminist struggle, and at the same time generating hysteria around female invasion and the location of women back into private spaces, rather than a reflection of *real* events and structural arrangements. As such, the focus has remained very much upon the discursive and the constructive, retaining something of an anti-realist stance.

Further, although the research has explored women's experiences, these are not treated by the thesis as individual or unique (as is characteristic of liberal humanistic feminist approaches) but rather, the emphasis is placed upon joint, negotiated experience. In addition, although allowing for an analysis of negotiation and resistance of positions (as discussed), at the same time, the thesis has rejected the liberal humanistic idea that

women have free will and agency, asserting and illustrating instead that their actions and investments in subject positions are constrained by discourses and meanings surrounding femininity. For example, the thesis has demonstrated how discourses pathologising women's alcohol consumption, those which define all things feminine as inferior, and those which position women who are regarded as 'sexually promiscuous' in derogatory ways, all have a regulatory effect on women's leisure and pleasure (chapters six and seven). Finally, the thesis has not treated language as a vehicle to exploring asymmetrical power relations which reside elsewhere, even though an exploration of women's joint, negotiated experiences did involve the offering of accounts which described 'extra-discursive' events (e.g. instances of male violence). For one, such accounts were not taken at face value. That is not to suggest (as argued previously) that accounts offered *did not* describe real incidents or events (which is difficult to determine anyway, as accounts are always constructed interestedly, and not a particular concern of the research). Rather, the focus of the analyses has, again, been placed primarily upon how such events were constructed and deconstructed by the participants in ways which rationalised, justified and challenged male violence.

However, in turning to a further discussion of the 'internal world' of the 'extra-discursive' (which as argued in chapter four, is strongly interrelated to the 'exterior world'), the thesis may have perhaps benefited from a further incorporation of a psychoanalytic dimension. Feminists have incorporated psychoanalytic ideas into their accounts in order to enrich these and supplement socially-based and structural understanding of gender. In addition, psychoanalytic notions of subjectivity as irrational and non-unitary, have represented an important intellectual undercurrent of poststructuralist and critical enterprises in psychology. In part, analyses presented by the

thesis have drawn upon psychoanalytic ideas. For example, the empirically-based chapters have discussed how the texts gathered and produced by the research have been littered with phallic imagery (e.g. the penis as representing masculinity).

Yet, further than this, feminist authors such as Hollway (1983, 1989, 1995) and Walkerdine (1987) have argued for a greater incorporation of psychoanalytic ideas and concepts into poststructuralist accounts because, for instance, experiences, emotions (e.g. anger, envy, hatred), desires and fantasies are often overlooked or not adequately addressed by these. One reason why an analysis of emotions, desires and fantasies is beneficial to accounts of subjectivties, as highlighted by critical theorists such Parker and Spears (1996), Parker (1997) and Hollway (1989), is that these can reveal much about the lived experience of gender, such as how it feels to be a woman in the present day (e.g. confused, frustrated), or to occupy a certain subject position. In addition, emotions, desires and fantasies can play an important role in the choices that people make, for example, the subject positions that they invest in.

The empirically-based chapters have discussed the feelings of guilt, fear and pleasure described by the participants. Yet, such inter-subjective phenomena was not dealt with to a great extent, mainly through fears that this would result in a slide into the kind of highly psychologised analysis that the thesis was concerned to avoid or move away from. Indeed, one of the reasons why poststructuralist writers have argued against an incorporation of psychoanalytic ideas, preferring to focus instead on surface texts, is that this may promote a slide back into such psychologisation and essentialism (Burr, 1995). Yet, a more thorough exploration of such affective experience could have been beneficial to the thesis. For example, it has been discussed how female pleasures are

undervalued and ignored. Although chapter seven did identify a pleasure discourse as being present in the women's talk around alcohol consumption, a furthering of the journey into this through the incorporation of a psychoanalytic dimension into the analysis may have more adequately addressed a niche and challenged pathologising discourses around women's alcohol consumption. For example, Hollway (1995) argues that one of the benefits of incorporating psychoanalytic ideas into her account of women and heterosexual desire was that this assisted an exploration of pleasure, rather than merely situating this within patriarchal relations and discourses around sexuality. Also, Walkerdine (1989, 1990) and Skeggs (1997) have argued that the construction of classed femininities involves elements of fantasy and projection. For example, Walkerdine (1989) argues that representations of normative femininity based upon upper class ideals (e.g. the concept of the 'lady') constitute a projection of male fantasies, and similarly, Skeggs (1997) argues that middle class constructions of working class subjectivities and behaviours may often include elements of fantasy and the projection of desires. In addition, Skeggs (1997) points out that the experiences of working class women are often pervaded with affective elements such as anxiety, fear and anger. As such, in addition, an incorporation of psychoanalytic ideas into the analysis may have assisted a more thorough journey into classed femininities. To a degree, this could be regarded as being beyond the scope of the thesis which was restricted by time and a word limit, and as such, necessarily had to be focused, for example, around recurring themes and discourses (as discussed). In addition, the extent to which psychoanalysis can be legitimately combined with poststrucuralist approaches continues to be a matter of debate which will no doubt continue for some time. However, this is a consideration which I will take from the research and which will inform future research practice.

9.8 Concluding Remarks

The aim of this final section of the chapter is to review the key discourses around femininity, women and alcohol identified in the research analysis. These include the following:

- Discourses which masculinise alcohol consumption, women who drink and contemporary femininities characterised in part by heavy alcohol consumption (e.g. through the use of male-centred language to describe these women, such as 'ladette'). These discourses reproduce the notion that drinking is 'normal' for men whilst deviant for women;

- Discourses which identify women who drink as putting not only their own health at risk, but also the health of their children (for example, by drinking whilst pregnant). This supports the idea that the most despised kinds of women who drink continue to be those who are mothers (see chapter one) and arguments presented that in Western patriarchal and capitalist societies, women are regarded as responsible carers first and foremost who should not indulge in such male vices and pleasures;

- In addition, the research analysis has identified discourses which identify middle class and professional women as being those most at risk from alcohol problems in contemporary society. As argued, from a feminist perspective, this could read as a backlash response to the numbers of women from this section of society invading male spaces (e.g. the professions) through the use of concepts such as medication

for work-related stress and implicit suggestions that these women can't cope with their responsibilities;

