

## **Drinking places**

### **Where people drink and why**

*Gill Valentine, Sarah L. Holloway, Mark Jayne and Charlotte Knell*

Over the past decade our patterns of drinking alcohol have been transformed. 'Night-time economies' have brought corporate themed pubs and hybrid café/bar/clubs to city centres. The proportion of women drinking above safe levels has increased dramatically. Drinking is also increasingly popular among young people. Concern about 'binge' drinking, alcohol-fuelled disorder on the streets and the impact of alcohol on illness, injury and poor work performance is widespread.

But whilst it is well-established that attitudes to alcohol vary by social group, there is a lack of research which gives an overview of how local populations drink within their own areas.

This report investigates the links between alcohol and where people drink it in two contrasting communities, one urban and one rural. Looking at a range of drinking practices, from abstinence to bingeing, the project:

- Explores how socio-economic processes shape place-specific cultures of alcohol consumption
- Evaluates the benefits and problems associated with alcohol use
- Examines how attitudes to, and use of, alcohol vary across social groupings both within, and between, the two communities
- Explores the extent to which attitudes to, and use of, alcohol have changed between generations and the impact of local history on those attitudes
- Identifies the policy implications of the local specificity of drinking cultures.

The fieldwork took place before the new licensing laws took effect in November 2005. The report therefore looks at a vital period in the history of the UK's licensing policy, capturing local debates about national policy and people's drinking practices before the implementation of the new regulatory framework.



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# Executive summary

The Government's recent relaxation of the licensing laws has focused attention on binge drinking by young people in public places. This study examined alcohol consumption in two contrasting geographical areas (one urban, one rural), including attitudes to and use of alcohol across various social groupings, by age, gender, social class and faith.

## Key points

The priority given to public drinking - particularly young people's binge drinking – by government policy and the media has detracted attention from a much broader spectrum of the population's routine domestic drinking practices.

Binge drinking, though technically referring to episodic heavy alcohol consumption, has come in cultural terms to mean high levels of drinking by young people on the streets of urban Britain. This has left many people who consume high levels of alcohol in very different social circumstances feeling unwarrantedly insulated from concern. In the study, many whose home consumption far exceeded government-recommended weekly limits continued to regard their own drinking practices as unremarkable.

Drinking cultures are not uniform across the country, but are embedded within wider historical, socio-economic and cultural contexts. The research identified clear differences in tolerance thresholds and expectations of appropriate behaviour between urban Stoke-on-Trent and rural Eden in Cumbria.

Important differences in the ways that men and women drank also indicate that alcohol strategies need to be nuanced to account for these gender differences.

Home was where young people increasingly learned to drink. As such, young people's drinking habits need to be understood and addressed in relation to their parents' attitudes to and use of alcohol, and the wider changing nature of intergenerational relationships and parenting practices.

Strategies to revitalise the urban night-time economy predicated on alcohol implicitly exclude faith communities such as Muslims, which contributes to social segregation.

The researchers suggest that more recognition is needed of how national alcohol strategies might be interpreted differently or have a different impact on specific locales. This is particularly pertinent in the light of the Licensing Act 2003, which has given local authorities more power to potentially dictate local licensing strategies. Geographical disparities may thus emerge in approaches to regulating and policing alcohol consumption.



# 1 Background to the study

The past decade has seen a transformation in landscapes of drinking. Faced with the decline of traditional industries many UK cities have sought to reinvent themselves as places of consumption (Bell and Valentine, 1997; Wynne and O'Connor, 1998). This has been achieved by developing night-time economies aimed at new post-industrial populations (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003). Alongside, or in place of, traditional pubs and working men's clubs new corporate themed pubs, and hybrid café/bar/club venues have emerged targeting a more diverse clientele including women, and students (Newburn and Shiner, 2001). In November 2005, the UK initiated its first major relaxation of alcohol licensing for almost a century.

These changes in the public consumption landscape have prompted concern about alcohol-fuelled disorder on the streets and led to conflict between night-life active groups and other residents as late-night venues have encroached upon traditional residential areas (Morgan, 1997; Jayne *et al.*, 2006). This tension between the potential benefits and potential problems associated with alcohol was reflected in the White Paper *Time for Reform* (Home Office, 2000) and subsequent *Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England* (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2004) and Licensing Act 2003 which simplified the procedures for the sale of alcohol to encourage more and later, night-time activity, whilst at the same time giving the police tougher powers to deal with disorder. Bound up with these goals has been a movement towards increasing the management of alcohol related issues at a local level. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 brought about a shift towards strategic partnerships within local government and policing, aiming to focus responsibility for managing crime and disorder reduction within the realm of public and private sector bodies with a relevant interest. The involvement of police, health, education, and church bodies in addition to parties from the local drinks industry, local action groups and transport services aims to create a joined-up approach to crime and disorder reduction strategies. In this context, local authorities have sought to balance their entrepreneurial role with maintaining order by restricting the growth of drinking outlets, passing bye-laws to curb drinking on the streets and creating multi-agency teams to tackle disorder.

Transformations in consumption landscapes are also bound up with changing social patterns of drinking. Traditionally heavy drinking has been the preserve of men and associated with men's work rituals (Gusfield, 1987). Today, the feminisation of the labour market means women have more income and opportunities to drink. As such the proportion of women drinking above safe levels has increased by 70 per cent since 1988 (ONS, 2001). Drinking is also an increasingly popular leisure activity among young people. In the 1930s the 18–24 year old age group were the lightest

drinkers, by the 1990s they were the heaviest (Institute for Alcohol Studies, 1999). Such patterns have raised widespread concern about what has been dubbed 'binge' drinking, and in particular the wider consequences of such social patterns of drinking (Valentine *et al.*, 2006) in terms of alcohol related illness and injury, and absenteeism and poor work performance. The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (2004) has estimated the hidden 'cost' of drinking to the country at £20 billion pounds per year.

Patterns of alcohol consumption, and societal responses to them, vary with class. Historically, the Temperance Movement was concerned with links between drinking and poverty (Kneale, 2001), with organisations such as the Band of Hope being set up to teach working class children about the dangers of drink. In contrast, drinking by the middle classes is commonly interpreted through medical discourses (Hunt, 1991). The role of religion in shaping attitudes to alcohol is not only apparent in the involvement of some branches of Christianity in the Temperance Movement. All the main religions in South Asia condemn the use of alcohol, although in practice it is only among Muslims that abstinence is widespread (McKeigue and Karmi, 1993). Nonetheless some still drink: a study of Muslims in Birmingham found that 10 per cent of men reported consuming alcohol in the previous year; among these men average alcohol consumption was also high (Cochrane and Bal, 1990). Specialist agencies (e.g. Alcohol East) have emerged to address this issue (Shaikh and Reading, 1999).

Whilst it is well established that attitudes to, and use of alcohol, vary by social group there is a paucity of research that takes a holistic approach across social groupings within particular place-specific communities, and that considers a range of drinking practices from abstinence to bingeing. Alongside this neglect there is a lack of attention to intergenerational continuity and change in attitudes to, and use of, alcohol. This report therefore investigates place-specific cultures of alcohol consumption in two contrasting geographical communities.

## Research aims

The key aims of this research project were as follows.

- 1 To explore the impact of socio-economic processes in shaping place-specific cultures of alcohol consumption in two contrasting geographical communities.
- 2 To evaluate the benefits/problems associated with alcohol use in these communities.

- 3 To examine contemporary variations in attitudes to, and use of, alcohol across diverse social groupings (age, gender, social class and faith) both within, and between, two contrasting communities.
- 4 To locate changing intergenerational patterns and cultures of alcohol consumption within the historical geography of these communities.
- 5 To identify the implications of the local specificity of drinking cultures for policy.

## **The study setting**

The study was conducted in two contrasting geographical communities. Stoke-on-Trent is a deprived urban area with higher than national average levels of alcohol consumption and a changing consumption landscape. The District of Eden, Cumbria, is an isolated rural area where the centrality of the pub in village life has historically been linked with the development of a strong temperance movement.

### **Stoke-on-Trent**

Stoke-on-Trent, a city of around 250,000 people is located in the English Midlands and sits between Birmingham and Manchester. This is a traditional working class area, that today experiences significant levels of deprivation. This deprivation takes multiple forms. Economically, the area has higher than national average levels of unemployment, and a significant proportion of the population have no qualifications (43 per cent compared to the national average 29 per cent). Deprivation is also reflected in the health of the local population: mortality is higher than average in this area, as is the prevalence of limiting long-term illness (24 per cent compared to the national average of 18 per cent) (ONS, 2001). Stoke-on-Trent has a significant population from minority ethnic groups. For example, the proportion of the population who identified themselves as Pakistani in the 2001 census is nearly double the national average (ONS, 2001). There is also a significant population of asylum seekers. North Staffordshire has been specifically identified as a cluster area in the National Asylum Support Service's dispersal policy.

Stoke-on-Trent's *Community Strategy* (2004) promotes the night-time economy as part of its regeneration agenda. Between 1997 and 1999 the capacity of Stoke-on-Trent's licensed premises rose by 242 per cent; this period also saw a 225 per cent rise in assaults associated with night-time drinking. Recent figures show that out of

354 local authority areas in the UK Stoke-on-Trent is ranked in the highest quartile for alcohol specific hospital admissions and for alcohol related months of life lost (North West Public Health Observatory, 2006). Within Stoke-on-Trent's city centre there are 18 public houses which are licensed to sell alcohol up to 11 p.m. and 28 special hour certificate premises which are licensed to sell alcohol into the early hours, usually until 2 a.m. There are 13 off-licences, 26 licensed restaurants and 16 fast food late night refreshment house premises. The combined capacity for the bars and nightclubs within the city centre is approximately 25,000 people. In spring 2003 the City Council introduced an on-street alcohol ban for the city centre in response to alcohol related disorder. Indeed, a MORI postal survey on adult lifestyles has shown that drinking levels in North Staffordshire are akin to that of the North West which has the highest average rates of consumption in the country. Alcohol Concern has also identified a specific local problem of binge drinking among young people.

### **Eden, Cumbria**

Eden, is the most sparsely populated district in England and Wales. It has a population of over 50,500 people: 15,500 of these live in Penrith, the largest urban centre; some others are clustered in three other small towns which each have populations of 2000–3,000 people; but over 50 per cent of the local population is scattered in small villages. Like many rural areas in Britain the population here is overwhelmingly white (99.6 per cent), over 80 per cent identify themselves as Christian, and no other religion accounts for more than 0.2 per cent of the population.

The area, which has a stable although relatively low-wage economy, falls into the middle-ranks of tables measuring deprivation: however, these average figures hide a great deal. Whilst the nature of the housing market in urban areas means geographical pockets of deprivation emerge, the same is not true of isolated rural areas where households on differing levels of income are quite likely to live in the same village. These average figures hide then both the existence of rural poverty (and wealth) and also obscure the different ways in which deprivation is experienced in the country as opposed to the city.

The area is particularly interesting in terms of alcohol use. Traditionally the pub has been one of the few social spaces open to rural residents, and it continues to be important in many villages today (although home-based consumption patterns may be significant). The prevalence of drinking in this area in the past, along with the strength of Methodism, led to the development of an active temperance movement which both taught about the dangers of drink and provided a practical alternative to the pub as a social space (e.g. organising the building of village halls). Temperance

parades and temperance clubs for children continued to be a feature in the area into the 1990s, organised under the auspices of the Vale of Eden Band of Hope Union.

Today levels of alcohol use here are lower than the national average. Recent figures show that out of 354 local authority areas in the UK Eden is ranked in the lowest quartile for alcohol related months of life lost (men), alcohol related violent offences and alcohol related recorded crime (North West Public Health Observatory, 2006). As in other areas these average figures hide significant variation by social group. A recent health authority survey found that Cumbrian women consumed 6.4 units of alcohol per week while Cumbrian men drank on average 17.2 units of alcohol (both figures exclude non-drinkers). Moreover, it found that alcohol consumption is higher amongst 16–35 year olds than amongst older residents.

## **Research design**

There were five elements to this research.

### **Historical and contemporary geographies of the case study areas**

We undertook specific archival work on the history of drinking cultures in Stoke-on-Trent and Eden. This included: mapping the geography of licensed drinking establishments through council records (where available); exploring the reporting of drink as a social issue/problem in the local print media; and an examination of the local temperance movement through archival sources.

The contemporary pattern of drinking in the two case study areas was captured through a telephone survey administered by a social research company. Five hundred people completed the questionnaire survey in each geographical location (see appendix 1 for further details). The survey was devised with reference to national surveys and significantly modified to suit the aims of the project. The survey was piloted through a random sample of 15 people, and was re-drafted in response to this pilot and in the light of comments from members of the project's advisory group.

### **Participant observation in consumption spaces**

The different spaces in which alcohol is consumed in each of the case study areas were mapped by a researcher carrying out participant observation. This process involved the researchers recording both descriptive observations (about the space; the numbers and types of clientele; general activities and specific acts; ambience, etc.) and a narrative account to build up an overall picture of each of the establishments that they visited. Participant observation was also carried out by the researchers on key streets in each case study area at different times of the night/week to develop a picture of the night-time economy and the relationship between alcohol, public cultures and the civility of the streets.

### **Interviews with key informants**

In-depth taped interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in each of the two localities to explore the positive and negative features of alcohol consumption.

### **Interviews and photo-diaries with residents**

On the basis of the telephone survey 20 residents were recruited for interview from each of the case-study areas to reflect the socio-economic diversity of the local population and a range of attitudes to, and use of alcohol (as described in the survey). In addition, a further ten participants from the Pakistani community in Stoke-on-Trent were interviewed in order to explore the issues as they relate to this particular minority ethnic group. Given the potential cultural and language issues for white researchers working in this context, here we employed, and trained, a researcher from the community to undertake these interviews.

To begin participants were given the opportunity to use a disposable camera to keep a photo-diary of their alcohol use and/or leisure activities which did not involve the consumption of alcohol. Where returned these photographs were subsequently used in interviews to promote discussion about the participants' attitudes to, and use of alcohol.

The interviews explored: (1) *Establishing behaviour*: first memories of alcohol; family and peer context in early alcohol use; access issues; (2) *Patterns and cultures of drinking*: type/level of alcohol consumption; when and where alcohol bought and consumed; family and peer contexts; what drunk; where/when/with whom;

relationship of alcohol consumption to the use of other substances; (3) *Attitudes to alcohol*: do they like it; what stops them drinking more/less; who approves/disapproves of their consumption; attitudes to drunkenness/binge drinking; physical feelings around consumption; health; role in their social life; (4) *Wider attitudes to alcohol*: benefits of drinking; problems associated with alcohol use; tensions within family/peer groups about alcohol use. (These themes were adapted for abstainers/low users.)

### **Case studies of intergenerational change in drinking habits/cultures**

Interviews were also conducted with two and where possible three generations of the same family. We focused on five case-study families in each area: each of the family members was interviewed individually to maintain confidentiality within the families and thus help ensure openness. In order to explore potential gender variations in these intergenerational changes we followed the male line in some case-study families and the female line in others. The families were chosen from a diversity of class, and in Stoke-on-Trent also ethnic, backgrounds. These interviews explored the different generations' experiences of: learning about alcohol, establishment of drinking practices, consumption spaces, wider social attitudes to alcohol, health promotion messages, and intergenerational conflict.

### **Comments on the research**

The fieldwork for this project was undertaken between September 2004 and October 2005. As such this data collection was completed following the publication of the UK Government's White paper *Time for Reform* (Home Office, 2000) but before the subsequent legislation (Licensing Act 2003) came into effect on 24 November 2005. During this time debates concerning binge drinking, urban disorder and extended opening hours associated with the new legislation were an almost daily feature in the media and a key element of policy concern at local levels. This research was thus undertaken during a vital period in the history of the UK's licensing policy, capturing empirical findings concerning local debates about national policy and people's drinking practices before the implementation of a new regulatory framework and the review of its impacts.

The multi-methods approach implemented during this research project has ensured that a large amount of data has been collected. As such, not all of the archival material, in-depth interviews and participant observation can be presented in this

report. However, while the data presented here does represent only a fraction of the material gathered it has been specifically chosen to reflect the larger body of evidence.

### **The structure of the report**

Following this introduction the report has five substantive chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the history of drinking cultures in Stoke-on-Trent and Eden, it identifies how drinking is embedded in wider historical, socio-economic and cultural contexts. Chapter 3 investigates contemporary public drinking. It suggests that contrary to popular images, for many people drinking alcohol on a night out is a safe and pleasurable activity which allows them to share a sense of commonality and ownership of public space. Chapter 4 looks at different patterns of drinking according to socio-economic group, gender, age, and faith. Chapter 5, with its focus on drinking at home, offers an important antidote to the kind of domination of debates around public drinking noted in section three. This chapter highlights the important social and health implications of banal drinking practices in domestic space. Chapter 6, the final substantive chapter, looks at how attitudes towards alcohol consumption and actual drinking practices have changed over different generations. This is followed by a conclusion that draws together the main findings of the report, identifies policy implications as well as highlighting future areas of research.

## 2 The place of drink: the histories of drinking cultures in Stoke-on-Trent and Eden

### Stoke-on-Trent

Granted city status in 1911, Stoke-on-Trent is the sum of six distinct towns, Stoke-upon-Trent, Burslem, Tunstall, Fenton, Longton and Hanley. Together with the nearby, but administratively separate borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme, with its population of 110,000, the area has traditionally been called ‘the Potteries’ and is the eleventh largest conurbation in the UK. Known throughout the world for the production of ceramics, the city experienced high levels of poverty, ill-health and physical scarring associated with the worst impacts of the industrial revolution and over the past thirty years global economic restructuring led to dramatic de-industrialisation, factory closures, unemployment and dereliction. In this part of the report we briefly show the ways in which alcohol has been bound up with the profound economic and cultural changes that have affected the city of Stoke-on-Trent and its people.

Along with other cities in the UK, Stoke-on-Trent grew rapidly during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. However, the domination of the city by the ceramics industry and the fragmented nature of the distinct Potteries towns have had a legacy arguably unlike that of any other city in the country. Due to the nature of the ceramics production the city has never had a large representation of middle-class or ethnically diverse residents – capital was tied up in the production process and there was little need for significant administrative, financial, banking institutions or retail infrastructure because goods were exported around the world but people did not come in significant numbers to the city to purchase ceramic products. Moreover, the spatial configuration of the city has ensured that there has never been a dominant city centre. Prior to unification in 1911, for example, each of the Potteries towns had developed its own cinemas, shopping streets and squares, markets, town halls, political structures and infrastructure for utilities provision. Each town also developed a significant number of venues selling alcohol, and a reputation for rowdy, alcohol fuelled nights out. While Hanley eventually edged ahead of the other towns and was officially designated as the ‘city centre’, the combination of the dominant working-class production and consumption cultures with the dispersed spatial configuration has ensured that the social geographies of alcohol consumption have unfolded in particular ways.

Described as the 'alcohol-drenched potteries' (Edwards 1997: 25), drunkenness, alcohol related disorder and related social problems have always been a prominent element of political debate and everyday life in the city. The late eighteenth century saw a rapid rise in the number of places to buy alcohol. For example, in 1850 there were over 800 alcohol outlets and in 1857 a magistrate concluded that between 80–90 per cent of all crimes were related to drink (despite relatively low levels of actual arrests for drink related crimes). In 1896 the number of venues had increased to 1,500.

Unlike elsewhere in the UK, the Temperance Movement in the Potteries was small, fragmented and only had limited success in influencing local politics and social life. One of the key issues relating to the relative failings of the temperance movements was the lack of a dominant middle class and reformist agenda, but also the weakness of paternalistic activity amongst local industrialists, the local authority, the church and other bodies. The pottery owners and other local industrialists were slow to end practices such as paying workers in pubs, stamping down on absenteeism and on-the-job drinking. Similarly, public debates at the time represented an understanding that the very poor quality of health and worklife for workers in the potteries and associated social problems were so acute that drinking was perhaps an understandable response to the living conditions in the city. Indeed, political ineffectuality, poor working conditions, low pay, unpaid holidays, and the availability of cheap alcohol ensured that rowdy and drunken behaviour dominated the city's street culture. Moreover, the leisure opportunities for the population of Stoke-on-Trent were overwhelmingly dominated by excessive drinking, which perhaps explains the wide-held attitude of 'a picturesque, muscular, breezy old chap, a packer, at Powell's potbank, who, when asked why he regularly got drunk on the weekend, answered that it would not be weekend if he did not get drunk' (*The Evening Sentinel*, 1978).

In 1896 a report in *The Evening Sentinel* suggests that while Hanley had begun to dominate the drinking landscape of the Potteries, each of the Potteries towns had a thriving number of drinking venues – 'The state of crown bank, Hanley was, after dark a scandal and a disgrace. The spirit vaults which thickly stud the border of the square were nightly filled with most abandoned characters – whose discordant shouts, obscene gestures and brutal violence often made the place a perfect pandemonium'.

Alongside this depiction of alcohol related disorder are contemporary accounts of the 'The Monkey Run', a circuit walk of central Hanley streets by thousands of people that took place around the theatres, cinema and the concentration of pubs on Friday and Saturday nights. The monkey run offered (mainly) young people the opportunity to promenade around the city centre, enjoying the crowds, and the chance to 'see

and be seen'. This turn of the century 'pub crawl' bound up with depictions of a night-time economy dominated by drunken disorder and violence has obvious resonances with contemporary concerns.

From its heyday in the 1900s, the ceramic industry and the city itself have struggled to be competitive, and the Potteries towns have been in a steady decline since that time. However, despite a fall in the number of alcohol venues throughout the city excessive and public drinking has continued to be a dominating feature. Although relatively slow to respond to the recent rapid and dramatic economic and social change associated with de-industrialisation, Stoke-on-Trent has, over the past decade, embarked on a range of attempts to undertake regeneration and instigate economic development strategies. Throughout the conurbation urban regeneration programmes have led to the reclamation of derelict and contaminated land and the proliferation of out-of-town retail and business parks. While the majority of the Potteries towns have lost much of their vitality (and the associated busy night-time activity and rowdy drinking), the city centre (Hanley) and Newcastle-under-Lyme have managed to maintain healthy numbers of pubs, bars and clubs. Moreover, in seeking to reinvent the economic and cultural life of the city, the promotion of the night-time economy has led to a proliferation of drinking venues in both the city centre and Newcastle-under-Lyme over the past five years, and issues and problems with an historical resonance have come to the fore.

## **Eden**

The rural district of Eden is an area that boasts a history as diverse and rich as its landscape. From the largest population centre of Penrith which has historically served as a busy trade centre and route through the country up into Scotland, to the rural isolation of the fells and the remote mining areas in the north-east, the significance of alcohol is deeply entwined within a rich historical picture of rural life. In an area where agriculture dominated until the 1950s, drinking alcohol was a long established part of rural living. An historical understanding of the area provides a crucial insight into its influence upon drinking practices which remain relevant right up until today.

### **Temperance in Eden**

Dean (2002) explains that alcohol was a key part of life for men, women and children in rural areas like Eden up until the industrial revolution, when the need for organised

labour and the family life that supported it, produced a new understanding of alcohol as immoral and thus a danger to the Christian values of the working 'man'.

Unsurprisingly then, the growth of temperance values throughout the country was no less influential in rural Eden. To illustrate this, below is an account written by the Countess of Carlisle in 1882 who was a central figure in the Temperance Movement of this area; she writes of the villages around Brampton<sup>1</sup>. In describing her concerns about the general acceptability of alcohol, the Countess of Carlisle also expresses a familiar concern at the time for the moral conditions of the labouring classes:

Marshall [*the clerk of the works*] says he never hires Brampton labourers or mechanics because they drink so much and only come to work on a Wednesday ... The Sunday drinking at Brampton especially at the tap shops for whisky is very bad, and the women just on par with the men.

The colliers are a strange, rough, drinking population and the Lessee keeps public houses which pay him immense rents, through which practically he gets back much of the men's wages. He does nothing for his men of any sort or kind, cares neither for schools, reading rooms or Temperance.

(Diary extracts quoted from Roberts, 1962)

The Temperance Movement emerged in the Eden Valley in the mid-1800s, and although it was a theme adopted by most of the denominations, the historically strong influence of Methodism in the area meant that temperance is most strongly associated with the Methodist Band of Hope movement. This set up its first Temperance Hall in the market town of Kirkby Stephen and quickly spread its influence across the area. The aim of the temperance message was complete abstinence from alcohol, as outlined in the pledge below, which had come to be considered as an evil central to the moral decline of the Christian family in England:

I hereby declare that I will abstain from all intoxicating liquors, all medicated, all British and all Foreign fermented wines, except in religious ordinance or when prescribed and furnished by a legally qualified medical practitioner during sickness which renders me incapable of following any employment. I will not give nor offer them to others, I will not engage in the traffic of them, but in all possible ways discountenance the use, manufacture and sale of them, and to the utmost of my power I will endeavour to spread the principles of abstinence from all intoxicating liquors.

(Rechabite pledge<sup>2</sup>)

One of the major goals of the Temperance Movement was to offer alternative opportunities for social engagements for the 'working man', and so in addition to temperance halls establishments like coffee houses were also opened in an attempt to offer leisure opportunities to farmers and labourers in the area where the ideals of abstinence could be suitably propagated. Below a further extract from the diary of the Countess of Carlisle explains how this practice understandably conflicted with the local licensees whose livelihoods were being challenged. Old practices of farm labourers' wages being given out in local pubs, and in some cases being paid, at least in part in beer, were being threatened by the emergence and success of temperance ideals:

Our mission was very interesting 300 or more people pledged themselves. But it was not the pledges alone that were encouraging but the reverent, thoughtful look of the low class which came night after night ... The publicans are really angry now ... The spirits vaults close early and the Trade is for the present ruined ... I have taken a small public house on a 7 years lease to make into a working man's free and easy coffee house. It won't pay here, but I can't lose much. Then we expect in the next few months that the landlady of the Howard Arms will give up for the want of custom, and that we shall get that as a farmer's temperance inn.

(Diary extracts quoted from Roberts, 1962)

The practice of closing down public houses perhaps gives some indication of why the influence of temperance was so strong in the Eden area. In the populated centre of Penrith the Temperance Movement had some influence, but was faced with competition from a considerable number of drinking establishments, indeed the economy of the town itself was based upon hospitality. In the remotely populated areas of the fells, closing down local public houses meant a much greater impact upon the local population.

### **Band of Hope Marches**

An annual march was central to the activities of the Band of Hope. The marches took place in Appleby (and later on in other villages), and followed a route around all the local public houses. The marches were made up of the local village groups and began in 1873 with a membership of 500 representing societies from seven villages. The success and longevity of these annual demonstrations, which continued until 1992, provides some indication of the influence of temperance in the area. By 1883 the Band of Hope membership had trebled, and continued to grow (although more

slowly) right up until the beginning of the First World War. At its peak, 62 societies made up a membership of over 4,000.

By the end of the Second World War the influence of the Band of Hope was in serious decline. The impact of television and radio, growing consumerism and a change in educational priorities for young people all contributed to its demise.

### Temperance in Eden today

The Band of Hope records however do not do justice to the relevance of temperance in the Eden area, even today. What is particularly interesting in relation to the drinking landscape of Eden is the relative stability of the population throughout much of the twentieth century. This means that although the marches officially stopped in 1992 (the Band of Hope in the area disbanded in 2001), their influence remains strong in the memories of local residents. Some of the older interviewees were able to recount memories of taking part in the marches, or in local sports activities organised by the Methodist youth groups, and a few also recalled taking the pledge or knowing someone that had. Children attended Band of Hope clubs until at least the 1980s. One woman who worked with young children in the area at this time recalls village children who had been to 'Band of Hope' asking her to listen to the poems which they were to recite at the Sunday School anniversary:

Sally Highgate: The children would want to practise what they'd learnt. Sometimes these were adulterated nursery rhymes. Humpty Dumpty would have fallen off the wall because he'd had too much to drink, or Miss Muffet would have been got by the spider because she'd been too drunk to run away. You had to keep a straight face because the children didn't think they were funny ... They used to take temperance exams as well where they had to know facts about the demon drink. I used to think that was hilarious as well.

(Eden, 65+, Female, NS-SEC 1<sup>3</sup>)

In the small fell villages there are even accounts of pubs still being bought out by local Methodist groups in the 1980s, and one interviewee claimed that Methodism still has a strong hold over two villages in particular:

Anthony Oram: Apparently not that long ago, the Methodists bought a pub in a village and had it shut down, I think they've been quite influential, sort of, over the years, and [had] quite a strong following.

(Eden, 65+, Male, NS-SEC 1)

Audrey Bennett: And the Methodist chapel in [place name removed] where I live is very, very well attended twice on a Sunday, and the people from there, many of them are from [two villages, names removed for confidentiality reasons] and because the majority of them don't drink, still don't drink. [*Methodism is*] still alive and well.

(Eden, 45–54, Female, NS-SEC 1)

Despite the influence of Methodism on the landscape of drinking, nonetheless individuals' actual practices did not always conform to the expectations of this place-based culture. Some of the interviewees described signing the pledge but not understanding what it was about, others reported not sticking to their pledge, or described creative ways in which people would justify drinking while upholding Methodist values. In this way, the dominant culture of community surveillance and control was always tempered by a pragmatic response to individuals' misdemeanours.

Yeah, signed the pledge, yeah, my father-in-law, he signed when he was fourteen, I don't know whether he knew what he was signing. Signed a pledge and he stuck to that, even when we got married he had a glass of orange, but when he came to stay with us, because they live down in ... and when he came to stay, we'd go down to the local pub and he'd buy me a pint and he'd have a glass of orange or whatever himself, but he wasn't adverse to going to the pub and having a game of dominoes, but he wouldn't have a drink.

(Member of the Eden District Council Licensing Committee, in his sixties)

Anthony Oram ... a chap that used to live here was a staunch Methodist as was all his family, and he didn't drink but he often used to go down to the pub and said can I have a whisky, it's for medicinal purposes, all he knows, had a cold, you know, 52 weeks of the year.

(Eden, 65+, Male, NS-SEC 1)

The final demise of the Band of Hope in 1990s perhaps marks a watershed in the influence of temperance within the area. However, the role of 'community' in inhibiting drinking in public to excess continues to echo across the generations.

While the majority of the younger interviewees showed little or no awareness of temperance values, nonetheless their drinking habits in public are tempered by an awareness that within close-knit communities a culture of surveillance and judgement persists (albeit not directly predicated on temperance values), which has the effect of limiting public displays of drunkenness. This is evident for example, in the fact

whilst the number of licences (on and off) in Eden has increased exponentially to over 200 in 2005, the number of drink related incidents has remained low, with only 25 prosecutions in the same year. Likewise, while the character of local towns such as Penrith are changing significantly, with the emergence of more diverse drinking venues (akin to urban establishments), it is important to note that alcohol related crime figures remain below the national average.

Thus although the values of temperance may no longer prevail, nonetheless the very isolation, relatively static population, culture of social control and unique history of this rural area that propagated the success of the Band of Hope movement in Eden, provides a key to understanding the evolution of concerns about drinking practices in this rural area and the extent to which it differs from urban culture.

## Summary

The material presented in this chapter demonstrates that drinking cultures are not uniform across the country. Rather these accounts demonstrate how they are embedded in wider historical, socio-economic and cultural contexts. Specifically, the research shows how Stoke-on-Trent's drinking patterns have particular links to its industrial heritage, while Eden's drinking culture demonstrates traces of the importance of close and stable communities in regulating public attitudes (if not always individual consumption practices) towards alcohol. In doing so these diverse patterns hint at the importance of the need for alcohol related policy initiatives to recognise the complexity of different drinking cultures, and thus the way that national policies might be interpreted differently or have a differential impact upon specific locales. This point is developed further in the following chapter.

### 3 Drunk and disorderly? Exploring public drinking

#### Drinkertainment and regeneration in Stoke-on-Trent

Attempts to reinvent the economic and cultural life of Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme have included the promotion of the night-time economy. This has led to a proliferation of drinking venues in both the city centre and Newcastle-under-Lyme, and issues and debates that have unfolded on a national and international stage have also been played out in the Potteries. For example, the tensions between celebrating and supporting economic and cultural regeneration and concerns about drink-fuelled disorder and of streets out of control have featured in the pages of the local paper. Amongst numerous articles were headlines such as 'Fear of violence creeping in', '64 banned from town pubs in blitz on trouble' and 'Police battle to stem tide of borough booze culture' (*The Sentinel*, 2004b, c and d). In contrast more positive headlines included 'Boom time in clubland' and 'Live for the moment ... we'll drink to that' (*The Sentinel*, 2002 and 2004a).

Such representations have emerged during a period of rapid change in local drinking landscapes, as a local night club owner explains:

... everything has changed a lot over the past five years ... the death of Thursday night in Hanley and the growth of Wednesday in Newcastle has been a major change ... Also on the back of that has been the move from nightclubs to super-bars ... the introduction of style bars has created a whole new niche market of more affluent customers and the pubs and bars have tried to keep up branding and re-branding.  
(Stoke-on-Trent, Night club owner)

Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme, like most other places in the UK, have seen the emergence of new kinds of pubs, bars and clubs that have changed the make-up of urban drinking venues (see Chatterton and Hollands, 2003).

However, the spread of venues throughout the seven Potteries towns is by no means even. As Table 1 below shows, the city centre has the highest number of pubs/bars followed by Newcastle-under-Lyme. Longton town centre has the fewest pubs with only two. There are also notably more traditional pubs and café bars but fewer theme and style pubs/bars in Newcastle-under-Lyme than the city centre.

**Table 1 Venue styles in the Potteries town centres**

Venue style	Tunstall	Burslem	Stoke	Fenton	Longton	City centre (Hanley)	Newcastle-under-Lyme
Traditional pub	6	11	7	6	2	13	10
Café bar	0	0	0	0	0	11	8
Disco bar	0	1	0	0	0	3	2
Theme pub/bar	0	0	2	0	0	6	1
Ale house	2	3	0	0	0	1	1
Style bar	0	0	2	0	0	8	4
Alternative pub	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Total	8	15	12	6	2	43	28

While the clustering of drinking venues in the city centre and Newcastle-under-Lyme has maintained a vitality that has all but disappeared in the other Potteries towns, local authorities are all too aware of the tensions between the economic benefits and concerns regarding disorder that circulate around expansion of the night-time economy:

... the landlords and the owners of some of these properties have spent a considerable amount of monies on often quite attractive buildings, and you could argue that has had a, a major positive effect because of some of those buildings, perhaps if they were exposed to long-term vacancy ... I think we should make the point too, there's nothing inherently undesirable about having a concentration of bars and pubs in a town centre location, for instance there, it's more desirable from a land use perspective having them in a central area like this, than it would be scattered around perhaps in semi-residential areas ... It's rather more the behaviour which follows, people are coming out at half past two in the morning, queuing up at the kebab house and picking fights in you know your kebab queues, that's more of a problem.

(Senior Council Officer, Newcastle Borough Council)

So that has a wider impact on the communities as well so you've got all the violence happening in the town centre, but then you've got the spillage afterwards and the costs which are huge as well, socially and financially.

(Community Safety Co-ordinator, Newcastle Borough Council)

However, while there is a consensus that there are both benefits and problems associated with pursuing an expansion of venues serving alcohol as a key pillar of urban regeneration strategies, there is a marked difference in the way that the local authorities in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme seek to address or reconcile some of the issues and problems.

For example, in Stoke-on-Trent's city centre an area that has grown organically with a concentration of large scale pubs, bars and nightclubs has been designated as the city's 'entertainment quarter'. This has been designated as such in order to contrast with, and control, the different type of drinking activities hoped for in the nearby 'cultural quarter'. This area in policy and policing terms appears to be a formalisation of attempts to 'corral' certain drinking cultures (for example, the youth orientated, vertical drinking establishments) into a concentrated area in an attempt to contain trouble, disorder and large volumes of people. Such zoning is an attempt to keep 'undesirable' revellers away from other visitors to the city centre, specifically those visiting the nearby 'cultural quarter':

There are a number of, dare I say it, some you know, some quite nice drinking establishments and eating houses down there [in the cultural quarter], you know and restaurants and the like. That run by the Regent Theatre there and so on and so forth, that clearly isn't for the younger crowd, it's for the more you know, middle aged customer I guess, so they're running, the two are running side by side.

(Senior Police Officer, Staffordshire Police)

In contrast, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council has a very different, and what it considers to be a more sustainable goal, that is seeking to produce a night-time economy that is more inclusive, convivial and socially diverse. Rather than a zoning strategy it is encouraging a mix of venues and more diverse uses of the city centre during the day and night, with the aim of sustaining a 'living community':

I think people who come in at night and enjoy it, enjoy the town are more likely to come in during the day time and shop and, and so I think it's an infectious thing in the sense that you know people will say well we'll come back in the day time, you know to do some shopping, whatever, so I think it is positive in that sense. We think getting people in the town is good at any time of the day or night really, it's just being able to manage the excesses and particular problems that come from very large numbers of people.

(Senior Council Officer, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council)

Well in a way it's 24 hour policing still because of the more people you have in a living community, a living community within the town centre, to, to some extent there are the non, the non-drunk people who are living, who are rubbing shoulders with the people who are perhaps misbehaving. (Senior Council Officer, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council)

It is clear then that drinkatainment (Bell, 2005) is seen by local authorities as an opportunity to pursue economic development and urban regeneration. A perceived cost-benefit analysis of alcohol-led regeneration clearly comes down to economic and cultural activity versus concerns over perceived levels of increased violence and disorder. The Licensing Act 2003 seeks to offer local authorities more power to define local strategy and policy and it can be seen that Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme favour very differing strategies concerning control of the type, concentration and mix of bars in the night-time economy. The extent to which these different polices can be sustained is still very much open to question depending on the way in which licensing applications and planning concerns unfold as the new legislation is applied. At present Newcastle-under-Lyme has designated the town centre an area where the 'cumulative impact' of large numbers of venues demands the implementation of a saturation policy (where further licences can be refused on the basis of the concentration of licensed premises). To date Stoke-on-Trent has not made the same designation for the city centre. Perhaps a key factor in why these different approaches have been adopted relates to concerns about the perception, and reality, of violence and disorder, and the ways these are framed or mobilised by different stakeholders and groups in different ways. This issue is the focus of the next section.