- In contrast, the research analysis has also identified a resistant pleasure discourse which constructs women's drinking in terms of pleasure as opposed to the self-medication of problems;

- Discourses which construct public drinking spaces as instances of public patriarchy wherein women are subjected to the objectifying male gaze, sexual harassment, exclusion, segregation, the regulation of their drinking and in which they are vulnerable to male aggression and violence. This competes with discourses (as evident within the media) which construct drinking culture as becoming increasingly 'feminised'. However, in addition, the research analysis has identified drinking spaces as sites of women's resistance (i.e. where such behaviour on the part of men is actively resisted and challenged);

- Further than this, the research analysis also identified discourses and the use of discursive techniques which detract blame away from the perpetrators of violence, placing blame for harm suffered onto (drinking) women themselves through, for example, notions of irresponsibility and provocation;

- In addition, the research analysis identified dichotomising discourses which construct women as either good girls or whores. Those which position drinking women as sexually promiscuous, in turn, are often drawn upon as a justification for abusive and threatening behaviour on the part of men towards women;

- The investment of women in different and competing discourses around femininity, for example, those which hold onto notions of traditional, passive and respectable femininity and those which can be described as more contemporary or resistant. This characterises feminine subjectivities as contradictory and inconsistent;

- Moreover, the research analysis further explores femininities as multiple and multi-faceted by highlighting discourses around different class groupings (e.g. middle class women as pretentious; working class women as hostile) and how women draw upon these in order to distinguish themselves from other groups of women, thus pointing to the relational construction of feminine identities;

- Discourses which characterise working class drinking culture and femininities located within this as characterised by aggression and violence.

The thesis is not final. In many ways, this opens up a 'can of worms' and hopefully will lead to critical understandings of women's alcohol consumption and the issues surrounding this being brought into a more public arena, competing with existing sexist and damaging practices. Cheers.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1

MEDIA TEXT STUDY – LIST OF ARTICLES AND COMMENTARIES COLLECTED

Broad-sheet/'Quality' Newspapers

1. 'Sex Abuse May Drive Women to Drink' by Tunku Varadarajan, *The Times,* 6th January, 1998.
2. '"Alcohol Fuels Violence" Says Study' (no author cited), *The Independent,* 7th December, 1998.
3. 'Oh God, Where Am I? Who is He?' by Miranda Ingram, *The Guardian,* 31st December, 1998.
4. ' 'Fatal Attraction' by Helen Dunmore, *The Guardian,* 11th November, 1999.
5. 'Boozing Women Behaving Badly' by Richard Reeves, *The Observer,* 12th December, 1999.
6. '"Danger to Foetus" in Glass of Wine' by Sarah Boseley (Health Correspondent), *The Guardian,* 27th January, 2000.
7. 'Glass of White Wine for the Lady' by Libby Brooks, *Guardian Unlimited,* 19th April,
2000.
8. 'Bridget Jones Habit of Rewards Helps Increase Alcohol Intake' by James Meikle, *The Guardian,* 19th April, 2000.
9. 'Hip Tipples' by Richard Benson, *The Guardian,* 12th May, 2000.
10. 'Going Back to the Bottle' by Fiona Morrow, *The Guardian,* 5th June, 2000.
11. 'Glass War' by Sally Weale, *The Guardian,* 20th June, 2000.
12. 'I Drink Therefore I Am' by Nigella Lawson, *The Observer,* 12th November, 2000.
13. 'Urbane Planning' by Michael Jackson, *The Observer,* 12th November, 2000.
14. 'Drink and be Merry' by Laura Hird, *The Guardian,* 16th November, 2000.
15.. 'Booze Nation' by Gary Younge, *The Guardian,* 19th December, 2000.

Tabloid/'Popular' Newspapers

1. 'Drinking is on Rise for Young' (no author cited), *The Daily Star,* 26th March, 1998.
2. 'Stan Beats Ulrika' by Jeremy Armstrong, *The Mirror,* 10th June, 1998.
3. 'Tears and Tantrums as Ulrika and Collymore Have a Bust Up' by Shekar Bhatia, *The Express,* 10th June, 1998.
4. 'Ulrika Heads Home Battered and Bruised' by Ian Gallagher, *The Express,* 11th June, 1998.
5. 'Wild New Ways of the Girls Who Love to be Lads' by John Lyttle, *The Express,* 9th July, 1998.
6. 'Yes , I'm an Alcoholic: Mrs. Merton Star Faces Up to Her Problems' by Oliver Harvey, *The Daily Mail,* 5th August, 1998.
7. 'Revealed: What Too Much Drink Does to You' by Becky Morris, *The Daily Mail,* 1st September, 1998.
8. 'Top School Suspends Drunken Party Girls' by Adam Powell & Kate Hurry, *The Daily Mail,* 6th October, 1999.
9. 'Alcohol is Killing More Men' (no author cited), *The Daily Mail,* 16th November, 1999.

10. 'Pregnant Women Warned: Avoid All Alcohol' by Beezy Marsh (Medial Reporter), *The Daily Mail,* 27th January, 2000.
11. ' 'Girls on the Pull' by Paul Crosbie, *The Sun,* 19th April, 2000.
12. 'Have We Men Reached the Very Bottom of the Barrel?' by Quentin Letts, *The Daily Mail,* 29th August, 2000.
13. 'Shocking Truth About How Women Live: Nearly Half of All Girls Have Drunken Sex and Regret It' by Jenny Forsyth & Emma Shrimsley, *The Sun,* 2nd November, 2000.
14. 'Blokes, Bed and Bacardi Breezers: A Snapshot of a Typical Girls' Night Out' by Jenny Forsyth & Briony Warden, *SunWOMAN,* 8th November, 2000.
15. 'What a Dyer Night' by Robin Perrie, *The Sun,* 30th November, 2000.

APPENDIX 2

IN-VIVO THEMES– MEDIA TEXT STUDY

1. Aggression and violence.
2. Alcoholism.
3. Beverages.
4. Body.
5. Child development.
6. Class.
7. Consumption levels.
8. Consumption patterns.
9. Control.
10. Dangers and risks.
11. Depression.
12. Deviancy.
13. Disinhibition.
14. Double standards.
15. Drinking spaces.
16. Gender neutrality.
17. Guilt.
18. Female liberation.
19. Femininity.
20. Feminisation of drinking culture.
21. Health.
22. Inter-gender competition.
23. Ladettes.
24. Leisure.
25. Marketing.
26. Masculinity.
27. Men.
28. Motherhood.
29. Peer pressure.
30. Pleasure.
31. Rape and sexual abuse.
32. Regulation.
33. Relationships.
34. Sex and sexuality.
35. Stress.
36. Warnings.
37. Work.