### **Anti-social behaviour? Disorder and violence or commonality and fun**

A cursory review of the proportion of crime involving alcohol as a mediating factor shows high levels of drink related crime in the Potteries. Such figures reflect broader trends within the UK. Out of 354 local authority areas in the UK Stoke-on-Trent is ranked in the top 10 per cent for alcohol related recorded crime and alcohol related violent offences. Newcastle-under-Lyme is ranked in the top 25 per cent for alcohol related recorded crime and 20 per cent in terms of alcohol related violent offences. (North West Public Health Observatory, 2006). However, both political and popular debate has thrown up some interesting contradictions that we seek to investigate here – in simple terms – if the streets are plagued with anti-social behaviour and violence why do so many people regularly spend their leisure time drinking in public

places? How do people experience, perceive and manage the risks and benefits associated with public drinking and how do these contrast with official depictions, management and policing of people's drinking?

Appendix 2 provides a brief taste of the rich and detailed ethnographic material gathered relating to people's nights out in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme. These findings show considerable differences in the nature and experience of drinking by different people at different times of the day, on different days of the week and different times of the year. The range of types of venues (traditional pubs, café bars, theme pubs, style bars etc) can generally be considered to attract different groups of drinkers, and many pubs can be identified as stopping off points on specific drinking circuits.

Nonetheless, at the level of policy formation and associated policing techniques, the relationship between drinking and disorder appears to be quite clear – excessive drinking is 'out of control', and measures to stop the further expansion of the night-time economy are necessary as are increased resources to tackle the problem. Indeed, some commentators have suggested that the ability of the police to intervene in relation to the problems of urban drinking and drunkenness is hampered by a lack of resources. Thus it is claimed that the police can only react to specific incidents, swarming units (a labour-intensive response) to deal with flashpoints (Hobbs, 2003) rather than develop preventative policing strategies. As a senior police officer in Staffordshire Police (Stoke-on-Trent Division) suggested:

... the situation with regards to violent crime particularly in the city centre environments is, is very similar whether it be Stoke-on-Trent, whether it be Cardiff, whether it be Manchester, whether it be Liverpool, and you know, Blackpool. I've visited most of those areas to compare the set up, shall we say in Manchester and Blackpool to what it's like in Stoke-on-Trent and there are many similarities in terms of the problems that you'd find on the streets of Manchester and Blackpool as you'd find in Stoke-on-Trent ... You know it's issues of young people who've got disposable income, who, who are tempted by drinks promotions and who are binge drinking that is then leading on to problems, you know, intensely dense areas and people coming out of premises at night, flashpoints and so on and so on and so on, and we try to put some strategies in place to try and minimise the effects of all of those, with some success, but there's considerable more work to be done. *[Later he continued]* ... And if we're going to, you know if we're going to keep investing in the city centre to get more and more and more premises in there that have got licenses, that will mean that we will need to increase the policing in there.

However, the broad range of measures, and approach utilised by actual police officers on the streets of Stoke-on-Trent suggest that there is a mismatch between the policing rhetoric of senior officers and the actual policing of drunkenness on the streets. These include preventative tactics, for example, the filming of revellers (by police officers with hand held video cameras), initiated as a 'calming measure'. These are designed to remind individuals of their behavioural responsibilities, before any offences are committed. Moreover, conversations held with low ranking police officers on the street in Stoke-on-Trent's city centre and in Newcastle-under-Lyme's town centre show a very different attitude towards policing drunkenness than that depicted by senior officers, as these quotations from three different officers illustrate:

You don't want to arrest someone who is drunk and disorderly, it's just too much bother, you want to be sending them on their way with no trouble.

It's not bad in Newcastle as some places. There are about ten of us on and ten in support. It's a bit rowdy and there are high spirits but there's not that much trouble – a lot of stuff about the violence associated with binge drinking is media hype – it's not that people don't drink too much and are badly behaved but it's only low level stuff ... the streets aren't out of control – the actual arrest rates are low.

We have a one-plus-seven that's me and seven other officers and then a support van with the same numbers [in the city centre]. Arrest rates really vary from a quiet night of one or two up to 25 but I suppose the thing is that it can be unpredictable so we keep a presence just in case. We police the whole city so if there is a bad incidence somewhere else it's not unusual for us all to leave. People tend to be good natured, we have to take a lot of 'humorous' comments to deal with and people asking us to mediate disputes between couples and friends and people complain to us about issues with management over entrance. But things aren't too bad – it's not considered one of the worst jobs – I suppose it's a bit like policing a football match, most people are well behaved and there is a large number of people out and about, you know there are people wanting to make trouble and sometimes they do and other times it's quiet.

Behaviour considered as 'anti-social' at a policy level clearly is for a large proportion of respondents considered as 'having a good time', indeed police at street level suggested that where people's drunkenness does not pose a serious threat to personal or public safety they are reluctant to intervene unnecessarily. Zero-tolerance policing is not applied to managing public drinking.

Indeed, experiences and attitudes to the risks associated with violence and disorder are illuminating. Only one or two people, interviewed in-depth; had personally been involved in violent incidents and while many had witnessed scuffles and fighting the overwhelming responses followed the lines of:

Max Speer: not a lot of actual trouble but sometimes there's quite a lot of tension in the air and you feel in some of those standing up drinking places that you know there's a bit, it's a bit oppressive, there's this kind of male bravado thing going on, nobody, where the music's really loud and nobody can talk and everybody's just looking at other people and they're looking, men are looking at each other in a slightly threatening way. So yeah, I think you know there is a connection with some of those venues but in other places where it's more laid back, different kind of clientele, you never feel that kind of, of threat.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Male, NS-SEC 5)

Jim Harper: I've not, I've not seen a great deal, the places I go don't tend to be violent, I'm, I'm lucky that I've never been involved in violence on a night out, but I'm quite a big lad and I think that's stood me in good stead and I'm not a violent person, I don't worry, I don't, I don't worry about it, no.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 35–44, Male, NS-SEC 1)

Allan Cummins: I have seen bits of violence but touch wood it's never happened to me and I've never, it's never really happened to any close friends, I, it's not a consideration when I go out, it doesn't really cross my mind.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Male, NS-SEC 5)

It is clear from such comments that while violence is understood to be a problem, people mobilise various strategies of avoidance and vigilance in order to ensure personal safety.

Respondents of different ages, genders and social backgrounds thus talk of drinking predominantly as being related to particular characteristics and functions of a night out, rather than drinking as an accelerator of violence. This includes younger people, escaping the pressures and time constraints of work in order to spend time with their friends 'out and about' or young families who can spend time away from their children and let their hair down. Older people talked similarly about the 'occasion' of a night out, the 'performance' of getting dressed up, the heightened sociability and escaping time constraints and the relaxed sociability offered by drinking:

Bob Bennett: There's just nothing like that feeling you get on a Friday night ... it's like a freedom that you don't get at other times. You might go out to the cinema, or for a meal during the week, even for a beer or two, but on Friday and Saturday it's different ... I don't get much time to see my mates, I work hard and I'm often tired but on a Friday you get a buzz ... You look good, you've got your best gear on, there's nothing like that feeling that you've the whole weekend ahead of you to do what you want and the time to do it, and recover from the hangover ... and that everyone about your age feels the same ... you don't have to get up to work so you can go out and get pissed ... drink what you want, do what you want, go where you want ... and everyone on the streets is the same ... when else do you get that freedom to walk through Castle ... mess around, see and be seen ... be part of thousands of other people who are just having a good time ... you feel part of it, it's yours and you feel the places you go are aimed at you and the way you want to live. After a hard week at work it's exactly what I need ...

(Stoke-on-Trent, 18–24, Male, NS-SEC 5)

Anne Peters: And I usually don't work on Fridays, it's only just recently I've started, so we'd start with a bottle of wine ... about half one, two, open the wine, you know, why not, talk about the day, chill out, and then we'll start getting ready to go out. And then the vodka comes out ... at my house, yeah, and then we'll get the vodka, sometimes if we're feeling particularly cheeky, we'll have a couple of little bottles of alcopops ... and then we'll open the vodka and then get ready, drink as we're getting ready... We will talk about work to start off with and just check everyone's had a good week and looking at the events that have happened and then we'll get on to the subject of what we're going to do, where we're going to go and then when we're out, we talk about the ... I'm sure if you recorded it, it'd sound stupid ... dead stupid [laughs].

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Female, NS-SEC 1)

Anne Peters further explains that the issue of sociability with strangers is also important:

And people you don't know from Adam, what they do for a living you know, you can sit and talk to them for half an hour and the next thing you can go back in and go oh how's your daughter, you know how's your wife, blah blah blah and it's really nice to talk to people just like, it's like a big social venue, you just go 'oh hello, how are you?'

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Female, NS-SEC 1)

Amanda Pindar also noted the importance of socialising with friends and that meeting in a setting away from the workplace is important:

Colleagues and friends have children the same age as mine and we go out on a regular basis, we go out once a month and try different restaurants, so we do go out to the towns but there again, the drinking is a feature but not the main event. It's the conversation, so, but I mean certainly we wouldn't go out for, for example, I work now with a much younger set of people, well everybody's younger than me now, to be truthful, but I work with a younger set of people and they organise a night out where they do go round to the pubs and drink ... we usually just go to nicer restaurants. One or two people would get a bit too drunk ... most people would be reasonable.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 55–64, Female, NS-SEC 2)

It is clear that all that is involved in the 'going out-ness' of a drinking experience – the drama, the dressing up, the transgression, the occupation of public space, of 'proper' streets and public squares and statues and the presence of crowds involved in 'improper' activities – is of central importance to a 'big night out'.

In contrast, respondents who are not regular users of commercial drinking venues in Stoke-on-Trent city centre and Newcastle-under-Lyme's town centre largely gained their perceptions about the nature of night-time drinking through stories about violence and disorder from friends or family, or from the media. These representations were often set against memories of drinking in their own youth.

Gwyn Parsons: My son, our son, David, he's 27 is he now? David. He went for a work, he went for a drink with some lads from work after they'd finished work. And he was saying that there was two lads in there ended up fighting and one of them got glassed in the face.

Interviewer: What was Hanley like then when you were young? Was it quite rowdy, were there lots of people around, was it?

Gwyn Parsons: Yeah, but it was good ... And it was fine, you could walk around and you didn't feel, you didn't feel frightened. Do you know what I mean? Everybody was having a good time and was fooling about and you know, but there was never any fear of anything would happen.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 45–54, Female NS-SEC 4)

Gwyn Parsons suggested that a particularly important issue was the ways in which young women's drinking had changed from the time she was young. However, Gwyn showed that her knowledge of this was gained from television programmes rather than first hand experience:

No, if two girls had have started a fight I'm sure that whoever the lads were that were in the pub would have pulled them apart straight away.

It just wasn't done, it was, again it was standards that you lived to, you know, and there's none of that now, I mean the girls you see, you watch the telly and you have the whatsit on don't you? The Police at night on the streets and, that was ... Oh, Rage Wars and Street, Street whatsit thing ... on cable. The things that they do and the way they're dressed an' all.  
(Stoke-on-Trent, 45–54, Female, NS-SEC 4)

Several respondents openly acknowledged that their images of public drinking have been influenced by the media rather than their own experiences of being out and about, during which they had actually witnessed little or no violence or disorder, just behaviour they considered rowdy or inappropriate:

Maurice Haige: I think it's exaggerated ... violence doesn't worry me, Hanley's a pretty, that's a pretty rough from what you read in the papers but I've never seen the problem for myself, but, I've heard about it, people have told me about it, but I've never seen it first hand. I think it's probably exaggerated a bit.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 55–64, Male, NS-SEC 4)

Several respondents acknowledged that they were not usually in central areas at night, and did not have first hand experience of what it was really like. Indeed one key informant from Stoke-on-Trent involved in local authority licensing, noted his surprise when finding himself amongst the crowds of Newcastle-under-Lyme on a Friday night:

One night I had to go through town [*Newcastle-under-Lyme*], a friend of mine dropped me off and I needed to get to the bus station, I'd not been in the town centre at night for donkey's years. I've been out in Hanley at night, for work, but there was a group of us, and it was for work. [In Newcastle] At first I was uncomfortable, a bit scared of all the people some of which were really drunk, young people and the noise, and that I might get hurt or people would say things to me or involve me. But after a while as I was walking, when you get over the fear factor it becomes just that you feel a bit not part of it you're not drunk so you feel kind of

vulnerable, or not really part of it all, a bit of an outsider. People just kind of looked at me but ignored me as I wasn't drunk and young. I realise that most people say things to you, but I walked through town and it was ok. You see some sights mind you.

(Stoke-on-Trent, Local Authority Councillor)

## **Public space or public health: a question of focus and resources**

The evidence of this research then is that political and popular representations of drinking and drunkenness as generating widespread violence and disorder, at best miss the complexity of people's drinking experiences and are, at worst, misleading. Potentially more problematic however is that the recent intense media focus on 'binge drinking', young people and unruly streets at night-time, may be having a detrimental effect on the development of strategic and joined-up alcohol service provision.

For example, respondents working in alcohol related service provision in the Potteries offered the view that there is a raft of well-targeted and successfully run alcohol related initiatives in the city. Moreover, in recent years a range of initiatives had been developed to improve joined-up thinking in terms of alcohol strategy, policy and implementation. However, the fact that national debates have become so focused on binge drinking and public space is producing both opportunities and problems. For example, some key informants argued that while the increased profile for alcohol related problems was to be welcomed, increased pressures on limited funding meant that the ability to make a strategic programme of alcohol services tailored to the local context in order achieve a more holistic approach was in danger of stalling:

And we'd like to get the multidisciplinary. And clearly we'd like to be in a position where we are able to fully accommodate and offer the models of care tier provision ... at the moment I think we probably struggle with the numbers of alcohol clients that we've got coming through and wanting to access that service ... one of the things that Drug Action Team have struggled with in the past is developing a strategy, developing that into local actions and then stakeholders, partner agencies, actually being proactive in taking that work back within their own agencies. And there's been reliance on our officers to take the work forward and clearly we're not in a position to be able to do all that.

(Council Officer, Stoke-on-Trent City Council)

Other comments also hint at the fact that alcohol policy must also be fully focused on issues that stretch beyond the night-time economy and commercial drinking venues. These include violence within the home (which is explored in Chapter 5), the cost of alcohol, unreported drinking within minority communities (discussed in Chapter 4), and drinking amongst the elderly:

I think that the focus on young people and binge drinking is good, good for getting support and funding and that alcohol is seen as an important issue ... you know, that Tony Blair will talk about drinking and it's in the newspapers. But I sometimes think this interest is having too much impact, that other things like domestic violence, getting at hard to reach groups are kind of being pushed to the side. I mean we work a lot on these but we don't get enough resources specifically for these issues and we should, it's just that they are hidden and not part of the bigger agenda at the moment.

(Alcohol Service Provider, Stoke-on-Trent)

Such comments suggest that an over-emphasis on the problem of drunkenness and public space might be hampering a more well-rounded approach to tackling the social problems associated with alcohol misuse. In the following sub-section we focus on how the issue of public drinking is debated and transformed within a rural context.

### **Eden – Public drinking: a rural problem?**

To date, as this account suggests, the debates about public drinking have been almost exclusively located in urban areas. However, representatives of rural agencies/service providers interviewed as part of this research argued that the issue of young people binge drinking is not confined to urban areas. They identified a problem with anti-social behaviour and also under-age drinking in rural communities.

The Crime and Disorder Act (Home Office, 1998), discussed above, has resulted in the development of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) across the UK. The Carlisle and Eden CDRP has responsibility for addressing both actual and perceived crime levels in the Eden area, a significant part of which relate to the problems associated with alcohol use in public spaces. In Eden, strategies have focused on initiatives such as alcohol exclusion zones in populated centres, an increase in visible community policing and investment in CCTV systems. Efforts have also been made to engage the community through work with charitable organisations and community workshops (Carlisle and Eden CDRP Strategy, 2005).

The introduction of CCTV into Eden could be read as a success for this type of strategy. National concern with crime and disorder led Central Government to make resources available for which Local Authorities could bid in order to fund CCTV schemes. Notwithstanding the fact that there had not been a local clamour for CCTV to be introduced in Eden, the District Authority responded positively to this opportunity for funding and put the best case it could forward for its share of resources:

The Government saw this new technology as a great leap forward for urban safety. The Government drove it forward ... It wasn't a cause you would find was championed by particular local people ... The authority would put forward the best case it could given our circumstances. It's used for general town centre management, an element of that would be youth disorder and crime reduction but not only that ... No one in their right mind would have campaigned for CCTV in Appleby and Kirkby at that point because of drink-related problems.

(Representative of Eden District Council)

Penrith, Appleby and Kirkby Stephen, now have CCTV schemes covering their town centres which aid the authorities in their policing of the towns (although police car and foot patrols remain important for covering known 'hotspots', for example the Cloisters in Kirkby Stephen where young people congregate).

Other interpretations are, however, possible. Yarwood (2005, p.64) argues that 'community-based policing can all too often reflect elite interests and exclude minority groups from rural spaces'. He suggests that powerful groups within the community construct a notion of a 'rural idyll' that they then feel the need to protect through the exclusion of marginal groups. This implicates young people who most often become the subjects of surveillance and criminalisation despite limited evidence for such concern. These constructions are then often reinforced through the processes of 'multi-agency working' between the criminal, health, education and charitable institutions (Yarwood, 2001). In Eden, the protection of rural public space appears to be driven as much from without as within. The introduction of CCTV into Appleby and Kirkby Stephen could be read as a spatially inappropriate response to an urban-dominated policy agenda, a response which assuages the concerns of a privileged few but targets other more marginal groups in a context where (as we explain below) concern about anti-social behaviour is evident but not widespread. Indeed, it is noteworthy that the District Council is currently considering cutting its recurrent funding of the CCTV schemes.

A second example illustrates the importance of professional discourses in transforming an urban policy concern around alcohol for a rural context. On the one hand there is recognition amongst local rural policy makers that alcohol related violence is much less a problem of youth disorder than in other parts of the country, at the same time as they express deep concern at the tendency for young people in the area to drink alcohol. This is clearly illustrated in the recent Cumbria Alcohol Strategy, 2005–08, a consultation document produced by the Cumbria Drug and Alcohol Action Team (which is a partnership of the Primary Care Trusts, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, Probation, Youth Offending Teams, Housing, Community Sector, Cumbria County Council, Police and Prison Services). This highlights Cumbria’s atypical age profile for alcohol related offenders; the national concentration in the 19–25 age group is not mirrored in Cumbria which sees only a small peak in this age group with levels plateauing until age 45, and only dropping thereafter. However, it is also stated that ‘young people are drinking more, drinking more often and start at a younger age than the national average and usually with parental knowledge’, citing evidence of this phenomenon from local data published by the Schools Health Education Unit, Exeter University, in comparison with the national data in *Smoking, Drinking and Drug use amongst young people in England in 2004* (Fuller, 2005). (See Table 2).

In this way, local policy makers play down some of the urban fears around binge drinking, most specifically that it can create violent behaviour amongst drunken youth, at the same time as they emphasise a different component of the youth drinking problem – namely underage drinking – as an issue that is prevalent in rural areas and justified or condoned by rural parents because of the lack of alternative forms of entertainment in the rural night-time economy for young people. Indeed, the Eden telephone survey revealed that 71 per cent of young people aged 18–24 had consumed dangerously above safe limits on their heaviest drinking day of the past week, this is strikingly higher than the comparable figure from the General Household Survey 2005 (ONS, 2006) of 26 per cent for young people nationally (see Appendix 3). In the words of an Eden District Council representative on the Carlisle and Eden CDRP:

**Table 2 Data on pupils’ drinking: Cumbria and national comparison**

	Percentage who have drunk some alcohol in the last week			
	Cumbria schools		National comparison	
	Year 8	Year 10	Year 8	Year 10
Boys	29	57	11	32
Girls	32	59	9	33
	Percentage of drinkers who drank over 14 units last week			
	Cumbria schools		National comparison	
	Year 8	Year 10	Year 8	Year 10
Boys	3	39	16	22
Girls	3	18	16	19

And I think that in some areas, in fact the very rural ones there's a different attitude toward drinking than there is in, you know perhaps more urban areas. Well ... there's nothing to do for youngsters. So it's, it's accepted to some degree by the community that they can't, you know that's what kids do. Underage, you know 12, 13 and drinking and taking their bottles of cider, sometimes, in some instances parents are actually giving them the cider. And dropping them off at the parks or the, you know the churchyards or whatever, and they're leaving them to it. But I don't think they're really seeing or thinking about the longer term effects because very soon one bottle of cider isn't enough ...

This local construction of the youth drinking problem focuses attention on parents who are seen to be at best naïve and at worst negligent in their support of young people's drinking practices (these issues are explored further in Chapter 6). In this context, local policy initiatives problematise parental acceptance of young people's drinking and seek to address these issues with both parents and young people.

### **Liquid leisure: the role of alcohol in rural communities**

Most older residents regard binge drinking as a city problem which they are aware of via the media but which has no immediate impact on their own lives, cocooned as they are in a rural environment. Picking up on the construction of binge drinking in the wider media, these residents imagine binge drinking not in terms of volume of alcohol consumed, but more significantly in terms of urban, late-night, alcohol-fuelled public disorder, which was not something they witnessed to any significant extent in their own locality. By contrast, the sometimes large amounts of alcohol consumed by rural young people were rarely regarded as problematic:

Audrey Bennett: I don't worry about it [*binge drinking*] because I suppose where I live it's, it doesn't at all affect me... I'm cocooned in a little village somewhere and it's nothing, I don't experience it, you know, so that's, it's something I'm reading in the, the newspaper and it isn't something I've experienced at all.

(Eden, 45–54, Female, NS-SEC 1)

Anne Moyles: I think it is a city problem. It's not a problem we have. I mean there is, there is anti-social behaviour round here and there's, you know people that binge drink and that but it's ... you don't have much of a problem with it, because there's not a, a concentration of people.

(Eden, 35–44, Female, NS-SEC 3)

Reginald Best: Up here [*Eden District*] we don't have any problems. Penrith, yeah, Penrith's one of the bad places you read, in the newspapers but you know and basically it's a big joke really, you, the, you read the local newspaper and the headline's still, it tells you, man drove into lamp post and you turn over the page and it says woman drives into tree [*laughs*]. This is the highlight of what happens.  
(Eden, 55–64, Male, NS-SEC 1)

I mean people always go on about binge drinking [*national level*] and I'm not sure just how much of a factor that is in Cumbria. People do go out on a Friday and Saturday night, they do get pissed...I've been out with the Police on Friday nights throughout this county and quite frankly I didn't notice any difference to when I used to go out [*as a young man*] ... you know I've never felt frightened or intimidated anywhere in Cumbria.  
(Alcohol Service Provider)

This difference between the ways that young people's behaviour is read by residents in a rural, as compared to urban, environment is also a product of the distinct characteristics of rural cultural life as well as changes in intergenerational relations (that are discussed in Chapter 6). In terms of rural life, alcohol plays a significant part in local culture. The pub has traditionally played an important role in village communities as a social space, especially for men. Despite broader socio-economic changes in rural communities the lack of entertainment and leisure spaces in the countryside (e.g. cinemas, bowling alleys, late-night shopping venues) means that the pub, as well as increasing home-based alcohol consumption, provide the focus for many adults' social lives. As such young people's drinking – in pubs and in informal spaces – is not only tolerated but in many cases regarded as normal behaviour by adults aware that their children (like themselves) have limited other social opportunities. Indeed, some rural commercial venues provide socially sanctioned underage access to alcohol in certain situations:

The majority of people ... who've we've found have consumed alcohol who were trying to get into the junior disco are female.

Interviewer:

Really?

And it's mums and dads who've given the females the drink, you know, little Suzie's had a bottle of Lambrusco before she's gone out and then she's gone to little Sarah's parents who've given them a couple of bottles of whatever, alcopops, you know and they turn up and we've got this and then you sit down with parents and

they say 'well what's wrong with having a drink before they go out?'

(Superintendent Cumbria Police)

Audrey Bennett: At our, our local pub it is well managed, there are youngsters who drink that are slightly underage but they are kept under control.

Interviewer: Right.

Audrey Bennett: And it's ... it is very much a social occasion, it's got a pool table and the youngsters come in and play that and it's got a juke box in one bar. But you know we've no public transport. Other than the Methodist chapel and the church ... there's no other focus for the community, there isn't a café, isn't a restaurant, nothing like that.

(Eden, 45–54, Female, NS-SEC 3)

Melissa Worthington: Between 13 and 14 is when I used to go around like to Kirkby Club, which is like the disco until 11 o'clock or something. And that would just be like older people there and they were drinking. And like we used to get our hands on like vodka and stuff and just. Yeah, well we didn't know anything really, we didn't, it was just the sort of, because it was like, we were getting to that age in Kirkby where it was too boring for us.

(Eden, 18–24, Female NS-SEC 2)

Other research has also identified similar evidence of the implicit tolerance of underage drinking in rural communities. For example in a study of young men's drinking Leyshon (2007) found that his respondents often 'got into' pubs when they were underage by going with their parents (usually fathers), by using their knowledge of village biographies to ingratiate themselves with 'the locals' or by finding work in pubs (e.g. washing glasses, etc).

This apparent acceptability of underage drinking may also stem from the fact that the close-knit nature of social relations in these rural communities itself acts as a deterrent to young people drinking to excess and behaving in anti-social ways. Given the greater informal social surveillance in rural than in urban areas young people exercise more self-governance, aware that there is less anonymity in the countryside than a larger town or city because most venues must serve all generations. For example, in one sense, the experience of going out in Penrith parallels the

opportunities available to young people in many town centres across the country, albeit on a smaller scale. However, even in the most popular establishment – a chameleon venue which acts as part venue for live music, part-club and part-sports bar – the clientele remains notably mixed in age (often with older groups sitting in a different part of the venue to the younger crowd) and many amongst the local population know each other. This limited anonymity tends to discourage anti-social behaviour by young people which might cause exclusion. Outside of Penrith venues in small towns and villages also tend to be shared with other adult age groups and at certain times of the year with tourists. Although some are slightly more orientated to the youth market than others, all contain a mix of ages and young people are expected to, and do, conform to certain rules, like sitting in certain spaces and behaving in a certain way. Sharing space in this way appears to inhibit or control young people's behaviour because they are aware that drunken rowdiness may be witnessed by friends of the family or potential future employers:

Anne Moyles: *[For young people]* ... it's sort of yeah, it's not maybe so much they know my Mum but as opposed to they speak to your employer or whatever ... You don't want to make such a fool of yourself in a very small place because people do get disapproving and you know, you might need the opportunity.

(Eden, 35–44, Female, NS-SEC 3)

The landlords or landladies are also more likely to have known young people since childhood and to know their families and so exert strong social control over their venues. The following excerpt from the participant observation diary describing a night out with a group of 18–25 year olds makes this clear:

Originally it had been arranged that we would begin drinking in [name of venue omitted], one of the local pubs in Appleby. It is apparently known as an old man's and truck driver's pub but has a room in the back where the pool table is and where the teenagers tended to sit if they go there. James made it clear that local young people were allowed to enter this pub but were expected to sit quietly in the room at the back and to behave sensibly. He made it clear that the Landlady was a notorious woman who would not tolerate drunken youth, or unacceptable behaviour.

Likewise, rurality affords young people many isolated or secluded spaces where they can carve out informal drinking opportunities without disturbing local residents (see appendix 4). As such simply having a few too many – where the same level of alcohol is consumed as in urban areas but the lack of unruly behaviour means the event goes unnoticed – is an unremarkable feature of youth and wider rural culture.

What is most striking about the accounts of young people in Eden themselves is their congruence with the views of older residents. Thus young people, like older generations, construct binge drinking as a city problem centred on the risks of alcohol related anti-social behaviour, behaviour from which they too feel safe in this rural area where crime rates are low and young people have the security of knowing other local people when on a night out. This identification with their environment, giving them a distinct and strong sense of place, has a significant impact upon their experiences and understandings of alcohol within local culture. As such young people, like older adults, allow themselves to be complacent about rural drinking:

Ellie Bellis:                      When you go out in Penrith, it's just like one big family, you know everybody ... [*she continues later*] ... Penrith is, you just feel so safe and ... Any trouble, someone will always be there.  
(Eden, 18–24, Female, NS-SEC 3)

Melissa Worthington:        It's quite nice round here because you know everybody.  
Interviewer:                      Right.  
Melissa Worthington:        You can go in and you're bound to know someone to go and sit and talk to.  
Interviewer:                      Right, so you feel safe?  
Melissa Worthington:        Yeah cos you know the boys, some of them that knows you, look out for you, you know.  
(Eden, 18–24, Female, NS-SEC 2)

Overall, the picture which emerges from this study is that while local policy makers have a heightened level of concern about anti-social behaviour and underage drinking – which might be regarded as an urban-centred binge drinking agenda – in their rural area, this moral panic is largely rejected by older and younger local residents alike who are content about rural drinking. At first glance this might be read as a rare instance where older residents reject a moral panic about youth culture, and the imposition of an urban agenda onto rural communities, and instead construct young people's behaviour as a normal, socially acceptable, and even a banal part of everyday life. This attitude is a source of concern to policy makers, however, because running through the discussions of local residents of all ages is a lack of awareness of the health risks of heavy or long-term drinking. Ultimately, the consequence of public and policy discussion which constructs binge drinking as an urban problem is to mask other – in this case health – problems associated with alcohol consumption in a broader diversity of locales. The evidence of this research suggests that work to prevent and address alcohol misuse therefore needs to not only address the issue of public drinking in urban space but also to acknowledge and find ways of responding

to the importance of alcohol in rural communities, paying attention to the specific consumption patterns (e.g. underage drinking) that develop in the context of rural lifestyles:

Because often Government policies are driven by whoever shouts the loudest and where the biggest problems are ... and you just can't take the national model that the Government's ... saying well that sits nicely in Cumbria ... Because that is not what's happening in Cumbria ... not dismissing it out of hand and just trying to say we can't take the rhetoric and automatically relieve the, into what's happening in Cumbria, and, and I think one of the problems is that everybody tries to fit into the picture. *[later he returns to the local situation]* What is clear is that in Cumbria young people tend to drink more, they drink at home, they drink with their parents' knowledge.

(Alcohol Service Provider, Cumbria)

*[referring to what work is needed in Eden]* I think it's targeting parents as much as it is young people ... we *[in Eden]* really need to focus on prevention and I think we need to send very hard hitting messages out to the community and to the youngsters ... that it's *[underage drinking]* not really acceptable, that if you carry on 20 years down the line you're going to be a very long waiting list for you know NHS for liver damage ... it's getting those serious messages across and just instilling in parents their responsibility ... I think parenting is where it should start and be instilled, and there needs to be some accountability somewhere along the line.

(Eden District, Community Safety Officer)

## Summary

It is clear from this research in Stoke-on-Trent and Eden that while alcohol related violence and disorder are important issues there has been an over-emphasis in both local contexts on the negative impacts of alcohol on our public spaces and the people who use them. Indeed, the studies demonstrate place-specific thresholds of tolerance in relation to public drinking. The evidence of the research in Stoke-on-Trent is that for most people, drinking on a night out is a pleasurable and safe experience. Indeed being drunk in public spaces, sharing this experience with a large number of people and being silly is part of the excitement and fun of a night out. While there is an understanding that violence and disorder are an ever present disadvantage of both drinking and the mixing of large numbers of people, few had

first hand experience of violence. Rather, drinking allows people to share a sense of fun, commonality and ownership of public space. To this end the street policing of people's drinking tends to recognise that drinkers are active citizens and economic agents and contributors to urban regeneration, only intervening when public disorder or individual safety is an issue. Likewise, within Eden political and popular depictions of drinking and drunkenness, as generating violence and disorder, are also considered misleading in the context of rural communities by older and younger residents alike. Rather, such representations miss the specificity and complexity of rural drinking cultures.

These two case studies have wider resonance for national policy and practice in two ways. First, the place-specific thresholds of tolerance in relation to public drinking identified in this report suggest that there is a need for more research at local levels to identify the specificity of drinking cultures and to create an evidence base upon which to develop local responses to the management of public drinking and provision of alcohol services. Second, notwithstanding the significance of place-specific drinking cultures the evidence from both case studies is that the recent intense focus on 'binge drinking', young people and unruly streets at night time mean that resources in both communities are potentially being over focused towards public disorder at the expense of addressing in-depth issues such as levels of domestic consumption, parenting practices in relation to alcohol, and other alcohol related problems such as domestic violence and health issues. The significance of this is highlighted further in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

## 4 Social patterns of drinking in Stoke-on-Trent and Eden

The results of the telephone survey showed that there are broad similarities in the number of units of alcohol consumed by respondents in both Eden and Stoke-on-Trent. For example, Table 3 shows that the amount of alcohol consumed on the heaviest drinking day in the week prior to the survey in both places was virtually identical.

In Stoke-on-Trent those in 'intermediate' and in 'managerial and professional' occupations were most likely to have reported that they drink heavily. In Eden it was those who have 'never worked or who are long-term unemployed', followed by 'managerial and professional' occupations that were most likely to describe themselves as drinking heavily. Yet, despite these high levels of self-reported drinking by professional people in both places it was those in lower supervisory and technical occupations and small employers who were most likely to agree strongly that they drink more during stressful times at work.

In both locations the majority of respondents spend up to £40 on a night out. There are clear differences in terms of the reasons why people drink between Stoke-on-Trent and Eden. In Stoke-on-Trent 29 per cent of respondents strongly agree that they drink because of peer/family pressure and 26 per cent because they want to get drunk:

Ann Peters: It was important to have a hangover. Because that proved how drunk you were the night before. And if you didn't have one you pretended to have one. We'd just talk about everything that happened. Oh my God I can't believe you were so drunk and you did that, oh my God, I just can't believe it, do you know what I mean.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Female, NS-SEC 1)

**Table 3 Alcohol consumption in Stoke-on-Trent and Eden on the heaviest drinking day in the week prior to the survey**

	Alcohol consumption on heaviest drinking day in the past week	
	Stoke-on-Trent	Eden
Drank nothing	40	41
Up to 4/3 units (up to safe limits for men/women)	9	9
More than 4/3, up to 8/6 units (above safe limits)	17	16
More than 8/6 units (dangerously above safe limits)	34	34

In contrast, in Eden, 26 per cent strongly agree that they drink to be sociable and 25 per cent to relax. This pattern would appear to reflect differences in the night-time economies of the two locations described earlier.

There were significant differences between Stoke-on-Trent and Eden in terms of the reasons given by non-drinkers for avoiding alcohol. In Stoke-on-Trent the most common response was a dislike of being drunk, whereas in Eden it was health reasons. This again may be related to the local drinking cultures described in Chapter 3.

The following sub-sections focus in more detail on the specific social patterns of drinking in relation to age, gender and faith.

### **Age: Who are the ‘binge drinkers’?**

The definition of binge drinking has evolved from a classification based on a weekly measure of consumption to one based on a measure of daily consumption, reflecting a recognition that weekly consumption figures can conceal short-term episodes of drinking to excess (see Appendix 5). The current definition of binge drinking used by the Department of Health (2007) is considered to be double the daily recommended levels of consumption or ‘consuming eight or more units for men and six or more units for women on at least one day during the week’ (in terms of actual alcohol unit consumption, this equates to approximately two thirds of a bottle of wine for a woman or four pints of normal strength beer for a man).

The *Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England* (Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, 2004) suggests: ‘Binge drinkers are those who drink to get drunk and are likely to be aged under 25. They are most likely to be men, although women’s drinking has been rising fast over the last ten years...’ However, the popular image of binge drinking or heavy drinking is associated with bad behaviour in public space by young people. Representations of binge drinking are problematic in that they conceal patterns of heavy drinking by other age groups, which take place in private rather than public space and which are not associated with anti-social behaviour, but which nonetheless are, according to medical definitions, ‘binge drinking’. Our research, consistent with ONS (2001) findings for the whole of England, clearly shows that drinking at this level and above was unremarkable in relation to our study group, and not simply the domain of those under 25 in the town and city centres on a Saturday night.

Whilst our local research has broadly verified the national picture of young people (aged 18–24) drinking at levels (i.e. dangerously above safe limits) which generally exceed other age groups in single sittings, the sustained drinking over the week at a heightened level of older adults is often not recognised, despite the fact this often represents similar overall consumption rates. As table 4 shows below, the percentage of people drinking above and dangerously above safe limits over the period of a week is strikingly similar between the 18–24 age group and older age groups (55+), with the exception of 18–24 year olds in Eden where levels of drinking amongst young people are heightened by the lack of alternative rural leisure opportunities (see Chapter 3).

The lack of recognition of the amount being drunk by ‘older adults’ (i.e. aged 25 and over) is largely due to its hidden nature: it takes place within the home (the significance of where drinking takes place is explored in more detail in Chapter 5) and is not associated with anti-social behaviour. For example, Table 5 below shows that the respondents aged 25 and over are significantly more likely to drink during a night in than respondents aged 18–24.

Very few of the interviewees aged 24 and over expressed any concern for their health in relation to their drinking practices. The majority felt that they drank a sensible amount and therefore did not have to worry about the risks associated with drinking (despite the fact that based upon what many individuals reported drinking, they actually drink quite heavily). In particular, those who drank wine on a regular basis appeared to have little or no awareness of the alcohol content they consumed or national recommended consumption levels, and indeed were most

**Table 4 Percentage of respondents who drank above or dangerously above safe limits over a week**

Age	Eden	Stoke-on-Trent
18–24	50	22
55–64	18	19
65+	17	18

**Table 5 Percentage of respondents who drink whilst having a night in**

Age	Percentage who drink during a night in
18–24	7
25–34	16
35–44	21
45–54	20
55–64	19
65+	17

likely to underestimate the alcohol content of their beverages. When the figures for the amount the survey respondents estimated they drank were compared with their actual consumption over the past week, it showed that older drinkers who drank above or dangerously above safe limits in the past week were far more likely than young people age 18–24 to underestimate their actual levels of consumption (see Table 6).

This lack of awareness amongst ‘older’ drinkers of how much they actually drink is further reflected in the casual attitude of some of the ‘older’ interviewees towards the alcohol content of the drinks which they consume and definitions of safe and unsafe drinking levels.

Anne Moyles: No, I have no idea really [*about recommended safe drinking guidelines*]. I mean I have read it quite a few times but I’ve no idea. Whether it’s five, I can’t remember ... I wouldn’t even know what a unit was ... So I don’t, don’t keep an awareness of it, on that either and I think it varies as well actually, if you’re, if you’re a larger person against a smaller person, then you can have so much more. And if you’ve not eaten and that lot.