APPENDIX 3

Effects on your fertility

A RECENT study has discovered that even low consumption of alcohol — ten glasses of wine a week — can make it harder for a woman to conceive.

The research found that women who drink five units a week are twice as likely to conceive as women drinking ten or more.

Alcohol may disrupt the ability of a fertilised egg to implant in the womb.

Just a few months of heavy drinking can also cause heavy, less regular periods and lower the chances of ovulation, making conception more difficult.

DRINKING to excess in the long term depresses the sperm count.

'It's a secondary effect of liver disorder; moderation is crucial if you want to conceive easily and quickly,' says Professor Ian Craft of the London Fertility Centre.

In persistent heavy drinkers, 'feminisation' of the body occurs — breasts develop and the testicles shrivel as the liver produces globulin, which destroys sex hormones.

'Twenty years hard drinking is needed to achieve this,' says Professor Craft.

Daily Mail, 1st September, 1998.

APPENDIX 4

Daily Mail

THURSDAY, JANUARY 27, 2000 NATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR 35p

Why can you no longer hear an English accent on TV or radio?

PAGE 12

PREGNANT WOMEN WARNED: AVOID ALL ALCOHOL

So
Jer
so

Daily Mail, 27th January, 2000.

APPENDIX 5

Alcohol is killing more men

THE number of middle-aged men dying from alcohol-related diseases has doubled in five years, the Government revealed yesterday.

Last year, alcohol was recorded as a cause of death on the death certificates of 8,228 people in England and Wales.

Of these, [illegible] were men in their forties, compared with 401 males in the same age group who died of alcohol-related diseases in 1993. Eric Appleby, director of Alcohol Concern, last night called for better education about the effects of alcohol.

He urged the Government to appoint a 'czar' to tackle the problem.

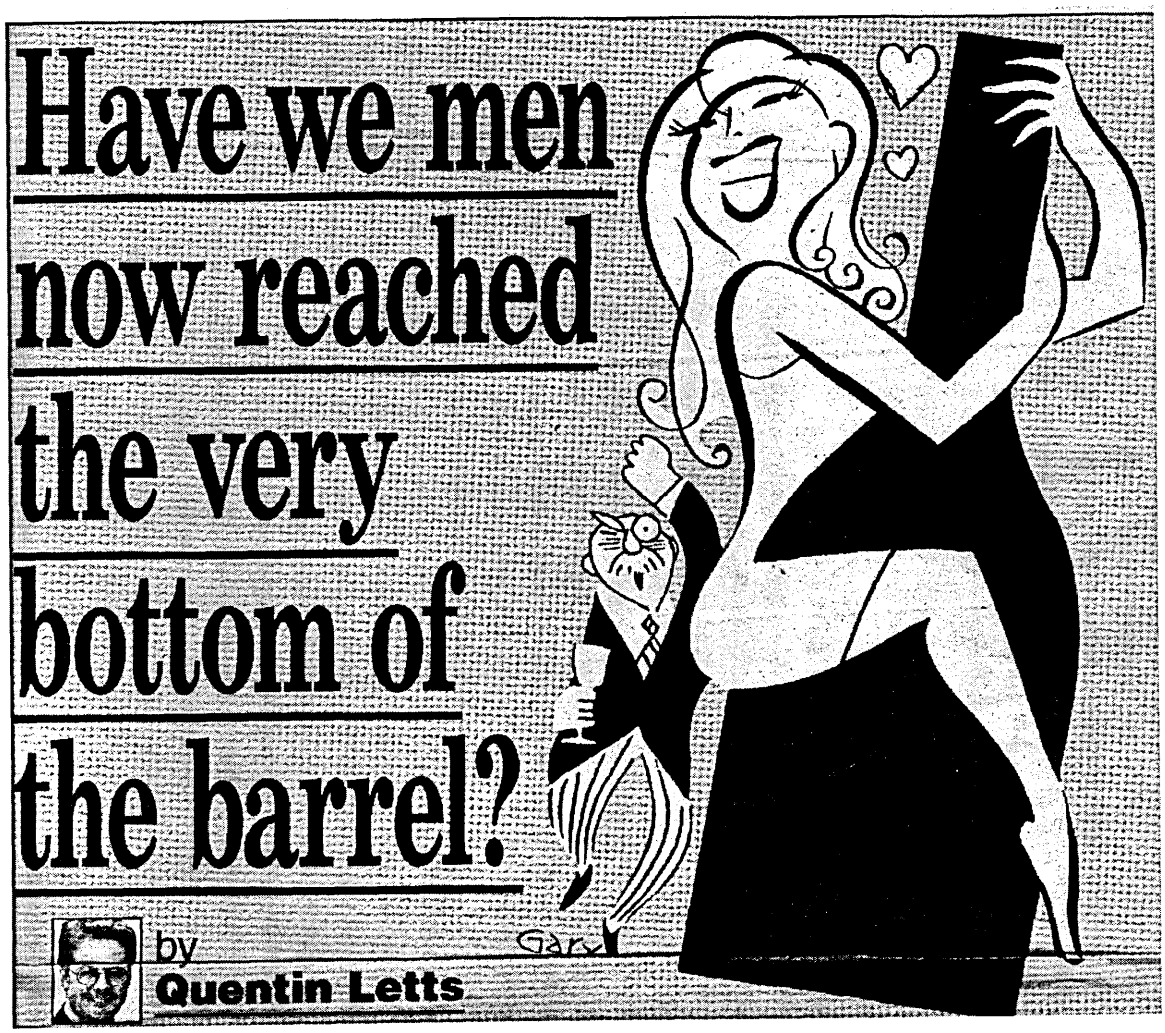
'We have something like £[illegible]million a year spent on advertising and glamorising alcohol,' he told Radio 4's PM programme.

'We need to spend a little bit of money portraying the downside and reminding people of the sort of problems they can get into by drinking.' Experts believe that [illegible] to [illegible] people die every year from alcohol-linked causes. Mr Appleby added: 'It's important that we do record all alcohol-related deaths so we can see what's really happening.'

The Department of Health plans to launch a new strategy to tackle the problem next year, acknowledging that alcohol-related deaths are running at up to three times the level of those caused by drug abuse.

Daily Mail, 16th November, 1999.

APPENDIX 6



Daily Mail, 29th August, 2000.

APPENDIX 7

PARTY: Ulrika Jonsson downs a drink in the Paris bar just before the bust-up

The Express, 10th June, 1998.

APPENDIX 8

QUESTIONNAIRE – WOMENS' DRINKING

This questionnaire is part of an investigation into the drinking habits of women. If you are female, then please would you take a few moments to fill this in. It is intended that the questionnaires will be followed up by a further study involving the conduction of more in-depth interviews. If you would be interested in taking part in this study, and if you feel comfortable enough, please put your name and a number on which you can be contacted. If this would make you feel uncomfortable, then leave out this information, therefore completing the questionnaire anonymously. The questions are open-ended and there is a space provided beneath each one for you to write your response. Thank you.

Personal Information

Name (optional):

Contact Number (optional):

Age:

Occupation:

Questions

1. **Which alcoholic drinks do you prefer and why?**

2. **How often do you visit the following places?**

a) **Pub**

b) **Night club**

c) **Social club (e.g. working men's club)**

d) **Wine bar**

e) **Café bar**

f) **Restaurant**

g) **Other** – please specify

3. **When do you usually get drunk?**

4. **When you go out drinking, who is this usually with?**

5. **What factors affect how much you drink and why?**

6. **When and what do you usually drink at home (if applicable)?**

7. **Please describe a usual week's drinking**

8. **On what occasions do you drink alone (if ever)?**

9. **Do you know how many units you are supposed to have a week, and if so, how many?**

10. **How many units, on average, do you have a week (if you know)?**

11. **Finally, please describe your drinking habits generally and the reasons why you drink?**

I would also like to give you the opportunity, in the space provided, to comment on the questionnaire generally.

Thank you very much for your co-operation.

APPENDIX 9

LETTER WHICH ACCOMPANIED THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Centre For Regional Economic and Social Research
Sheffield Hallam University
City Campus
Howard Street
Sheffield
S1 1WB

0114 225 3562

E-mail: K.L.Day@shu.ac.uk

30th September, 1998

Hello,

My name is Katy Day and I am a research student from Sheffield Hallam University who is currently conducting a research project on women and drinking. As part of this study, I am asking women to fill in a questionnaire about their drinking habits. If you have a few moments, then please would you complete the enclosed questionnaire which can be returned in the pre-paid envelope provided. It is anticipated that a follow-up study involving group discussions with women about drinking will be conducted. If you would be interested in taking part in this study, and if you feel comfortable enough, then please provide your name and a number on which you can be reached. Otherwise, complete the questionnaire anonymously.

The information which you provide will be treated with complete confidentiality and will be available only to myself. You will not be named in the study – indeed, as stated, you don't even have to provide your name if you do not wish to do so. I would like to stress that this is **not** a study about alcoholism, and no judgements will be made with regards to how much you drink.

If you would like further information about this study or have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me on the number provided at the top of the letter.

Thank you

Katy Day

APPENDIX 10

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Drinking Patterns

Prompt: Describe a typical week's drinking or if this varies a lot, describe what you did last week.

2. Types of Beverage

Prompt 1: What kinds of drinks do you prefer and why?

Prompt 2: What kinds of drinks do you dislike and why?

Prompt 3: What kinds of images are portrayed by these?

3. Social Drinking and Solitary Drinking

Prompt 1: How often do you drink alone?

Prompt 2: How often do you drink with others?

Prompt 3: Who do you usually drink with (drinking partners)?

4. Places/Venues

Prompt 1: When you go out drinking, where do you usually go and why?

Prompt 2: Which places do you avoid and why?

5. Drinking Activities

Prompt 1: Describe a typical evening out with friends, colleagues or whoever you usually go out with?

Prompt 2: What kinds of things do you talk about?

Prompt 3: Do you ever play drinking games or anything like that?

6. Aggression

Prompt 1: Do you ever witness any aggressive behaviour when you are out drinking? Describe.

Prompt 2: Do you or the people you go out with ever engage in aggressive behaviour when out drinking? Describe.

7. Sexuality

Prompt 1: Have you or your friends ever gone out on the pull? Describe.

Prompt 2: If not, would you ever do this? Why/why not?

8. Drunkenness

Prompt 1: Do you ever get in a state which you would regard as drunkenness?

Prompt 2: When is this usually?

Prompt 3: Describe what happened the last time you got drunk.

9. Functions

Prompt 1: What does drinking do for you?

Prompt 2: What factors affect how much you drink and why?

10. Men's Drinking

Prompt 1: How would you describe men's drinking?

Prompt 2: Does this differ from the drinking behaviour of women? How? Why?

11. Masculinity

Prompt: What does the term 'masculinity' men to you?

12. Femininity

Prompt: What does the term 'femininity' mean to you?

13. Feminism

Prompt: What does the term 'feminism' mean to you?

14. Social Change

Prompt: Do you think that women's drinking patterns and behaviours have changed over, say, the past 50 years? How? Why?

APPENDIX 11

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

(.) Short pause (less than 1 second).

(1.0) Timed pause in seconds.

[(.)] Pause not timed.

[...] Material deliberately omitted.

(..) Material omitted due to inaudibility.

(\\) Start of overlap between speakers.

(\\) (..) Inaudible due to overlap between speakers.

(...) Talk trailed off mid-sentence.

[text] Clarificatory information.

<u>text</u> Emphasised by speaker.

(yes), (hmm) Comments made by researcher.

APPENDIX 12

SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Focus Group: SY1

DATE: Tuesday, 10th November, 1998.
DURATION: 1 hour, 10 mins.
PLACE: Sheffield Hallam University.