(Eden, 35–55, Female, NS-SEC 3)

Linda Lewis: I can never remember [*laughs*]. And do you ever, would you ever look at the, the labels on the, on the back of things to see what, how many units or how much alcohol is in them ... So I don’t actually, it’s the taste more than anything.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 45–54 Female, NS-SEC 3)

Rob Edgerton: [*in response to a question about his awareness of safe drinking guidelines*] Well I mean I don’t, it’s twenty, twenty-eight or whether that’s come down to, whether that’s come down to about twenty, I don’t know, it’s come down to about twenty ... Which works out about, even that works out about ten pints doesn’t it?

(Stoke-on-Trent, 55–64, Male NS-SEC 7)

**Table 6 Percentage of respondents by age who drank above, or dangerously above, safe limits over the past week that underestimated their actual levels of consumption**

Age	Percentage who underestimated their actual level of alcohol consumption
18–24	2
25–44	9
44 +	14

In contrast, young people (18–24) commonly showed a more sophisticated awareness of the alcohol content of different drinks, how much they should be drinking and what constituted ‘binge drinking’. At the same time this group were dismissive about the health warnings associated with ‘binge drinking’ and were happy to admit to regular excess consumption. This is consistent with other recent research findings (Turning Point, 2004; Engineer *et al.*, 2003; Richardson and Budd, 2003) which look at young people’s attitudes to binge drinking, these also conclude that young people perceive little risk associated with episodes of heavy drinking other than to their personal safety. The main reason for this is that while young people recognise the dangers associated with heavy ‘binge’ drinking they also regard this pattern as only a temporary phase in their life (‘part of growing up’, ‘everybody does it’). In other words, they rationalise it, arguing that they have only been drinking for a short period of time (the last few years) and believe that at some point (most suggested their mid to late twenties) they will cut back their alcohol consumption:

Lisa Turner: I don’t get worried about [*her alcohol consumption*], because I don’t, I know binge drinking’s not, like you know, bad for your health and that, it is bad for your health and, but it doesn’t really affect how I drink or anything ... Like I’ll go out and get drunk but I don’t do it, I don’t think I do it like too often sort of thing.  
(Eden, 18–24, female, NS-SEC 2)

Melissa Worthington: No because I think I’m so young anyway, I haven’t done it [*drunk*] that much.

Interviewer: Right.

Melissa Worthington: I probably would if I was older ... I don’t think I’ll carry on like this you know.

Interviewer: Right, so it’s a rite of passage?

Melissa Worthington: Yeah, cos you’ve got to do it, you got to do it haven’t you?

(Eden, 18–24, Female, NS-SEC 2)

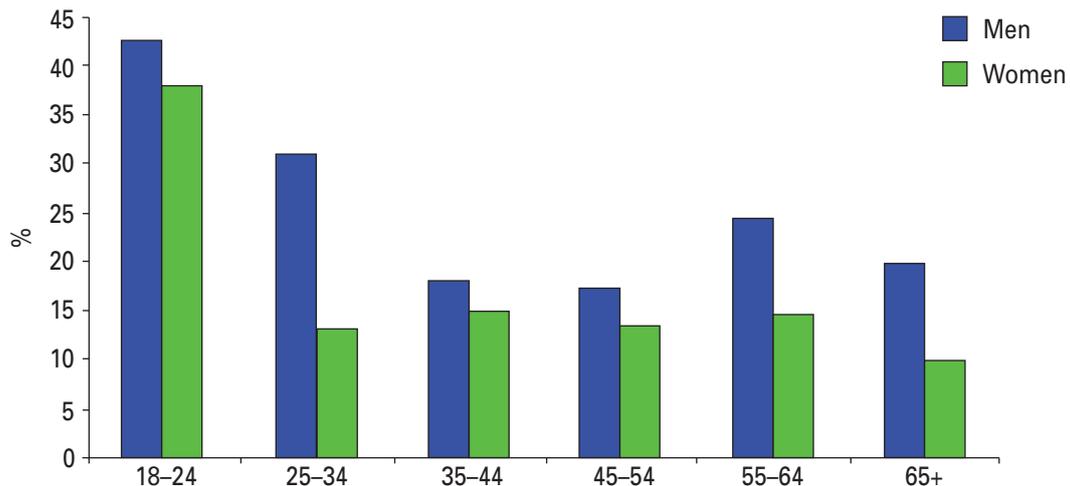
Peter Kirkland: If I’m honest I don’t really think about it too much ... although I do when I go out, I do obviously drink more than physically you should, I don’t, I don’t drink frequently enough to really, really do bad damage, no ... I think my drinking will probably slow down when I finish uni ... the sort of wanting to go and get drunk will definitely decrease more, as it has done from when I was sixteen.

(Eden, 18–24, Male, NS-SEC 5)

## Gender: respectability and responsibility

Men were more likely than women to drink above the recommended levels of safe alcohol consumption in the week prior to the survey across all age groups (Figure 1).

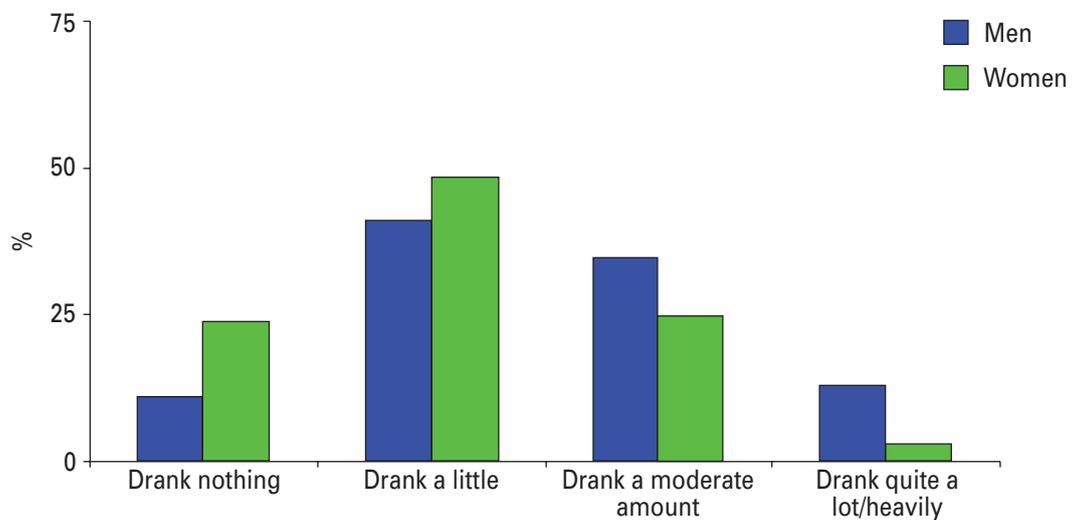
**Figure 1 Drinking above recommended levels of safe alcohol consumption in the week prior to the survey by age and gender**



Source: Drinking Places Questionnaire Survey Data for Stoke-on-Trent and Eden

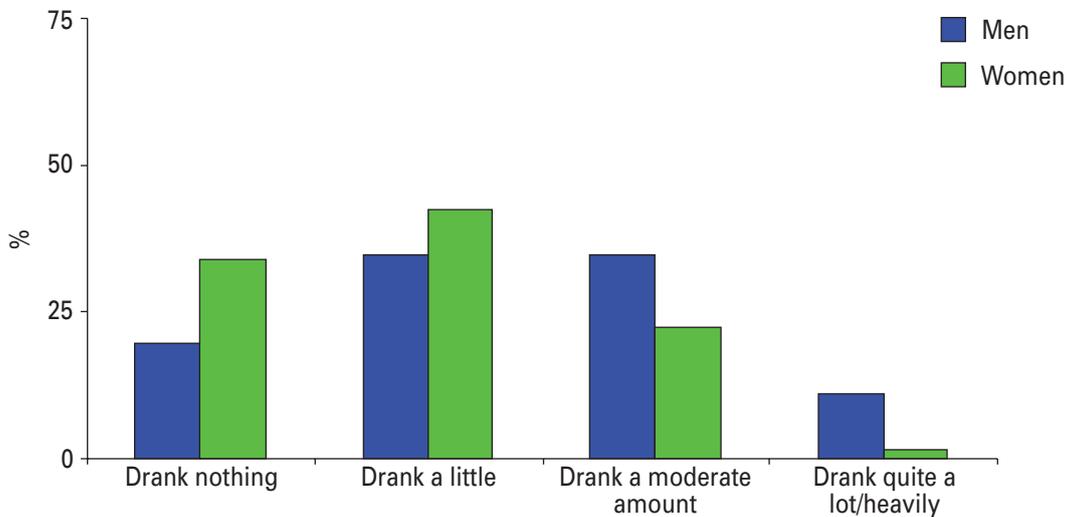
When this pattern is broken down into case study areas we see that in both Eden (Figure 2) and Stoke-on-Trent (Figure 3) there is a significant relationship between the levels that interviewees perceived themselves to drink and gender. For example, in Eden 48 per cent women claimed to have drunk a little in the week prior to the survey, compared to 41 per cent of men. Men were significantly more likely to claim that they drank quite a lot or heavily (13 per cent) than women in this period (3 per cent). In Stoke-on-Trent a very similar pattern emerged to that in Eden, with more women claiming to have drunk a little the week prior to the survey (42 per cent) compared to men (35 per cent), and men (11 per cent) again being more likely to report that they drank quite a lot/heavily than women (2 per cent).

**Figure 2 Eden respondents' perceived alcohol consumption by gender in the week prior to the survey**



Source: Drinking Places Data for Eden

**Figure 3 Stoke-on-Trent respondents' perceived alcohol consumption by gender in the week prior to the survey**



Source: Drinking Places Data for Stoke-on-Trent

Men in both case study locations were also much more likely than women to drink above, or dangerously above safe limits in the week prior to the survey (Table 7). More strikingly, when these figures for actual levels of consumption were compared with the percentage who characterised themselves as drinking a lot/heavily it shows that men and women in both locations who reported drinking dangerously above safe limits significantly underestimated how much they drank, with fewer than half describing themselves as having drunk a lot/heavily.

**Table 7 Men and women’s reported and perceived levels of alcohol consumption (by percentage) in the week prior to the survey for Stoke-on-Trent and Eden**

Reported actual alcohol consumption for the week prior to the survey				
	Stoke-on-Trent		Eden	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Drank above safe limits	10	5	11	5
Drank dangerously above safe limits	25	7	26	8
Description of how much the respondents perceived themselves to have drunk the week prior to the survey				
	Stoke-on-Trent		Eden	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Drank a moderate amount	35	22	35	25
Drank a lot/heavily	11	2	13	3

Men, as well as drinking more heavily than women, were also more likely to report drinking alone than women. Not surprisingly, men were also significantly more likely to drink during sporting events. There were also clear gender differences in alcohol consumption in relation to a night out. Women in both Stoke-on-Trent and Eden were (60 per cent) more likely than men (40 per cent) to drink before a night out, usually as part of the ritual of getting ready to go out; while men (77 per cent) were more likely to drink after a night out than women (23 per cent).

Within public drinking venues, where the research was conducted, there was a gendered geography of drinking amongst young people. Men tended to be more active and mobile within drinking spaces, often occupying the area near the bar, around a pool table, or darts board. Groups of more than two men rarely sat down together, unless watching sport or eating a meal. There was often a culture of ‘showing off’ associated with young men’s drinking. They also seemed keen to show a level of stamina by being able to drink heavily, and were competitive about the amount they drank and how quickly they did so. There was also an interesting tendency for men to drink the same drinks when in a group, and to not ask each other if they would like the same drink but to keep ordering ‘rounds’ as the extract from participant observation demonstrates:

The bar downstairs was pretty busy ... Quite a lot of men are stood alone at the bar or against the wall staring at women congregated in the seating areas, none of the men actually go up and talk to any of them. There appears to be a lot of drinking going on, with a lot of the men and women drinking bottled drinks. Standing and watching a group of men who order at the bar, one man pays and it appears his friend orders the next round straight after him, although the bar is getting busier so maybe it is because of that. They all have something in bottles, and accept the second drink in their other hand whilst drinking from the original. They look to be drinking pretty fast and in the five minutes I am stood there watching at least two of the men have put the first bottle down. The young women seem to be happily drinking too, but a couple of women at a table of around seven who have finished their drinks seem happy enough to sit and wait for the others to finish.

In contrast, women moved around less and were less visible even in the more crowded club atmosphere. They usually sat in groups with a focus on the social element of drinking. When they were together women tended to act very differently depending on whether there were any men in the group. Women only groups tended to be much louder and more 'obvious' than mixed groups. Women seemed to enjoy drinking as much as men but were less concerned about showing off. They seemed much less comfortable about ordering drinks. Where women did order they tended to approach the bars in groups. Women tended to be happier to drink at different paces (often ordering in smaller rounds) and to skip drinks. This enabled them to control how much they drank and how drunk they become more effectively.

While there was little dispute amongst the interviewees that women have greater access to public drinking than ever before it was also apparent that nevertheless women's drinking, and particularly drunkenness, is viewed more negatively than the same behaviour by men. In particular, public drinking is regarded as less respectable than drinking at home, with particular public scorn being reserved for older women who drink to excess in public. Such social attitudes about gender and respectability can have wider implications too. For some older women, going out for a drink with their husbands to a local pub or working men's club is an important part of their social lives. On being widowed they are isolated from this activity because while they only drink in moderation nonetheless they are self-conscious that 'respectable' women do not go to the pub alone, as this interviewee describes:

Doris Humphreys: And my husband and I used to drink wine, you know, he was a farmer so lunch times were always busy so we didn't get chance to do that sort of thing. It's only since we sort of retired but unfortunately

he died just two years ago. And so, I, you know that culture for me has all altered quite a bit. The going down to the pub has all stopped stone dead really. But before that we used to go to the pub on a regular basis.

(Eden, 55–64, Female, NS-SEC 3)

Women of all ages who were interviewed were conscious of the need to manage their ‘appearance’ in public especially when drunk. Individuals described, for example, how they stop drinking before they begin to appear out of control or pace their drinking so that they do not appear to be visibly drunk and have a sophisticated understanding of how much they can drink of particular products before they become drunk to varying degrees. This regulated pattern of drinking – which was also related to women’s need to manage their personal safety when out drinking – was contrasted with the less subtle way that men drink, as this interviewee explains:

Lisa Turner: They just sort of carry on going just for the sake of, you know even if they see, like girls will admit when they’re feeling ill won’t they? Whereas lads are more likely to carry on drinking ... my boyfriend used to like drink quite a lot and then whenever he went outside he’d always be sick and then he’d just carry on drinking the rest of the night but I just really couldn’t do that ... If I got to that stage I’d just go home.

(Eden, 18–24, Female, NS-SEC 2)

While some men identified having children as a factor in the changing of their drinking patterns (having less money and time) women tended to focus more upon the way that drinking alcohol, particularly in public, conflicts with the responsibilities of motherhood. Being seen to be a ‘good mother’ is a particular concern for young mothers, and lone mothers:

Claire Hall: I was determined to be a good mother, I wasn’t going to let anybody say I couldn’t because I was nineteen, so I think really, going to town [*i.e. out drinking*] and everything was just like a couple of years ago when I was thirty.

(Eden, 24–34, Female, NS-SEC 5)

Beyond concerns about how they will be perceived as mothers, women also express a need to limit their drinking for practical reasons. Despite changing gender roles women still take the lion’s share of responsibility for parenting and are aware of the need to ensure that their drinking patterns or hangovers do not inhibit their ability to look after their children.

While many pubs are now making an effort to be family friendly nonetheless women described how in many drinking establishments mothers with children are frequently treated as second class citizens, being relegated to segregated 'children's spaces' (usually dining areas, designated play areas or outside) within pubs, while men drink in the bar. While it is necessary to restrict children in this way because of licensing regulations the respondents complained that the spaces to which they are confined are generally unpleasant and unwelcoming environments. This in itself can be a deterrent to mothers wanting to drink in public space. This mother describes her experiences of 'the children's room' as both a child and a mother:

Margaret Sellars: Oh I could write a book about children's rooms in pubs ... we'd go out for a drink with my Dad and we were left to sit in this children's room, you know it was, some were just awful. They were about the size of a toilet and poor mum was sitting with us in there ... oh terrible places, you know, shove the children out there with the wives you know, but yes, we, my husband and myself with the kids, went through the whole children's rooms in pubs as well.  
(Eden, 45–55, Female, NS-SEC 4)

### **Contemporary temperance: Pakistani Muslim respondents' attitudes to alcohol**

All of the Pakistani/Muslim respondents (ten individual interviewees and three sets of intergenerational interviewees) acknowledged that there are significant levels of alcohol consumption within their community, despite religious prohibitions on drinking. However, this activity is largely confined to young men. A common pattern appears to be that young men start drinking in their mid to late teens, largely as a result of peer pressure and curiosity. Informants described alcohol as giving them confidence – particularly with women – and as an escape from the stresses of everyday family life. They often drink explicitly to get drunk. The most common drinks consumed are spirits bought from off-licences. Much of this drinking has to take place in informal spaces (such as the park, in cars, bus shelters, etc.) rather than at home or in pubs or bars for risk of being seen by family or community members (although some informants described going to public venues in parts of the city not frequented by the Asian community). Particular areas of Stoke-on-Trent were also described as potentially unsafe for minority ethnic groups, who may be subject to racism or the threat of violence from drunk revellers. The informants recounted numerous strategies that they have used to conceal their drinking from their parents:

Farooq Hussain: A lot of, lot of young people do it ...They do it secretive with their mates, yeah, they're not going to do it in the open because they're Muslims, you know bad thing, you know they get highlighted and they don't want that cover, that bracket under you.

Interviewer: So where do you think they do it then?

Farooq Hussain: Parked up in cars. Out in colleges. Where nobody can see them, anywhere where they think they can't get caught.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Male, NS-SEC 3)

Bazid Nazar: I can remember we used to go to Dixie Fried Chicken, have a chicken and so on, I used to walk my mate home ... it's about what, three quarters of a mile, it's not far, it's ten, fifteen minute walk, but it used to feel like the longest walk ever, it felt like it was lasting for days and days, I was going home right, and I was thinking right okay, am I sober, am I straight, is anyone going to be up at home and so on? And you know I used to walk home and look to see if there was a light on, and if I'd see a light on downstairs, I used to just walk around the streets for a bit and just wait for the light to go off then just creep in the house and go straight to bed, so it was just that walking home was I think, it was more a feeling of, probably guilt, I've had a good night, I've had a brilliant night, I've really enjoyed myself and now it was time to back down, come back down to reality now, I think it was just a guilt trip like, really, walking home.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Male, NS-SEC 4)

However, this pattern of drinking appears to be a relatively temporary phase, once young men marry they take their family and community obligations more seriously and abstain from consuming alcohol. In particular, emotions of guilt and shame were frequently described in relation to married men drinking compared to young, single men. Alcohol was also associated with a lack of respect, a lack of control and as degrading. At the same time some of the Muslim respondents described the sense of pride they feel in their ability to resist the temptation to drink and in their faith. They also identified financial and health benefits from abstinence:

Bazid Nazar: What I've seen a lot of people do grow out of it as soon as they get into their twenties, they do start drinking about sixteen,

seventeen years old, and they do very slowly grow out of it, and mainly generally the places they're buying them from is, just buy them from the off-licence and drink them in the parks and like that, don't really get into the habit of going to the pubs or clubs or something like that ... I think with, especially with Asian families I think, see people seem to get married earlier and so on and they get more family oriented ... I think when you do seem to get married a lot, obviously at an early age and you have children your responsibilities and your, I don't know, your main, your main focus on life completely changes then, it's not about getting a drink, it's about making sure you've got a roof over your head and got food on the table and looking after your kids.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Male, NS-SEC 4)

In this respect the informants argued that drinking by young men is an absent presence in the Muslim/Pakistani community because 'the community' knows that it occurs but this behaviour is not publicly acknowledged or managed, indeed it is rarely acknowledged within families either, except between siblings. Some informants claimed that this is because a lack of openness and intergenerational dialogue characterises Muslim family relations more generally.

Drinking by women however is much more strongly prohibited and policed by parents/the community. It was only going away to university that created the space for one female informant to experiment with alcohol:

Uddin Masood: I think that with a lot of parents, especially with boys, it would be a case of ask no questions, hear no lies, but with girls it's definitely, definitely taboo and you'd actually, a lot of Asian girls, and I think I'm probably the exception rather than the rule, aren't, don't really have the freedoms to be able to go and do it in the first place unless they go to university and they're away from home.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Female, NS-SEC 2)

Afzul Mohammed: I think definitely if it's known that a girl's drinking, if a girl's drinking she'll get it from all sides, like the guys will look at her, the younger guy drinkers will look at her in a funny way, all the people, I think they see some disdain towards drinking but they do overlook their sons drinking it, their daughter's doing it she'll be whisked off to Pakistan.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 45–54, Male, NS-SEC 2)

Those informants who do not drink prefer to socialise with other non-drinkers, effectively this contributes to the social segregation of the Muslim population from

night-time economy leisure spaces. Informants described self-excluding themselves from public places, or events where alcohol is involved referring to these as sites of corruption, 'dirty' and 'illegal' (under Islamic law). Indeed, one interviewee claimed that social integration was a threat to the Muslim faith because it would result in more young people drinking to fit in with the wider social environment.

## **Summary**

This chapter has identified patterns of drinking and attitudes to alcohol according to age, gender and faith, and has highlighted some of the social implications of these. Notably, young people ignore the potential health implications of 'binge' drinking because they justify it as a phase and so do not recognise the potential longer term risks of high levels of alcohol consumption. Amongst older people there is a clear lack of awareness of the alcohol content of what drinks they consume and the extent to which their consumption patterns might be defined as 'binge' drinking. There are also important differences in the way that men and women drink and the meanings of it for them, as well as significant levels of alcohol consumption within the Muslim community, a group that is usually presumed to abstain on the basis of faith.

## 5 ‘The supermarket is my local’: exploring domestic drinking practices

The recent political and media furore over the rise of city centre binge drinking has left domestic drinking as a relatively invisible, but nonetheless highly significant, phenomenon. In fact in Britain 46 per cent of drinking adults do most of their drinking at home (compared with 42 per cent in Germany, 31 per cent in France and 23 per cent in Spain) (Mintel, 2003). In economic terms this means that the off-trade – which is now dominated by the major supermarkets at the expense of specialist suppliers – accounts for 43 per cent of market volume (Mintel, 2003). In social terms, regular domestic drinking is more popular than the frequent use of commercial venues: in 2004 48 per cent of British adults had a drink at home at least once a week, compared to only 28 per cent who did so outside the home. What is also striking is that the balance of beverages bought and sold through the on and off-trades is different; notably, wine is the most popular drink in the home, with an estimated 80+ per cent of all wine being sold through the off-trade in 2004 (Mintel, 2005).

Notwithstanding the economic importance of domestic drinking, and its popularity as a social practice, the relative lack of political and press interest in this issue is also reflected in the paucity of academic research exploring domestic consumption practices. What literature exists tends to take one of two forms. On the one hand, there are studies which consider the problems associated with drinking, for example domestic violence (Hutchinson, 1999; Leonard, 2001) and the vulnerability of children whose parents misuse alcohol (Edleson, 1999, Markowitz and Grossman, 1998), or the management of socially marginal forms of drinking, for example drinking amongst older people who are recipients of home care support (Herring and Thom, 1997). On the other hand, researchers have considered the importance of parental influence and home environment in shaping young people’s drinking practices (Lowe *et al.*, 1993; Valentine *et al.*, 2008). Whilst such research tackles unquestionably important issues, noticeable for their absence are studies which examine the everyday domestic drinking practices of a broader diversity of social groups who would not consider themselves as having an alcohol problem, or to be suffering the consequences of other people’s problematic drinking.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the everyday social practices of this much more diverse range of drinkers and non-drinkers, and to uncover the broader implications of a widespread but overlooked social trend.

## Home: A prime drinking venue

The popularity of domestic drinking suggested by trade figures (Mintel 2003, 2005) was clearly reflected in our study. Nearly three quarters of people in our questionnaire survey said they regularly drank at home, with 63 per cent also listing family’s and friends’ homes as regular drinking venues. As table 8 shows, these figures outstrip the numbers regularly drinking in pubs/bars, restaurants, hotels and clubs, although these particular venues were statistically significantly and more popular in urban Stoke-on-Trent than rural Eden.

**Table 8 Percentages of people who drank regularly in different venues over the past 12 months**

	Eden	Stoke-on-Trent
Home	73	73
Friends’/family’s houses	64	63
Pubs/bars	55	64
Restaurants	48	57
Hotels	26	30
Clubs	20	25
Public events	19	23

Source: Drinking Places Questionnaire Survey

Interestingly, there was no statistical association between drinking levels (the amount someone drinks) and venues. It is not the case therefore that heavy drinkers combine domestic consumption with drinking in commercial venues, or that cost means heavy drinkers are most closely associated with the home. Rather drinkers of all levels are equally associated with each of these venues.

Differences did emerge in terms of venue choice by social groupings and by those people living in different household types. For example, in terms of social class, those in managerial and professional employment are significantly more likely to drink at home than those in socio-economic groups 3 –7<sup>3</sup>. In relation to age, younger people were unsurprisingly most likely to drink alcohol in all public venues, with the under 25s preferring venues like pubs/bars and clubs. Focusing on domestic drinking there was a fairly even spread with age when considering consumption in people’s own homes; however, the under 35s reported being significantly more likely to drink in friends’ and family’s homes than the older age groups. Gender had relatively little impact upon venue choice, although women are more likely to report drinking in friends’ and family’s homes than men. Household type also appears to be important: those living alone are significantly less likely to drink at home than all other groups, emphasising the social nature of drinking. This is a form of sociability more likely to

be shared in some households than others, for example, those who live with partners and children are significantly more likely to drink at home than those who live with their parents.

Drinking alcohol within the home is an important part of home-based social life with 56 per cent of the adults surveyed saying that they were likely to have a drink at home during a night in. This drinking can be associated with a diverse range of activities (see table 9). The combination of alcohol and food consumption is the most popular, with dinner parties and standard meals topping the list (36 per cent and 32 per cent respectively) although drinking whilst watching DVD/videos, sport and TV are also common activities for a smaller minority (26 per cent, 24 per cent and 20 per cent respectively).

**Table 9 Percentages of people who drink at different times and with different activities**

	Likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Unlikely
Dinner parties	36	6	58
With meals	32	7	61
Watching DVD/videos	26	7	67
Watching sport	24	7	69
Watching TV	20	8	73

Source: Drinking Places Questionnaire Survey

Moreover, home drinking is also an important component of people's nights out. Of the adults surveyed 40 per cent claimed that they have a drink at home before they go out and 23 per cent claim that they drink on their return home after a night out.

## Domestic drinking lifestyles

The results of the questionnaire survey demonstrate that drinking can play an important role in home-based sociability. Drinking with dinner parties tops the list of likely occasions on which people would drink in the domestic environment, and this can take both formal and, as Jenny describes, more informal forms:

Jenny Rush: I have friends round on a Thursday or I go to theirs, I do drink a full bottle of red wine to myself. It doesn't touch the sides really, it doesn't affect me in any way. [She continues later] A group of us, about six of us, so girl friends. We have a takeaway at either one of our houses, you know once a week, it's a regular thing.  
(Stoke-on-Trent, 35–44, Female, NS-SEC 4)

The importance of being able to offer visitors an appropriate alcoholic beverage of their choice is highlighted by the amounts and varieties of drink which people keep in their homes. Drinkers not only kept alcohol that suited their own personal tastes in the home, but often also a range of standard drinks they thought it appropriate to be able to offer visitors and sometimes the personal favourites of friends/family who they might expect to visit. Indeed, it is striking that the social importance of being able to offer alcohol to suit others’ tastes meant that many non-drinkers also kept alcohol in their house for others:

Max Speer: There’s usually some [*alcohol*] knocking about [*the house*]. People, you know other people, drink it and people bring it, you know if you went around for dinner, they bring wine or I’d buy wine for people when they come round for dinner and it’s not a, you know, dry house.

Interviewer: And does that surprise you and your friends and family that you don’t drink but then you’ll keep alcohol in the house for them if they want any?

Max Speer: I think it pleases them more than surprises them they don’t think that they come to my house and they go on the wagon for the night.  
(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Male, NS-SEC 5)

This social domestic drinking with people from outside the household, while important, is only one aspect of domestic drinking. More important for some is the more everyday use of alcohol to wind down after work. Audrey Bennett, for example, who drinks wine with her meal every night explains that both she and her partner work long hours and often have further work to finish off when they get home. When she has sorted this out she likes to drink wine whilst cooking and eating to help her switch off:

Audrey Bennett: Well I think I like to switch off, because I tend to get home and ...sort out anything I need, because quite often I’ve been in different meetings and, sort all that out and then I actually start to relax when I start doing the cooking, this is when I’ll want a glass of wine and quite happy drinking while I’m in the kitchen doing the cooking. And that’s me winding down really.

(Eden, 45–55, Female, NS-SEC 1)

While for Audrey drinking wine whilst cooking is a key part of this process, other respondents were equally happy to wind down with a take away or the television:

Allan Cummins: If it's been a hard day at work and what not, and it's just, I've got an empty evening ahead of me, I'll get some food and some alcohol and just sit round and chill.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Male, NS-SEC 5)

Charlotte Heaton: I'd rather sit in the house than go and sit in a smoky *[pub]*. I'd rather have a bottle of wine and watch telly. *[She continues later]* I find it relaxes me and my husband likes it. It relaxes him, he's got quite a stressful job. *[She continues later]* Well normally, when we sit down like tonight we probably sit down and my husband will go and play his guitar, he's got his guitar, so he'll go and play the guitar and I'll probably watch Coronation Street, he hates anything like that, so he's out of the way, and then we'll sit down together about nine o'clock and then, I'd say a bottle of wine will last us two and half hours between us and that's it, bedtime.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 45–54, Female, NS-SEC 2)

However, younger single respondents were more likely to describe combining domestic drinking with a night out in order to wind down:

Ann Peters: *[P]*eople come, people come to my house and meet us there, and we'll drink vodka all together and then we'll go out and then we'll drink when we get back as well.

Interviewer: So you'd be chatting about what the night's going to be like or where you're going or what kind of stuff?

Ann Peters: Yeah, yeah what we did last week ... we'll talk about work as well, as we unwind, we'll talk about work and what's happened there, because *[my friend]* has got quite a stressful job as well and we sort of really offload on each other and get it all out, then we're ready to go out.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Female, NS-SEC 1)

The bodily feelings induced by alcohol consumption – including its ability to help some people wind down after work – leads to it being used as both a treat and a treatment. Margaret Sellers' consumption of alcohol illustrates both these trends. On the one hand, she views alcohol as something of a luxury which she can reward herself:

Margaret Sellers: I do drink at home during the week, but yeah there is an element of luxury about it I suppose, it's treating myself and being good to myself and getting something nice out of drinking you know, it's, sometimes what I really like doing to be really decadent, just take a big glass to bed, to bed with me when I'm reading. You know if you sort of think there's nothing to watch on telly, I'll take a big glass of wine to bed and read, and it's lovely, it feels really decadent. And, and relaxing and lovely, so I like to do that as well. I suppose it is a bit of a luxury, I'm treating myself and being kind to myself sort of thing.

(Eden, 45–55, Female, NS-SEC 4)

On the other hand, this treat can also be used as a treatment to help relieve excessive stress or feelings of depression:

Margaret Sellers: I think I comfort drink if I have a bad day, or it's a Tuesday and I think, and there's not a bottle open, I think oh sod it that's what it's there for, I'll just have a glass of wine. But I wouldn't drink the whole bottle. [*She continues later*] ... I came home on Friday feeling really, really, really down, fed up and I opened a bottle of Cava, and I had the whole bottle with orange juice and I went to bed at half past eight, I woke up feeling fantastic the next morning, so it obviously did the trick you know, it was like wow that's worked, but that, I mean that's fairly extreme, I wouldn't normally drink that sort of drink on my own, I think it's more of a social drink.

(Eden, 45–55, Female, NS-SEC 4)

The ability to use alcohol to wind down in domestic contexts appears to be fuelled by easier access to, and the greater affordability of, alcohol. The fact that regular domestic drinking is more common among professional and managerial groups than small employers and own account workers and those in lower supervisory and technical occupations (although it is also seen here) suggests that affordability continues to be an important factor. Indeed, many middle-class respondents explained that drinking wine at home had changed from being a rare or weekly treat to something which they could now afford on a regular basis as their own incomes increased and perhaps more importantly as the price of wine has fallen relative to average earnings (Mintel, 2005). However, it is also important to note that some interviewees on lower incomes prioritised domestic drinking as it is substantially cheaper than going out for an evening. In addition to price concerns, some older respondents were clear that wine had become more socially accessible as it now no longer required specialist knowledge to purchase it, instead being available with the weekly food shop:

Anthony Oram: You know again when I was young, well there weren't supermarkets but I mean the, the wine shops were, I mean you were almost reluctant to go in there. I mean you know they weren't friendly places if you like and you didn't go in to, to be made a fool of if you didn't know much about the wine. I mean it wasn't just like off the shelves at Tesco's or anything like that.

(Eden, 65+, Male, NS-SEC 1)

This freer availability of alcohol through supermarkets has been important in changing the drinking landscape and facilitating domestic drinking. In the words of one respondent:

Allan Cummins: Sainsbury's is my local.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Male, NS-SEC 5)

Changes in individuals' lives are equally as important as these broader social changes over time. The life course, and particularly significant events such as marriage/partnership and the arrival of children, often mark significant changes in people's drinking practices. The most notable impact of the 'family' phase of the lifecycle is a shift away from the importance of commercial drinking venues where new partners can be met and towards the increased importance of domestic drinking environments. Some of this shift is simply practical in nature. These interviewees, for example, explain that they stopped going out to drink as often and shifted to home based consumption when they had responsibility for children because they no longer had as much money and going out required arranging alternative care:

Reginald Best: We didn't drink so much when we had children, you find a big change when your first child comes ... You suddenly don't have quite so much money and there's only one of you then working whereas previously you're two and you settle down really and your life becomes boring.

(Eden, 55–65, Male, NS-SEC 1)

Mark Simpson: We couldn't go out because she had kids, she couldn't get a babysitter so, like Friday night we didn't go out, we stopped in so we'd get the beer in for Friday nights.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 35–44, Male, NS-SEC 5)

This shift towards domestic drinking with marriage/cohabitation and in some cases childrearing has interesting implications for the amount of alcohol consumed. Some mothers were explicit that their childrearing responsibilities meant that they consumed less alcohol than in their youth as they needed to be able to get up early

in the morning with young children, and wanted to be in a condition where they could respond to problems if required. Lone parent Helen Winner, for example, explains that she drinks Lambrusco or Lambrini which are low alcohol drinks so that she would be able to look after her daughter and drive her to hospital (which is some considerable distance away in this rural area) if she needed to:

Helen Winner: I think that a lot of it is that I don't drink too much when I'm home because what happens if? ... The rest of my family live in Penrith, and I was the only one of my sisters that could drive, but it's not as if if anything happens I could ring my sister up ... and say oh my God, Milly's had an accident can you come up, I've been drinking.  
(Eden, 24–34, Female, NS-SEC 5).

However, this pattern of low domestic alcohol consumption when children are very young is far from universal, and increasingly less common as children get older. Indeed, as Anne Moyles explains the shift from public to private consumption practices can result in an increase rather than a decrease in the units of alcohol consumed:

Anne Moyles: I don't go out to nightclubs anymore, we stay very local now, I do a lot more drinking at home, you know, me and Stephen will crack open a bottle of wine most evenings, we don't go out to the pub that much, and we drink more than what we did, overall, *[laughs]* than when I was going out nightclubbing ... Because we do it over the week and yeah I'll still get blotto most weekends and things like that, just, we just do it sort of quietly ... not going out nightclubbing, that sort of thing.  
(Eden, 35–44, Female, NS-SEC 3).

Notwithstanding the amount of alcohol consumed by some in the home, concerns about the health impacts of domestic drinking were limited to a minority of interviewees. Such people tended to have specific alcohol related issues driving this decision. Julie Dodd, for example, an alcoholic who having been dry for three years chooses to not allow alcohol in her house. Jeremy Collins has a severe heart condition and diabetes which means that, while his wife can drink at home, he is now teetotal for health reasons. In the absence of factors such as these, concerns about health and domestic drinking were very few and far between:

Malcolm Patterson: I've always taken the position that the, you know that, you know a little bit of what you fancy of anything probably doesn't do you any harm.  
(Stoke-on-Trent, 55–64, Male, NS-SEC 1)

## Drinking places

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Jenny Rush: It's completely slipped my mind now how much you are supposed to have.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 35–44, Female, NS-SEC 4)

There is a clear mismatch here between perceptions of health risk and unhealthy practices. The telephone survey showed that 33 per cent of Stoke-on-Trent respondents and 34 per cent of Eden respondents drank dangerously above safe limits on their heaviest drinking day in the past week (see appendices 3 and 6). Moreover, both the interviewees cited above had drunk above recommended guidelines (8 units for men, 6 units for women) in the previous week, and interviewees regularly described domestic consumption practices that exceeded weekly guidelines and, less often, daily amounts of domestic drinking that constituted binge drinking.

Indeed, not only were the vast majority of interviewees unconcerned about the health implications of domestic drinking practices, some were also keen to argue that drinking at home with a meal was a healthy part of a Mediterranean lifestyle. Here the publicity given to studies which suggest that small amounts of red wine can have health benefits for men and post-menopausal women, was mobilised as part of a position that constructed wine drinking as healthy. Some deploying these arguments were not themselves heavy drinkers:

Maurice Haige: [*I like*] red more than white. I've heard that's good for you. That's brilliant, it absorbs your cholesterol and clears out the blood vessels and I prefer red than white.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 55–64, Male, NS-SEC 1)

Others, such as Audrey Bennett who regard the Government's recommended units as 'just a very minute amount', go further and argue that alcohol needs to be considered in the context of a wider lifestyle, suggesting that a Mediterranean diet although high in alcohol also contained oily fish and was therefore more healthy than one containing too much saturated fat. She, therefore, chose not to be panicked by what she regards as health scares stating that:

Audrey Bennett: I mean I'm reasonably fit, I do eat healthy food, and I don't think that I'm seriously damaging myself by drinking wine with a meal each evening.