KD: Just going back to beverage preference before we move on, has anyone, does anybody have anything else to say about that?
Rebecca: Yeah, I like the taste.
Sara: I don't like the taste.
Clare: I don't drink lager because that makes me burp.
Sara: Yeah, it makes me burp as well.
Amanda: I drink quite a lot of different things really.
Sara: Yeah, I do as well.
Amanda: I drink Guinness sometimes.
Sara: I think it depends on the situation, what you drink (Yeah) (\\) (..). If you're just having a last orders drink, you go for, I'd drink something like Baileys, if it was last orders in the pub, if you're just going for one drink out at the end of the evening, I'd go for Baileys or Contreau, spirits, a nice warming spirit, whereas if you're going out for a big piss up night, you generally, I drink Pernod, I drink shorts, which will get me pissed (\\) (*Clare:* Yeah). Whereas if I'm going out for sort of a social drink, most of the night I'll drink beer (\\) (*Clare:* Yeah, they're longer drinks), yeah because they last longer, so I think it's different.
Clare: But then it's also, I think what we do depends on price as well, cos when we go out, we drink whatever the special is regardless of whether we like it or not, cos, you know like that horrible lager? (Yeah) It's like poison and it always gives me a massive hangover, but it's one fifty a bottle, and how cheap is that?
KD: Do you drink pints?
(\\) *Sara* and *Clare:* Yeah.
Rebecca: I would automatically go to the bar and get a pint first off, that would be (\\) (..)
Sara: I drink half quite a lot though.
Amanda: Oh I'd get a pint of lager. If I'd just met someone, it was eight o'clock and I didn't know what I was doing, I think I'd automatically get a pint.
Sara: I'd automatically get a half, just because I'm a lightweight, because I'm a lightweight and get pissed more easily than other people (1.0). I don't know. I probably don't, but I quite often get a half and then I'll move on to pints, or I'll get a pint and then move on to halves. I very rarely drink pints all the way through the night, although I have changed a lot though recently (Yeah), because I never used to, when I lived with Alan, I never drank pints at all, whereas now I drink pints but (...)
Rebecca: I think if you're staying in, like if you all come round to somebody's house, (\\) (*Sara and Clare:* You drink wine) you drink wine, yeah. Whereas the other night when we went to, we went to the White Swan [a pub in Sheffield] and then we went to The Palace [night club in Sheffield], I drank vodka straight away, I had a double vodka

and coke straight away, because you had already had something to drink, so I automatically went, but then I carried on drinking throughout the night.
Sara: It does totally depend on your situation, and your circumstance (\\) (*Claire:* But)
Clare: But we don't tend to mix do we, I tend to stick on what I'm drinking all night.
Sara: Oh no I don't.
Amanda: I just don't mix certain things.
Clare: If I've started on bitter, then I really do try to stick with bitter all the way through.
Sara: Oh no, that night I had in London I started on cocktails, had champagne, had red wine, had white wine.
Clare: But then up to a point, when you've had that many, then you just think, "Oh well it doesn't matter", but on a normal night, on a normal night (...)
Sara: I usually (1.0) stick with lager and then perhaps go on to shorts.
Amanda: I have lager and shorts, or wine and shorts.
KD: Do you ever choose drinks because of image, for image sake?
(1.0)
Sara: I think when I'm with my brother I probably do, when I (\\) (*Clare:* There's an image thing in London) yeah, there's certain types of bottled beers, you can't drink Bud [Budweiser].
KD: Why?
Sara: Don't know.
Clare: But here [in Sheffield], here it's not an issue what you drink, is it?
Amanda: Mind you I won't drink, if I was going out with a big group of, I wouldn't order a Baileys, and like, if everyone's going out for a big night, I wouldn't order, I'd try not to order a <u>really girlie drink</u> either, I wouldn't order Archers, I wouldn't order Taboo.
Sara: White wine spritzer.
Amanda: I wouldn't order a white wine spritzer.
KD: That's really interesting. So you think that they're girlie drinks?
Amanda: I'd call that a girlie drink. I'd wanna be more like one of the boys. I think, that's why I drink, well, I think of it as, as like a girlie drink.
Sara: I think of it as a girlie drink.
KD: So do you think you are trying to get away from that, from that traditional feminine image?
Amanda: Well I think it looks more, more, sort of, I don't know (2.0) yeah, I suppose it is.
Clare: You get the piss taken out of you (\\) (..). When I was in London in the summer, I, I wanted to have a cold drink but I don't like lager very much, so I got a white wine spritzer, and I got the piss taken out of me <u>badly</u> on that occasion .
Sara: But did you stop drinking them though?
Clare: No.
KD: Why do you think that was?
(2.0)
Clare: Oh, cos I guess they're not used to it, they're used to me matching them pint for pint, but suddenly I decided it was hot and I wanted something (...)
KD: So who were you with?
Clare: Old university mates.
KD: Male?
Clare: Yeah.

Sara: I think there's a different image (\\) (*Clare:* But they put on quite a lot of pressure don't they? Like if I go down to halves, then you, then y'know) my brother gave me a lot of pressure when I was drinking halves (\\) (*Clare:* But you don't want a half really, you want a pint).
Amanda: But that's the thing about girls you see, you want to look like you can keep up, and you can, you're drinking a proper drink, I think because it looks more sort of, I don't want to say streetwise, but I, I can't think of an expression. I mean it's not trying to be one of the gang either, but it does look, even though I never think about it at all actually.
Rebecca: When I go home to my parent's (\\) (*Sara:* I was just gonna say my parents) I still would automatically order, drink bitter, and then I suddenly realise I'm down South, and it will taste like shit, and so I'll change my mind, but I would still automatically, stick to the same drinks because (...)
Sara: I wouldn't you see, I drink totally different drinks with my parents, I would never drink a pint of lager with my parents, I'd drink (2.0) champagne [laughing]
K.D.: Really?
Amanda: Is your mother Camilla Parker Bowles? [laughing].
Sara: No, I'm much more likely to drink wine of some description.
Rebecca: In the house I would, cos my parents live near a port, and they go over to France, and they get loads of cheap wine and booze, but they still always bring me back a crate of Bud [Budweiser], and I get, or Boddingtons [a brand of bitter], and my sister gets a crate of Stella [Stella Artoir - a brand of lager], so they still, they know I drink Boddingtons, and my sister after being in Manchester for a while drinks that as well, so they still bring us back that, and so, I walk through the door, having come back on the train sometimes from Sheffield, and they will say "Oh, Rebecca, there's two Boddingtons in the fridge".
Clare: Oh no, my mother, every time I speak to her, she's worried that I'm drinking too much, cos she thinks I have a tendency to really like alcohol too much.
Sara: I drink gin and tonics and stuff with my parents as well, in the early evening before dinner. (1.0) My brother drinks beer at home, but I'm more encouraged to drink wine, I don't know, I don't think my parents do it consciously, but (...)
Amanda: My parents don't have a sort of drinking culture (*Sara:* No, mine don't have either) It not like at five o'clock we're always drinking or we always have these drinks, I mean my dad likes a drink, and he'll go out and buy lager and Guinness, and wine, but it's not a kind of routine thing.
Sara: Do you have alcohol in the house then generally?
Amanda: They've got a really like dusty old drinks cabinet.
Clare: [laughing] Yeah.
Sara: We constantly have alcohol in the house, cos we have like a whole, erm, wine rack in the garage and beer and then, and then there's a whole other cupboard full of spirits like gin, and so there's loads, so you can have, literally, there's any alcoholic drink that you want, if you want Bailey's or (...)
Clare: But I mean with my friends, with my friends, we went through a phase, not so much recently, but, we were really worrying about how much we drank (2.0) cos it had totally accelerated from what we all used to drink at university, and we thought "God, we must cut down the amount of drink". That's become quite a regular conversation every time I see them (\\) (..) especially after a certain age, people start looking at their bellies.
K.D : Looking at their bellies?
Clare: Yeah.

K.D: Why? Do you mean like their putting on weight?
Clare: Yeah, they're getting a bit of a tummy, and we've talked about that before, haven't we though? [addressed to another participant].
Sara: I worry occasionally, because you shouldn't binge, and that's what I do.
Rebecca: We had a lot in summer, and when we started to cut down a little bit after that, I began to think "Oh my God, I've put so much weight on from drinking so much", and, I don't know.
Clare: I definitely try to eat healthily to make up, and that's why I started doing all that exercise, cos I thought, "I'm drinking a lot, I really need to sort of (...)"
Sara: Really, is that what you were conscious of?
Clare: One of the, one of the reasons, yeah.
(3.0)
K.D.: When you go out drinking, who do you usually go out drinking with?
[laughing]
Sara: Friends really, yeah.
Rebecca: People from my department, people from (...)
Sara: It's usually boys and girls together.
Amanda: I don't actually drink with people I work with, but I suppose we're in a weird situation anyway.
(2.0)
Rebecca: Yeah, I suppose I'm quite lucky really. In our department, we have all gone out regularly together, right from the start, we've always been out together.
Clare: But we don't really drink with the rest of SRC [name of research centre] though do we? [question addressed to Sara].
Sara: Mick I suppose.
Clare: But he's a research student (*Clare:* Oh, yeah), I'm thinking more of staff.
Amanda: I don't drink with the staff that I work with.
(3.0)
K.D.: So do the groups you go out with tend to be mixed sex? I think someone mentioned that earlier.
Sara: Yeah, definitely. We very rarely go out on a girlie night unless (\\) (*Amanda:* We're more likely to have a girlie night in really aren't we?) yeah, or maybe it will start as a girlie night and then maybe meet up with the lads later on, if we're going out locally for a drink, but very rarely is it all girls, yeah, it's generally, I mean sometimes it's more men (*Others:* Yeah).
Rebecca: I mean, for my first two years at Sheffield Uni, it was, I didn't know any other girls. Gail occasionally, but especially my first year, there was me and about ten other blokes. So I mean in my department, until Jane started as well, I was the only girl with ten blokes.
Clare: But I mean when, when, when we phone each other up to go out, I never just think "Oh we're just going out to drink", I always think we're going out (\\) (..) and we might go somewhere else.
Sara: It's just to catch up on what everyone's been doing really, isn't it?
Everyone: Yeah.
Amanda: Though I sometimes think "I really want to go out and drink a lot tonight" (*Sara:* Hmm), if it's a Saturday or Friday.
Clare: Yeah, but we like going for a dance as well, or (...)
Sara: Oh no, on Saturday all I wanted to do was get pissed, that is, when we were in Cambridge, that was all I wanted to do, just get pissed.
Amanda: Sometimes I think like that, I really wanna just be, totally not (\\) (..)

Sara: Alcohol, alcohol.
Rebecca: If you're just have a good time, you don't think about anything, you don't think about work, or anything, it's just having a good time (*Others:* Yeah).
Sara: Oh yeah, we did want to dance didn't we? Always when I'm drunk, I always want to dance, I always want to dance because I just love dancing.
Clare: I was thinking, (1.0) yeah (1.0) hmm, definitely New Year, I go out to get totally, I don't, you know, I don't want to even be there for twelve o'clock, I just want to get pissed totally. I don't know on a Saturday night, because my motivation is (...)
Sara: Oh I do.
Amanda: If I've worked, then I get really quite sort of pent up.
Sara: Cos then Sunday, all you can do is lie in bed, and nurse your hangover, and it's wonderful [laughing] have someone bringing you a cooked breakfast.
Amanda: I don't look forward to that side of it [laughing]
Clare: I hate that side of it too.
(3.0)
K.D.: Do you go out drinking with Robert? [Sara's boyfriend]
Sara: Yeah, quite a lot.
K.D.: Just the two of you though?
Sara: Erm (2.0) we're more likely to stay in and drink, just the two of us, or he's more likely to be pissed, and then I'll go round and catch up (3.0) or (2.0) I don't know (...)
Clare: Can you ever go out with him and not get pissed with him, can you like just go out for an evening, and just not drink at all?
Sara: Well, yeah, we'll go out for coffee sometimes, but that's more of an afternoon thing.
Clare: In the evening?
Sara: Early evening maybe.
Amanda: Could you go out for a meal at say seven o'clock, and have a whole meal, and then not go to a pub afterwards, and not drink, and drive home?
Rebecca: Never.
Sara: I could if I was driving, I wouldn't drink all night.
Amanda: No, and him?
Sara: No [laughing], not if we were going to the pub. There's no point. What's the point of going to the pub if you're not gonna drink? (1.0) It's probably a bad thing to say, but (...)
Amanda: But I suppose you do sometimes though.