(Eden, 45–55, Female, NS-SEC 1)

In this way, the limited health benefits of small amounts of alcohol consumption have been mobilised to justify domestic drinking practices where alcohol intake can exceed Government guidelines. Equally important, in rejecting what are

characterised by some as the moving goalposts of health advice, is the notion that as individual drinking events do not induce illness in the drinker they are not inherently unhealthy. Amanda Pindar for example, suggests that sharing a bottle of wine with her husband five or six times a week convinces her that the practice is not unhealthy:

I do have concerns about drinking but I, I still think that my drinking is within manageable limits, and I never feel ill after I've drunk the half bottle so you know when we've drunk that ... we just quit and that's it ... today with anything, clean your teeth, whatever you eat, how much you drink, you know the goalposts keep moving all the time, and it's difficult to be sure that, but I don't think it's harmful, not the amount I drink.  
(Stoke-on-Trent, 55–64, Female, NS-SEC 2)

The result is that domestic drinking, unlike public binge drinking, remains a normal, unremarkable, unproblematic practice in the eyes of many, notwithstanding the health problems such practices can cause.

Where drinking is only clearly marked as problematic in the home environment is when it is associated with domestic violence. Several respondents discussed the impact of alcohol related domestic violence on their lives. This included the role of domestic violence in mediating their own drinking habits, the impact of domestic violence on their family relationships and the impact of neighbours' alcohol related domestic problems. For example, a local authority councillor in Stoke-on-Trent explained:

I've never drunk because of my Dad. He worked in the steelworks in Etruria and we used to live on the corner where Courts furniture is now. Well that big redbrick building that is now office space was a pub. So at closing time every night I used to open the front door and watch my father stagger or crawl across the road, fall in through the front door and then collapse on the floor. It has quarry tiles so he used to wake up freezing cold in the middle of the night and stumble up to bed ...

Other respondents identified how family related alcohol problems had made them think about, and attempt to control, their own drunken behaviour. For example, Bob Bennet said:

My old man ... he's an alcoholic so, he'd drink a fair bit and it wasn't always a good situation but then sometimes it was a good situation and that's, that's ...

Interviewer: So he'd drink most nights would he?

## Drinking places

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Bob Bennett: No, actually, no, it's not like a sort of heavy drinker as such, more of a sort of crazy drink too much, binge drinking. Spirit drinking thing, you know ... just a secret drinker and things like that.

Interviewer: Oh so were you aware of it at that age then?

Bob Bennett: Yeah, yeah, 'cos it's like, you know even though they think you can't smell vodka and stuff you can, so yeah. He didn't go out, he always drank at home.  
(Stoke-on-Trent, 18–24, Male, NS-SEC 5)

Reflecting on the impact of his father's drinking on the break up of his family he continues:

Bob Bennett: they sort of split up and later on, and my mum wouldn't drink at all, because of that, bad experiences and wouldn't have drink in the house, but then he would, carried on the same way, stopping and starting.

Interviewer: How do you think your dad's drinking has impacted attitudes towards alcohol, does it impact on where you drink or ...?

Bob Bennett: Yeah, well, dad drank secretly things like that. Yeah, yeah, really, and just trying to be a bit of a better drunk than that but not always that easy is it?  
(Stoke-on-Trent, 18–24, Male, NS-SEC 5)

Jenny Rush, for example, talked about the impact of her neighbour's cycle of alcohol related domestic violence:

Jenny Rush: I've had to go across before now, while I'm sober, during the day, middle of the night, early morning, any time, and, and I've had to like prise people apart. Through fighting ... a couple plus children ... Knocking on our door and the police: 'My mum's drunk'. So, but my children have seen that ... we've tried to break off ties and not get involved but we've lived here eighteen years and it's been constant.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 35–44, Female, NS-SEC 2)

Key service providers from both case-study areas commented on the high levels of alcohol related violence bound up in the lives of people who seek out their services:

I would say that a high proportion of the people that come here, both male and female, have had, have experienced domestic violence, be that psychological or physical in some form, and increasing numbers of, levels of men reporting it. Ask me five years ago had I sat in front of a man that would have said my wife gets very, very drunk and she hurts me and I drink because I need to block it all out.

*[edit...later she continued]*

But certainly because I come from a criminal justice background as a worker as well, the police have had to undergo a whole change in their way of thinking, particularly towards both, both women obviously, but also towards men, men reporting it, because traditionally it was laughed at.

*[edit later she returned to this theme]*

But now it's being taken very seriously and there's a great deal of empathy within the police I think, that you know, men can experience domestic violence and that situations get out of control because another person's drunk as well and there is a distinction there.

*[edit, later she returned to this theme]*

And bullying issues that's on the rise as reported reasons, as part of our monitoring form we've got, there is some ... for example we would, take a look, it's not robust I should say.

(Stoke-on-Trent, Alcohol Service Provider)

While alcohol service providers interviewed identified the importance of alcohol related domestic violence to their work there was an acknowledgement that it was still a hidden and overly ignored issue in policy terms. This was particularly true in terms of access to support, advice and help:

Definitely in domestic violence there's a very strong link between alcohol and abuse, that's, that sort of, you know without doubt, again I think we need to work with perpetrators and utilise anger management services, but then you know often these people are the nicest people you would possibly wish to meet and they're fully aware of you know and it's the drink that turns them aggressive, it would be very interesting to have some psychological research into that, what is it? What is it in alcohol that triggers the mind to want to fight and be aggressive? Again, rurality plays

quite a key part in alcohol and the link it has to domestic ... people that are very isolated, geographically and therefore they don't have a network necessarily of support, like perhaps if you live in a town and family and friends were in a town they're easily accessible, and that's not the case in, in many areas and you know people are putting up with domestic abuse because they can't see another way out, you know to walk away from everything you've, you know lived with and worked for is very, very hard and, even the support services, they don't access all the rural areas.  
(Eden, Alcohol Service Provider)

## Summary

The priority given to public drinking cultures by both Government policy and the media in recent years has detracted attention from domestic drinking practices which account for 43 per cent of the drinks market in terms of volume. Although social scientists have undertaken valuable work looking at problematic drinking in the home, we too have been guilty of overlooking the importance of apparently banal domestic drinking practices. Taken together, the consequences of such neglect are that an important part of British culture has remained hidden from view. This is important because whilst as a nation we are acutely aware of issues to do with young people binge drinking in public space, the health implications of routine domestic drinking for a much broader spectrum of the population have not been placed in the spotlight. This means that many, whose domestic consumption far exceeds Government recommended weekly limits, continue to regard their own practices as unremarkable. The health dangers of domestic drinking are far from apparent because binge drinking, although technically referring to periods of episodic heavy alcohol consumption, has come in cultural terms to mean dangerous drinking by young people in the streets of urban Britain (as we outlined in Chapter 3 above). This leaves many of those who consume high levels of alcohol in very different social circumstances feeling unwarrantedly insulated from concern. In the following chapter we reflect in more detail on the processes through which people are first introduced to alcohol and on the extent to which the contemporary drinking patterns described have evolved throughout individuals' lives, and between generations.

## 6 Learning to drink: intergenerational patterns of alcohol consumption

There are significant patterns in terms of similarities and differences in experiences of drinking across three generations. As our research involved adults aged 18+ these are defined here for the purposes of this report as: the '*older generation*' (mid 50s and above); the '*mid generation*' (30s to 40s); and the '*younger generation*' (late teens to 20s).

The 'older generation' are the group that grew up with the most social prohibition on drinking alcohol. Drinking in public space in the period when they were young was very much a male pursuit. However, there was an understanding that fathers policed their sons' behaviour because it would reflect badly on them – not only in terms of drinking behaviour but also their appearance in public:

Carl Allan: going back pre, my father died in nineteen seventy, I used to go down to the pub and say he'd got your half there and ... I went down one night with a ... big ... collar and he pulled me on one side and he'd got a couple of his mates there. And he said don't come down here, don't come down here like that, he said. Collar and tie. This was a bloody Thursday night this was, half past ten, yeah, and I never, I didn't argue with him, I respected what he said.

(Stoke-on-Trent, aged 65+, Male, NS-SEC 4)

While the interviewees cannot recall specific rules in relation to alcohol consumption, they were aware that there were unspoken expectations, particularly for women, that meant that they were inhibited from openly drinking underage in front of their parents. Nonetheless, all the men recalled 'dabbling' in drink without their parents' knowledge and also that some underage drinking by young men (usually accompanied by their fathers or another male relative) was also sanctioned within community spaces like the pub. For women, leaving home offered the first freedom to drink but it was still not a dominant part of their lives. Here, Amanda Pindar describes the anonymity afforded to her by being a student nurse during the late 1950s:

Amanda Pindar: Well I left school at sixteen and went to be a nurse, cadet nurses they were and it was in Northallerton, which is a market town in Yorkshire. And certainly in those days, you know there was really only drinking to be done and then I think I must have drunk quite a lot ... there was nothing else in those days, so, you know ... I can't remember

particularly ever getting blotto but I never drank at home. I suppose in those days it was silly things like Cherry B.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 55–64, Female, NS-SEC 2)

The 'mid generation' recall that alcohol played an important role in their parents' lives. Amongst the middle-class respondents most of them remember a drinks cabinet at home, that their parents would entertain friends for dinner parties while they and their siblings were banished upstairs, and that drink driving was more socially acceptable. Among the interviewees from 'working class' backgrounds drinking was more strongly associated with public drinking particularly something their fathers did at the pub. For this generation, most were introduced to or allowed to experiment with alcohol at Christmas or other special family occasions but they also drank underage without their parents' knowledge in both commercial venues and informal public spaces (such as drinking with friends in church yards, in the park and so on). This involved trying to 'pass' as older in pubs, and obtaining alcohol from siblings or from the family home to drink with friends. These practices were key elements of joining in with different local drinking cultures, and involved negotiating or asserting this participation with family members. Sometimes they were caught out by their parents, several recalled experiences of getting very drunk and then being sick or passing out when they got home. As Jane Cox remembers:

The only thing I remember is when I would come in ... extremely pissed. And my Dad kind of telling me how stupid I was or something but I don't, yeah, desperately trying to get him to shut up because I was just about ... to be sick [*laughs*].

(Stoke-on-Trent, 45–54, Female, NS-SEC 1)

While these misdemeanours often resulted in a stern telling off, several of the interviewees also recalled that their parents acknowledged, in reprimanding them, that they had marked a rite of passage – 'you have learnt your lesson now'.

Anne Peters: The first time I drank away from my family's influence ... I actually stole a, a liqueur, it was in a really fancy bottle ... and took it up to the park ... With my friends, and of course got absolutely hammered and was sick everywhere, I poured it [*away*], because ... obviously you can't take it back half drunk. So, yeah, so we drank all of that, and then, that carried on, we used to do that on a weekly basis. She used to have this cupboard just full. My granddad used to make wine, you know had loads of fruit juice, we used to take whatever we could and like, you know we used to Johnny Mack, which is really expensive whisky, we used to take it to the park and neck it ... we'd drink anything.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Female, NS-SEC 1)

The 'younger generation' largely recall being introduced to alcohol at a young age within a familial context and describe a much more relaxed attitude from their parents towards their experiments with alcohol than the mid and older generations. Several interviewees recounted examples of when their parents or friends' parents would allow them (especially in the lead up to being 18) to consume alcohol with their friends in the home either before, or instead of going out. In these instances, young people thought their parents supported their drinking in order to encourage them to stay in the safe space of the home. In some cases within Eden parents also gave underage young people alcohol to drink in informal spaces outside the home with their friends. This generation also describe experiences of going to pubs with their parents in which they were also sometimes provided with socially sanctioned underage access to alcohol:

Ellie Bellis: ... the pub, I was like 16 and they used to let you, if I was with Dad they used to let us have a drink of something, on a night, just bottles again of your weak lager.

(Eden, 18–24, Female, NS-SEC, 3)

Nonetheless, despite this more open atmosphere some young people also described patterns of illicit drinking in both informal spaces and commercial venues that bear strong echoes of their parents' stories.

## **From 'do as I say', to 'do as I do': the changing nature of intergenerational relations**

In a contemporary context, where alcohol consumption is constituted as a normal part of everyday life, and excess consumption is seen as a normal part of growing up, the key question for most contemporary parents (the mid generation) is not how should they discourage their teenagers from drinking alcohol, but how they might best introduce them to it in order to encourage sensible drinking as alcohol becomes more readily available to them in their later teenage years and beyond. It is for this reason that the majority of parents in the mid generation are seeking to gradually introduce younger teenagers to alcohol and to offer both them and older teenagers guidance in relation to the need to recognise sensible drinking habits. As Myles Huff suggests:

A kind of weird thing about any relationship between so-called liberal parents and their children, the kids know that if you're going to be criticising them you're a hypocrite. Because it's, you know haven't, it's

not a secret from my children that I've you know drunk to excess, and I've used drugs and most other things. So there's no question of getting pious about those kind of things, some time I suppose I'd like my kids to be able to recognise certain, certain kind of, or to develop certain bodily habits and practices that would mean that they were sensible, yes, about whether they decided to get drunk.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 45–54, Male, NS-SEC 1)

This supportive approach was seen to avoid alienating young people by being too strict, hence causing them to rebel in a context where they will undoubtedly be exposed to alcohol:

Helen Winner: I think if I introduce it slowly then she is less likely to [*go over the top*], because I have known people that have gone out and got absolutely [*drunk*] because they haven't had that choice of alcohol. I think it is more about education, so hopefully she has like, a special occasion a glass of wine. It's going to be, like a social thing as opposed to a 'you're definitely not having any alcohol', so when she does start going out she's going to hit the bottle big time ... Yeah, 'cos I have known people, one of my, like my friend, one of my friends, no alcohol in her house and she went out, she got absolutely rat-arsed and got pregnant.

(Eden, 24–34, Female, NS-Sec 5)

This gradual relaxation of rules in relation to drinking, particularly between the mid and young generation, also reflects a broader trend in terms of the changing nature of intergenerational relations. Traditionally, parents have had 'natural' authority over children because of their superior size, strength, age and command of material resources. This authority has been sustained through laws and everyday norms about the appropriate behaviour of adults and children (Jamieson and Toynbee, 1989). However, some commentators have suggested that at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries parents are seeking closer, less hierarchical relationships with their children with the consequence that some of their 'natural' authority is being eroded (Wyness, 1997). As part of this parents are more ready to recognise and acknowledge their children's own social competencies. Dale Harper's comments, for example, suggest that while he gave advice his son was well aware of problems concerned with drinking:

I might have mentioned a few things you know. I think you know, well people today don't need talking to. Got a good idea of how things work you know what I mean?

(Stoke-on-Trent, 65+, Male, NS-SEC 7)

In a similar vein Adam Huff suggested:

I can just remember coming through the front door and Mum smiling at me and saying 'Have you been drinking?' I said 'yes' and she said 'Well as long as you know what you're doing', kind of thing, so it was. I think there was that, she passed on the responsibility to me because she knew I wasn't an idiot.

(Stoke-on-Trent, 25–34, Male, NS-SEC 2)

Rather than laying down the law with their children parents are more willing to invite discussion and to negotiate their relationships. As such several studies have suggested that children have an increasingly powerful voice in terms of patterns of household consumption (Valentine, 1999). Some commentators (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) have even gone so far as to suggest that the balance of obligations has shifted between the generations. Rather than children having a responsibility to be dutiful sons and daughters, the onus is on parents to maximise their children's potential by providing them with an idyllic childhood (in mainly material ways) and all opportunities that they themselves were denied.

Thus, the liberal consensus that it is parents' responsibility to encourage sensible drinking rather than total avoidance of alcohol reflects both a reluctance to assert a hierarchical –'do as I say but not as I do' – relationship, and a desire to ensure that their offspring maximise enjoyment of their youth. As Jane Cox suggests:

Do I give them advice? I do give them advice. I guess partly because, partly because of my job ... I'm very well aware of the kind of difficulties that young men particularly can get into when they're very drunk but things can happen to them, so I'm worried about them being a victim, as much as I am worried about them doing, you know getting into trouble or, or kind of you know doing something stupid.

(Stoke, 45–54, Female, NS-SEC 1)

While there is a less tolerant attitude to alcohol in the Pakistani Muslim community, nonetheless, the Pakistani Muslim interviewees also acknowledged a subtle shift towards a more liberal attitude in relation to alcohol between the three generations. Notably, some of the interviewees in the 'younger generation' were more tolerant of other people drinking, even when they themselves chose not to do so because of their faith, than the older generations. One woman described allowing guests who came to dinner to bring and consume their own alcohol in her home.

### Summary

The interviewees' accounts support other evidence which suggests that a more liberal consensus is emerging in relation to adults' attitudes towards young people's alcohol consumption. This reflects a more general change in the nature of intergenerational relations. However, it also has implications for alcohol related service providers because, as Chapters 3 and 5 argue, if the messages about the long-term health implications of heavy drinking are to be effective they must address the significance of everyday banal drinking practices in the home as well as in public space, and specifically parenting practices and how young people learn to drink.

## 7 Conclusions

In November 2005, the UK initiated its first major relaxation of alcohol licensing for almost a century. This has put the UK at the centre of debate for those involved in alcohol related legislation, policy and academic work around the world (Drummond, 2000). It is in attempting a more 'joined-up' policy approach, and seeking a balance between economic development, political goals, health concerns and consumer choice – in the context of traditional and longstanding alcohol related problems in the UK, high-profile and sustained media attention – that the new legislation has received such attention. At a seminar to discuss the Government's first National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair (2004), summarised the tension between the positive aspects of alcohol consumption and some of the problems implicit in encouraging public drinking when he argued that:

Millions of people drink alcohol responsibly every day and no-one wants to stop the pleasure, but there is a clear and growing problem in our town and city centres up and down the country on Friday and Saturday nights. At a time when overall crime is falling, alcohol related violent crime is actually rising. As a society we have to make sure that this form of what we often call binge drinking doesn't become a British disease.

In this context this research has explored attitudes towards alcohol and everyday drinking patterns, habits and consequences in two contrasting geographical communities – one urban and one rural. The findings from the research clearly challenge the current emphasis in media and policy debates on binge drinking in public space and its construction as a youth problem. Specifically, the implications are as follows:

- **Mis-placed debate:** The priority being given to public drinking (particularly binge drinking by young people) by both Government policy and the media is detracting attention from routine domestic drinking practices for a much broader spectrum of the population. Binge drinking, although technically referring to periods of episodic heavy alcohol consumption, has come in cultural terms to mean high levels of drinking by young people on the streets of urban Britain. This leaves many of those who consume high levels of alcohol in very different social circumstances feeling unwarrantedly insulated from concern. In particular, many, whose domestic consumption far exceeds Government recommended weekly limits, continue to regard their own practices as unremarkable. As such there is a need to abandon the term 'binge drinking' and to develop a more appropriate set of terms to discuss drinking to excess so that a wider range of the population will be able to recognise when their own practices are potentially harmful.