APPENDIX 13

LIST OF IN-VIVO THEMES – FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In-vivo themes discussed in chapter 6:

1. Aggression and violence
2. Class
3. Drinking and mood
4. Drinking cultures
5. Drinking partners
6. Drinking patterns
7. Drinking and space
8. Drunkenness
9. Functions
10. Mates
11. Men
12. Motherhood
13. Motivations
14. Pints
15. Places
16. Pleasure
17. Problem drinking
18. Relationships
19. Sex and sexuality
20. Social change
21. Social influence
22. Solitary drinking
23. Women
24. Work

In-vivo themes discussed in chapter 7:

1. Aggression and violence
2. Body Image
3. Class
4. Drinking cultures
5. Drinking partners
6. Drinking patterns
7. Drinking and space
8. Drunkenness
9. Femininity
10. Feminism and feminists
11. Functions
12. Masculinity
13. Mates
14. Men
15. Motivations
16. Pints

17. Places
18. Pleasure
19. Relationships
20. Romanticism and chivalry
21. Sex and sexuality
22. Social influence
23. Students
24. Types of beverages
25. Women

APPENDIX 14

SAMPLE OF ANALYSIS FOR ONE THEME

FOCUS GROUP: WY1
THEME : PINTS

1.*K.D:* Do you think feminism relates to women and alcohol in any way?
2.*Karen:* No.
3.*Janice:* No.
4.*Karen:* Apart from that feminists, feminists probably think they're equally allowed
5.to go into a working man's club, an drink a pint.
6.*Janice:* Bernie, I think of Bernie.
7.*Karen:* They won't serve, they won't serve a woman a pint in a working man's club,
8. they'll only serve a half, or give you a half pint glass to drink it out of.
9.*Vicky:* Won't they?
10.*Karen:* No.
11.*Janice:* Really.
12.*Karen:* No cos like, it's a totally, it's a masculine thing.
13.*Janice:* So if you go to a working men's club an say, "Can I ave a pint of bitter?" (...)
14.*Karen:* If they think it's for you, then they'll say, "Do you want, don't you want a
15.half pint glass?" An if you say, "No", then it's like, you're not supposed to.
16.*Janice:* That's what they all do though in their training though, sort of like bar
17.owners, they'll say, "When it comes to a lady, ask her if she wants a half". Cos
18.they do that in bars, I've worked in bars, an they do do that. So I don't think it's
19.just in working men's clubs.
20.*Karen:* It's an unspoken rule in a working man's club that you can't get a pint.
21.You can't, like when I used to drink bitter, right, when I was like sixteen years old,
22.I remember going to the working men's club an saying, "Can I ave a pint of
23.bitter?" An he said, "Who's it for?" An I said, "For me", an I ad no idea, an he said
24."Well do you want a half pint glass with it?" An I went, "No", an he said, "Well, I
25.think you really should ave a half pint glass".
26.*Janice:* They do.
27.*Karen:* An I couldn't understand what the fuck he were on about, an I was goin,
28."Can't you just give me a pint of beer?" An he's goin, "No, y'know, you're a lady,
29.an you can't do that".
30.*Janice:* Yeah, they do, they really stress to recommend it.
31.*Karen:* I mean, it's a fuckin drink, it's comes down to the size of a glass. Does it
32.make them any less of a man, cos a woman drinking out of a pint glass?
33.*Janice:* But that's like when I was training how to pull pints at The Brown Cow [pub
34. in Leeds city centre], y'know, down the bottom of Briggate [main street in Leeds city 35.centre]. An they used to say, "When it comes to a lady, an they say, "Pint of bitter", an 36.they ask for it, say, "Is it for yourself?" An I used to think, "Come on, who gives a 37.shite". If she ask for a pint, I'll give her a pint.
38.*Joanne:* I don't like those adverts me, Boddingtons.
39.*Karen:* I used to work in a Rugby club (..) I used to give them ought they fuckin
40.wanted.

Janice: I remember doin a stint for a couple of weeks at The Globe [pub near Leeds University], an in places like that they don't give a shit, y'know what a mean? But when it comes to like traditional pubs, they always go, "Oh, is that for a lady?" It's like, "Oh, no, if people want a pint, they want a pint, what should it matter".

Identified ways of talking about pints:

Type 1: Feminism doesn't relate to women and alcohol in any way

K.D: Do you think feminism relates to women and alcohol in any way?
Karen: No.
Janice: No.
(1-3)

Type 2: Feminists probably think that they're equally allowed to go into a W.M.C. and drink a pint

Despite initially saying that feminism did not relate to women and alcohol in any way, the respondents then went on to discuss how feminists probably think that they are equally entitled (as men) to drink a pint in a working men's club
Karen: Apart from that feminists, feminists probably think they're equally allowed to go into a working man's club, an drink a pint
(4/5)

Type 3: They won't serve a woman a pint in a W.M.C.

Karen: They won't serve, they won't serve a woman a pint in a working man's club, they'll only serve a half, or give you a half pint glass to drink it out of
(7/8)

Type 4: Drinking pints is a masculine thing

In discussion of why the above is the case, it was proposed that this is because drinking a pint is associated with masculinity
Karen: No cos like, it's a totally, it's a masculine thing
(12)

Type 5: Bar staff are instructed to to ask women if they want a half

Janice: That's what they all do though in their training though, sort of like bar owners, they'll say, "When it comes to a lady, ask her if she want a half". Cos they do that in bars, I've worked in bars, an they do do that. So I don't think it's just in working men's clubs
(16-19)

Type 6: Some establishments are reluctant to serve women pints

See above quote

Type 7: It's not just W.M.C.s that are reluctant to serve women pints

See quote for type 6

Type 8: It's an unspoken rule in W.M.C.s that women can't order a pint

Karen: It's an unspoken rule in a working man's club that you can't get a pint
(20)

Type 9: It's about the size of a glass

Karen: I mean, it's a fuckin drink, it comes down to the size of a glass
(31)

Type 10: Women drinking pints can undermine masculinity

Karen: Does it make them any less of a man, cos a woman's drinking out of a pint glass? (31/32)

Type 11: If a woman asks for a pint, she should be served a pint

Janice: [talking about a time when she was training to be a bar person] *An they* [manager/s] *used to say, "When it comes to a lady, an they say, "Pint of bitter", an they ask for it, say, "Is it for yourself?" An I used to think, "Come on, who gives a shite". If she asks for a pint, I'll give her a pint*
(35-37)

Karen: I used to work in a Rugby club (..) I used to give them ought they fuckin wanted
(39/40)

Type 12: Some advertisements for alcohol are objectionable

Joanne: I don't like those adverts me, Boddingtons
(38)

Type 13: They'll serve women pints in student places

One participant, who had worked as a bar person in a range of establishments, pointed out that such rules around women and pint drinking don't apply in student places:
Janice: I remember doing a stint for a couple of weeks at The Faversham [student pub situated near Leeds University] *an in places like that, they don't give a shit*
(41/42)

Type 14: Traditional pubs are reluctant to serve women pints

Janice: But when it comes to like traditional pubs, they always go, "Oh, is that for a lady?" It's like, "Oh no, if people want a pint, they want a pint, what should it matter."
(43-45)

Type 15: If people want a pint, they should be served a pint

See above quote

Links with other themes:

- Places
- Men
- Drinking and space

Cross referencing between different types:

Primary Groups:

Objectionable:

Type 6: Some establishments are reluctant to serve women pints.
Type 3: They won't serve a woman a pint in a W.M.C.
Type 8: It's an unspoken rule in a W.M.C. that you can't get a pint.
Type 7: It's not just W.M.C.s that are reluctant to serve ladies pints.
Type 14: Traditional pubs are reluctant to serve women pints.
Type 5: Bar staff are instructed to ask women if they want a half.
Type 4: Drinking pints is a masculine thing.
Type 10: Women drinking pints can undermine masculinity.

Permissive:

Type 15: If people want a pint, they should be served a pint.
Type 11: If a woman asks for a pint, she should be served a pint.
Type 2: Feminists probably think that they're equally allowed to go into a W.M.C. and drink a pint.
Type 13: They'll serve women pints in student places.

Discussion of Discursive Patterns:

Pint drinking: a masculine activity
There was strong evidence here of a discourse which links the drinking of pints to masculinity. The participants discussed the reasons why certain establishments (W.M.C.s, traditional pubs and certain bars) are reluctant to serve women pints. During this discussion, it was offered that the reason for this is that drinking pints is a masculine activity and as such, one which "ladies" should not indulge in. The usage of language is interesting here, in that the words "lady" and "ladies" were used during accounts given of instances when the participants had experienced reluctance from bar staff to serve them a pint, and also, when the participants, during training as bar staff themselves, had been instructed to question pint orders from "ladies". The usage of such language (as opposed to, for example, "woman" or "women") appears to suggest a stronger element of femininity, as such terms, which originate as a referral to women of an aristocratic background, conjure up images of elegance, high social standing and "traditional" forms of femininity.

Reference was also made to a recent advertising campaign by Boddingtons. Two recent advertising campaigns by other breweries have explicitly linked the drinking of pints to masculinity. A recent Mansfield's advert features the slogan "Man's world, Man's pint, Mansfield", whilst displaying a pint of Mansfield bitter. Similarly, a recent advertising campaign by Worthington's features the slogan "It's a man's thing", whilst also displaying a pint of bitter. It is suspected here that the respondent who referred to the Boddington's advert [Joanne] had these two advertising campaigns in mind, and pointed to the wrong brewery [recent Boddington's adverts do not make such an explicit link between pint drinking and masculinity] due to the context of the talk, which was, at the time, about the links between pint drinking and masculinity.

Masculinity as constructed in relation to "Other"

Interestingly, one of the participants remarked, "*Does it make them any less of a man, cos a woman's drinking out of a pint glass?*". There are a number of implications here. Firstly, and most obviously, a further link is drawn between the drinking of pints and masculinity. However, this statement also suggests that masculine identities are constructed in relation to Other (e.g. Gough & Edwards, 1998), the "other" in this case being women, in that the (drinking) behaviour of women is a reflection of their masculinity. It is implicated here that pint drinking is seen as a male/masculine preserve, and that indulgence by women to a degree removes this from men. A further deduction which can be drawn from this statement is that there is evidence of resistance/a resistant discourse with regards to the link between pint drinking and masculinity, and the reluctance of certain establishments to serve women pints. This will be discussed further under the next sub-heading.

Resistant discourse

A number of statements in the chunk of text currently being discussed can be taken as evidence of a resistant discourse regarding the link between masculinity and pint drinking and the reluctance of certain establishments to serve women pints. Firstly (as already briefly discussed), pint drinking on the part of women as a challenge to men's masculinity is discussed/constructed, and also, suggested as absurd. Furthermore, the suggested significance of the drinking of pints in relation to masculinity is challenged, in that "*it's a fuckin drink, it comes down to the size of a glass*". One participant stated that she doesn't like recent advertising campaigns which overtly link pint drinking to masculinity (as already discussed).

More over, it was strongly asserted at points during this chunk of text that if a woman wants to drink a pint, then she should be served a pint, and also, one participant who had worked behind a bar retorted that she had no qualms in serving women pints without question. An association was also made between feminism and women as pint drinkers, in that it was suggested that feminists probably think that they are equally entitled (as men) to go into a W.M.C. and drink a pint. This is interesting in that there is a suggestion here that women's drinking behaviour can be regarded as a site for feminist struggles.

Construction of difference between drinking establishments

Whilst cross-referencing between the different ways of talking about the theme "pints", certain types of drinking establishments which were discussed during this chunk of text could be grouped together and contrasted with other establishments. Namely, "W.M.C.s", "traditional pubs" and "certain bars" were placed together as places which

were discussed as often being reluctant to serve women pints. These places were contrasted with "student places", which were discussed as being much more relaxed in terms of serving pints to women. Therefore, in summary, talk here constructs differences between certain kinds of drinking establishments in terms of their approach to serving pints to women, with "student places" being constructed as more relaxed, and perhaps more "politically correct".

There are a number if important points here:

1. There is a strong societal discourse linking pint drinking with masculinity, as evidenced by the current text, and by recent text which can be seen in the media (e.g. the Mansfield and Worthington's recent advertising campaigns; the labelling of women who drink pints as "geezer birds" and "ladettes").
2. There is talk around control exercised in certain drinking establishments over the drinking behaviour of women (e.g. by questioning orders of pints). This, along with recent media text (e.g. recent advertising campaigns) could be read as part of an effort in society to maintain traditional forms of femininity/feminine behaviour, and part of an anti-feminist backlash (Faludi, 1992).
3. There is evidence to support arguments presented by those such as Gough & Edwards (1998) and Kaminer & Dixon (1995) that talk around drinking and drink-related activities offers a useful site for the investigation of masculine identities, due to the strong connection between pint drinking and masculinity uncovered here.
4. There is evidence here to support arguments presented by those such as Gough & Edwards (1998) that masculinity is constructed in relation to "Other".
5. There is a suggestion in the text that women's drinking can be a site of resistance.