- **Home consumption matters:** The health dangers of domestic drinking are being obscured by the public emphasis on the extremes of drunken behaviour on the streets rather than the normality of drinking at home. Most respondents demonstrated a lack of awareness of the health risks of the high levels of alcohol which they consume at home. Home is also the space where young people increasingly learn to drink. As such young people's drinking needs to be understood and addressed in relation to their parents' attitudes to and use of alcohol, and the wider changing nature of intergenerational relations and parenting practices. Here, the publication of '*Safe, Sensible, Social*' (HM Government, 2007), the second step in the Government's national alcohol strategy, marks an important move towards recognising the significance of domestic as well as public drinking practices and harmful patterns of alcohol consumption among adult drinkers as well as amongst young people.
- **Impact on service provision:** The national focus on 'binge drinking' in public space may potentially have a detrimental effect on the development of strategic and joined-up alcohol service provision in local areas, such as those described in our case studies. For example, resources may be oriented towards public drinking in response to the national agenda when in specific local contexts other issues such as high levels of home consumption and underage drinking or other alcohol related problems such as domestic violence and health issues may deserve greater local attention.
- **Health promotion strategies must be specifically targeted for different social groups of drinkers:** Different patterns of drinking, and attitudes to alcohol, are evident within different social groups (by age, gender and faith). Notably, young people ignore the potential health implications of their binge drinking because they justify it as a phase and so do not recognise the potential longer term risks of high levels of alcohol consumption. Amongst older people there is a clear lack of awareness of alcohol content and the extent to which their domestic consumption might be defined as binge drinking. There are also important differences in the ways that men and women drink which indicate that alcohol strategies need to be nuanced to account for these gender differences. Finally, the hidden levels of drinking within Muslim communities suggest that there is a need for service providers to develop initiatives to reach problem-drinkers within communities where these issues are not publicly acknowledged.
- **Urban regeneration for whom?** Strategies to revitalise the night-time economies of urban areas that are predicated on alcohol are implicitly excluding faith communities, such as Muslims (who do not drink openly), and thus are potentially contributing to social segregation.

- **Geography matters:** Drinking cultures are not uniform across the country. Rather as the urban and rural case studies presented in this report demonstrate they are complexly embedded in wider historical, socio-economic and cultural contexts. In particular, the research has identified clear differences in thresholds of tolerance and expectations of appropriate behaviour between urban Stoke-on-Trent and rural Eden. As such there is a need for more recognition of the way that national alcohol strategies might be interpreted differently or have a differential impact upon specific locales. However, to date there is a lack of robust data about patterns of drinking at a local level which means that local authorities lack an evidence base upon which to develop place-specific initiatives. This is particularly pertinent in the light of the Licensing Act 2003 which gives local authorities more power to dictate local licensing strategies, so offering the possibility that geographical disparities may emerge in approaches to the regulation and policing of alcohol consumption. This unfolding regulatory framework and its impact on drinking cultures need to be more fully investigated by future research to monitor and evaluate the relative effectiveness of different local strategies.
- **Future directions for research:** There is a need for more research to explore: the range of local strategies concerning control of the type, concentration and mix of bars in the night-time economy; how people perceive, experience and manage the risks and benefits associated with public drinking; patterns of domestic consumption (particularly amongst older people); parents' attitudes and practices in relation to underage drinking and drinking by young people in their late teens; the reasons why some people abstain from or give up alcohol; and the difference in tolerance levels of public drinking within different communities (in particular to broaden understandings of local drinking cultures within their historical-social contexts).

# Notes

## Chapter 2

- 1 Although this is not within the boundaries of the modern Eden district, it is both geographically close in proximity and landscape, particularly across the smaller villages of the Fells where temperance had a strong influence. Historical accounts are difficult to find, this account however is reflective of many of the local history accounts given of the Temperance Movement in the Eden Valley area during the course of our research.
- 2 The Methodist rechabites actually derived from a friendly (or mutual) society. They provided insurance for members which would only pay out so long as they adhered to the temperance values. The idea being that you would be supported in your sticking to the pledge by the other members of the society and the fear of losing your investments.
- 3 National Statistics Socio-Economic Classifications (NS-SEC): 1 = managerial and professional occupations; 2 = intermediate occupations; 3 = small employers and own account workers; 4 = lower supervisory and technical occupations; 5 = semi-routine and routine occupations; 6 = never worked and long-term unemployed; 7 = unclassified.

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# **Appendix 1: Details about the data collection**

## **Questionnaire survey**

The social research company purchased telephone numbers from Datalynx using the following criteria (within the specified geographic regions): name, address and telephone number, aged 18+. The data was captured in the following ways: the numbers were acquired from the electoral roll in the first instance and then filtered against the deceased register, bereavement register, gone away register before being tele-appended using BT Osis to verify that names match addresses, and to append the phone numbers.

## **Interviews**

These were recorded and transcribed using conventional social science techniques. All the names of people and venues in the report have been changed to protect the anonymity of the research participants.

# Appendix 2: Researcher's diary of nights out in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme

## The City Centre (Hanley)

Hanley has two particularly busy evenings – Monday and Saturday.

Monday – throughout the UK Monday night is widely known as national student night characterised by cheap drinks offers and cheap/free admission – offers on cheap pints of lager, cocktails, bottled lager, alcopops, and spirits. However, in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme there are a relatively small number of students that contribute to the drinking cultures of the Potteries towns. For example, Staffordshire University students have traditionally stayed at College and Leek Road student union venues or been bussed to and from Shelton pubs to Creation and the now closed The Place. The city centre has a known reputation amongst students as being too violent and they view that students are key targets of local young people. Keele University students rarely leave campus in significant numbers and if they do so it will be to visit Newcastle at the weekend (the town's two nightclubs that offered student nights on a Monday have closed). Aside from students from local Further Education Colleges, Monday nights in the city centre have been adopted as one of the 'big nights out' by local people and the bars and streets are populated by those people who also engage in the other three big nights in the Potteries.

On Monday night the Entertainment Quarter will be very busy. The rest of the city centre will be relatively quiet but niche/crossover bars such as Wetherspoons, The Unicorn, Churassco will benefit from the crowds. The nightclubs are traditionally busy especially Creation and Liquid, as well as the late night bars. The city centre becomes busy around 9–10 p.m. and the fashion is more casual than Saturday night but characterised by smart/casual high-street fashion. Liquid for example, has no dress code on Monday but on Saturday requires smart jeans, no sports trainers, with a shirt with a collar. Drinkers will be drawn mostly from the local population as evidenced by the number of local taxis and full buses arriving in the city centre.

Saturday – attracts a slightly older crowd (Friday is a night for going out with friends – see Newcastle below). Drinks are more expensive (most popular appears to be bottled lager and spirits) and admission is full-price (from £1–3 to enter late night bars to £4–6 for nightclubs). People will be more dressed up but again in high-

street fashion and will spend more money. Saturday is particularly characterised by the influx of people from Newcastle and the large numbers of out-of-town revellers evidenced by the steady numbers of mini-bus taxis from elsewhere in North Staffs, Newcastle, South Cheshire, Crewe and Nantwich that drop off groups around Trinity Street from 8 p.m. onwards. While Hanley is predominantly populated by 18–30 year olds it will tend to be heavily weighted towards the 18–21 year olds.

On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday most national chains and many independent venues will be closed. Thursday will be slightly busier.

One local music entrepreneur told me: 'I would estimate that around 30% of people are taking recreational drugs on the busy nights, mostly coke and ecstasy, especially the more affluent and trendy' and that 'Thursday used to be a big night in Hanley but this shifted to Wednesday in Newcastle with the opening of the large venues in Newcastle'.

## Newcastle-under-Lyme

Newcastle-under-Lyme has two particularly busy evenings – Wednesday and Friday.

Traditionally (the now closed) Maxim's Nightclub attracted more mature 30+ people to Newcastle. This tradition has continued and there tends to be an older crowd that go out around 9–10 p.m. and stay out until 2 a.m. Restaurants in Newcastle are far busier than in Hanley on the 'big nights out'.

There are small groups of people bar hopping between venues but little hanging around on the streets during/or at the end of the night. This contrasts to Hanley where people congregate during and at the end of the night around Trinity Street and on Piccadilly (around take-aways). There are no nightclubs in Newcastle and the town is known as less violent than Hanley. There are no drinks offers on the busiest nights in Newcastle. Newcastle tends to attract predominately 18–30 year olds but tends to be dominated by people who are 21–30. Friday night is the same as Wednesday in Newcastle but busier. Some people only go to only Newcastle or Hanley but the majority visit both on different nights. Saturday night is busy but mostly couples/families.

## Tunstall, Burslem, Fenton, Longton

Tunstall, Burslem, Fenton and Longton are populated by local drinkers. Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays are the busiest time when some pubs will be full and people engage in small local pub-crawls. *Burslem and Tunstall* have 'home supporters only' football pubs. *Stoke* has student nights that are busy on Monday, Wednesday and Friday during term time with the Roebuck and students' venues being full. There are late licences in Harry's Bar until 4 a.m. on Wednesday nights and the Kingsway and Wheatsheaf will be full. Harry's is full on student nights but also on Fridays, and Saturdays attract a male football crowd that when combined with students is known for trouble. The Talbot has bands on every night of the week but is often quiet.

## Weekly/monthly observations

### June, July and August

Quiet but steady months, usual weekly patterns apply. There tends to be more after work drinking in venues with beer-gardens and on street seating and on Saturdays/Sundays. The summer months appear to have little impact on night-time economy and it is a busy time of year for weddings, barbecues and holidays. Not much of an overall drop in the crowds due to lack of importance of student market and fewer people going away on holiday than elsewhere. On really hot days there appears to be more people out and about but increased violence.

The bank holidays during this time are very busy but the Saturday of the bank holiday weekend is quiet, 'as people save themselves for the Sunday and Monday'. People tend to wear ever skimpier clothes to show off tans. Bank holiday marks the end of summer, it's the last bank holiday of the year and so there is a big blow out.

### September

The first three weeks are quiet. The third week in September is the quietest I've observed of the year. People haven't got money to spend after the holiday period? However, the last week in September is the second busiest of the year that I've seen (apart from the bank holidays). Again the return of the students has little impact beyond student bars/venues. The day before Mother's Day is quiet as (people don't go out before they go to their mother's the next day?) – Father's Day doesn't have the same effect.

### October and November

Two of the busiest months I've observed. There are no bank holidays, and the third week is quiet but fourth week is very busy.

### December

Generally quiet and unpredictable even on busy nights. The week up until the weekend before Christmas is characterised by the office party week. The café bars and restaurants are all busy. The Saturday before Christmas is very quiet.

One bar manager told me, 'Christmas Eve has been in the doldrums over the past few years but has recently picked up ... it's only really busy if it coincides with usual big nights out ... Boxing Day is variable, it's a big night out for 18–21 year olds but many places are shut ... Newcastle will be very quiet but bars/clubs in Hanley will be busy'.

Another bar manager told me, 'New Year's Eve has been very quiet since the Millennium eve parties. The Millennium ruined the night, people are not prepared to pay for hikes in price of taxis, admission so stay at local pubs or have house parties'.

### January

On the whole January seems to be the quietest month. However, it includes one of the two quietest and two of the busiest weekends. The third weekend appears to be one of the quietest of the year. The last weekend in January is one of the busiest. A nightclub owner told me, 'the payment timetable means that people are skint from Christmas as they are usually paid early, and have stayed in all month, but come pay day it's a big night out .... unless it's snowing ... the usual busiest nights remain so but if it's raining there is much less bar hopping due to weather'.

### February

This appears to be an average month but the third week is quiet around Valentine's Day which sees the restaurants busy but pubs/bars quieter than usual.

**March**

Again an averagely busy month but the third week is quiet and fourth week busier.

**April**

One of the busiest weekends of the year is Easter bank holiday, with Good Friday and Easter Monday renowned 'big nights'. The weekend gives people their days off work in a row (so four lie-ins) so in essence this creates 'an extra weekend' in the month, or 'two weekends in one'. Thursday is also busy. Sunday night in Hanley is as busy as a normal Friday night. The bank holiday cycle does not appear to affect Newcastle in the same way (although Fridays are usually busy). The daytime on Saturday in Hanley is busy and 'people just seem to stay out' with the crowd growing from tea-time onwards. Easter Monday is very busy – it's the busiest of the year (despite people) having to go to work the next day. The week after Easter is quietest of the year.

**May**

Two bank holidays during the month (so that makes two extra weekends). The rest of the year is quiet and as a bar manager told me 'People don't spend more this month they just save their money for the bank holidays ... although you get more trouble over bank holidays as you get "amateur drinkers", people who don't usually drink as much and drink all day and night ... that leads to trouble'.

(Over the year of observations I would estimate that crowds in city centre and Newcastle venues were 50–60% lower in January and the week after bank holidays, on the third week of the month 30–40% lower and on quiet weeks. On bank holidays all venues will be busy with the larger bars enforcing a one-out/one-in door policy.)

### Drinking Circuits

#### *The city centre*

The city centre has five identifiable drinking circuits:

- 1 Popular large venues  
Yates, Hogshead, Chicago, Rock Café, Wetherspoons, Revolution, Flares, Walkabout, Aruba, JFK, 360's, Fluid, Flackettes, Harley's, Trinity's, Cuba, etc.
- 2 Niche market 'style venues'  
Fat Cat's Café Bar, Touch, Revolution, Satchmo's, Fluid.
- 3 'Lower end' traditional pubs  
Market Tavern, Wetherspoons, Harvey's, Burton Stores, The Tontine, The Albion, etc.
- 4 Gay 'Hamlet'  
The 3 Tuns, Monique's, Chaplins, The Club.
- 5 'Middle-class' niche venues  
Not really 'circuit' but Churrasco, Chaplins and to lesser degree Fat Cats.

Other bars that tend to stand alone include the Unicorn, The Metro has yet to find a niche (it used to be a BNP stronghold). Bars like Fusion and new 'Chicane' have changed names a lot over past few years and lack an 'identity'.

### Newcastle-under-Lyme

- 1 Popular large venues  
Yates, Hogshead, Wetherspoons, Revolution, Fluid, Flackettes, The Bull's Vaults, The Tube, Reflex, The Albion.
- 2 Niche market 'style venues'  
Blakey's, Pablo Frankies, Blues, Fluid, Brassingtons, On the Square, Red.
- 3 Indie/Rock  
Blackfriars, Old Brown Jug, The Full Moon (Rigger).
- 4 Traditional pubs  
The Bull's Head, the George and Dragon.

## Appendix 3: Heaviest drinking day in the past week by age

<b>National</b>					
	<b>18–24</b>	<b>25–44</b>	<b>45–64</b>	<b>65+</b>	<b>Total</b>
Drank nothing	40	32	31	47	36
Up to 4/3 units (up to safe limits)	21	34	43	44	37
More than 4/3, up to 8/6 units (above safe limits)	14	16	17	7	14
More than 8/6 units (dangerously above safe limits)	26	18	10	2	13
<b>Total</b>					<b>100</b>

<b>Stoke-on-Trent</b>					
	<b>18–24</b>	<b>25–44</b>	<b>45–64</b>	<b>65+</b>	<b>Total</b>
Drank nothing	33	35	35	59	40
Up to 4/3 units (up to safe limits)	7	6	11	11	9
More than 4/3, up to 8/6 units (above safe limits)	20	16	17	20	17
More than 8/6 units (dangerously above safe limits)	40	44	37	10	34
<b>Total</b>					<b>100</b>

<b>Eden</b>					
	<b>18–24</b>	<b>25–44</b>	<b>45–64</b>	<b>65+</b>	<b>Total</b>
Drank nothing	14	35	43	52	41
Up to 4/3 units (up to safe limits)	0	5	9	18	9
More than 4/3, up to 8/6 units (above safe limits)	14	13	18	16	16
More than 8/6 units (dangerously above safe limits)	71	47	30	13	34
<b>Total</b>					<b>100</b>

Source: Comparison of Drinking Places questionnaire data on Stoke-on-Trent and Eden with national figures from the General Household Survey 2005 (in percentages)

## Appendix 4: Researcher's diary of a night out with young people in an Eden town

It was half past twelve by now and the place suddenly seemed to empty out. Libby and Lucy had gone inside the pub after collecting more money from everyone and came out with five bottles of wine, a mix of red and white. I asked about the wine and Libby said that they often buy it at the end of a night, it was cheap Fetzer wine, they paid £8.00 a bottle for it.

Once the wine was opened we left the pub and started to walk along the river, to an area behind the local swimming pool (The Butts) that was a familiar haunt for local young people according to Carly, who I was walking along beside. She was holding one of the bottles of white wine.

I asked her if she liked wine, and she said 'no, not really' before offering me the bottle. She said she drank it because it 'made her drunk quickly' and made a change from lager.

Some of the boys sat on the bench when we arrived were smoking weed, but they weren't drinking much, they had a single can of lager between them. It is possible that a couple of the boys may have been underage, they didn't look that young though, maybe 16 or 17.

Our group acknowledged the people at the bus stop but then went and sat on the grass in front of them on the field. The bottles of wine were being passed around, there seemed to be four now, all of which were already half empty. The group sat in a circle, quite close together. Someone decided to initiate a drinking game, but it fizzled out after just a few minutes, mostly because Bevis was so drunk at this point. By this time all of the wine was finished. The boys demanded that the last bit of alcohol be produced and Lucy reluctantly pulled two cans of Fosters out of her bag, one of which she handed to the boys, the other one she opened and was drinking with Libby.

# Appendix 5: Definition of binge drinking and guide to alcohol unit measurements

In 1995 the Government report *Sensible Drinking* (Department of Health, 1995) changed the guidelines for recommended limits from a weekly to a daily measure of consumption, reflecting the concern that: 'weekly consumption can have little relation to single drinking episodes and may indeed mask short term episodes which ... often correlate strongly with both medical and social harm'. The change from an emphasis on weekly to daily levels does not increase the recommended upper limit for weekly consumption.

The current Department of Health advice is that men should not drink more than 3–4 units of alcohol per day, and women should not drink more than 2–3 units of alcohol per day. Binge drinking is less clearly defined, but has been referred to by the Department of Health and Office for National Statistics as 'consuming eight or more units for men and six or more units for women on at least one day during the week'. In other words double the daily recommended levels of consumption.

A unit of alcohol is 8g or 10ml of pure alcohol. As a rough guide, the following unit measurements apply.

- A pint of ordinary strength lager: 2 units
- A pint of strong lager: 3 units
- A pint of bitter: 2 units
- A pint of ordinary strength cider: 2 units
- A small (175ml) glass of wine: 2 units approx
- A measure of spirit: 1 unit
- An alcopop: 1.5 units approx

It is however very difficult to be accurate as measures, strengths and types of alcohol vary considerably.

## Appendix 6: Heaviest drinking day in the past week by gender

<b>Men</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Stoke-on-Trent</b>	<b>Eden</b>
Drank nothing	28	30	30
Up to 4 units (up to safe limits)	38	10	11
More than 4, up to 8 units (above safe limits)	16	16	13
More than 8 units (dangerously above safe limits)	19	44	46
Total			100
<b>Women</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Stoke-on-Trent</b>	<b>Eden</b>
Drank nothing	43	52	51
Up to 3 units (up to safe limits)	37	8	7
More than 3, up to 6 units (above safe limits)	12	19	18
More than 6 units (dangerously above safe limits)	8	21	24
Total			100

Source: Comparison of Drinking Places questionnaire data on Stoke-on-Trent and Eden with national figures from the General Household Survey 2005 (in percentages)