Student Narratives of Drinking and Transition to University

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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2018

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisory team, Professor Sarah Galvani (Director of Studies), Professor Rebecca Lawthom and Dr Ken McLaughlin. Supervising PhD students alongside many other conflicting work pressures is a demanding job and I know I sometimes tested it to the limit. A combination of their commitment, advice, feedback support and wide-ranging knowledge and expertise have been invaluable in helping me progress.

I also wish to thank the two members of my small writing group, Chris Yianni and Debbie Thackray. The support and encouragement from both of you alongside the chats and endless brews proved to be a lifeline and provided much needed impetus to keep going.

Thank you also to Garry Diack and to Victoria Morris for practical help and moral support at the end when I most needed it. Also to Concetta Banks who provided me with some great discussions, listened when I was struggling and provided encouragement and support throughout. Also to Gemma Yarwood, for invaluable advice and support along the way. Thanks to the many friends and family who have helped me in so many different ways. Thank you also to those who were key to the study, the students who took part. It was a pleasure and privilege to hear their stories.

Finally, thank you to my sons Adam and Ben, who have had to put up with me disappearing "to write". Ultimately, they have kept me going through the toughest times.

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Abstract

For many UK student leaving home to go to university presents an opportunity to experience freedom for the first time. For a proportion of young people, this equates to having fun, partying and drink copious amounts of alcohol. This is perhaps a rather clichéd view of the experience and, whilst this may be how some students experience the transition to university, there is evidence that a number of students find the transition to university difficult. There is also evidence to suggest problematic drinking patterns may start in the first year of University, that some may use alcohol as a coping mechanism to help ease the transition to university, and that students drink more than same age peers do in the wider population. There is currently little research relating to the transition to university and drinking and no research exploring how this relates to drinking motivations. Given that in the last thirty years the student population has doubled, and there has been an increase in students reporting mental health problems, research in to how students experience university and, in particular the transition to university, is timely.

The study, conducted as part of this thesis, involved interviewing six first year students using the Free Association Interview Method (FANI), (Hollway & Jefferson, 2012). The method makes use of unstructured interviews that enable participants to talk about what is relevant and important to them, within a given framework. The aim of the study was to explore how students, leaving home for the first time, experience the transition to university and how it relates to their drinking motivations.

Findings from the study suggest that the transition to university is a unique period. Having left the security of home and family students feel a heightened sense of urgency to make new friends and develop a sense of belonging. For some students alcohol plays a crucial role in this process. Students also experience a Fear of Missing (FoMO). They are reluctant to turn down opportunities to drink because it means missing out on "bonding time". Findings also showed that whilst students have an awareness of the health implications of excessive drinking and knowledge about safe drinking they largely ignore them, and consider their drinking to be unproblematic.

Chapter 1: Introduction and rationale

1.1. Introduction to the thesis

In 1999 Tony Blair, then Prime Minister, pledged that by 2010, 50% of young people would be in Higher Education. Although this deadline was not achieved, almost half the population now enter higher education by the time they are 30, and 27% of 18 year olds now attend university (Adams, 2017). Alongside an increase in the student population, there have also been growing concerns about problematic drinking amongst young people. Such concerns have focussed on particular forms of drinking such as binge drinking and extreme drunkenness, which are associated with higher risks to health and linked to alcohol related violence and anti-social behaviour (Hammerton, 2017; NHS online, no date). Although drinking amongst young people has fallen in the last few years, it still remains relatively high compared with other countries and drinking amongst students remains high in comparison with same age non student peers.   The Institute for Alcohol Studies (IAS, 2016) suggests there are a number of theories for a fall in consumption. However many of these relate to younger age groups such as better legal enforcement and the increase in online gaming meaning younger people are engaging with each other virtually, rather than in person. Although some theories do relate to older age groups too, such as increased awareness of health implications and increased prices, and some to students such as higher tuition fees, the IAS admit that, at this stage these explanations are theoretical and that more research is needed. There is also no evidence as to how or whether these collectively account for the fall in young people's drinking. A better

understanding of why people drink may also be useful for policy makers when considering measures to reduce consumption. Kuntsche et al (2005) argue that prevention and/or intervention strategies to target the student population are likely to be more effective if based on an understanding of student drinking motivations

Although there is a wealth of research relating to drinking amongst young people and students there is very little that focuses on the transition to university and drinking. To date there is no research exploring the link between drinking motivations and the transition to university. Given the number of young people now attending university, and that alcohol consumption remains high in this group, developing a better understanding of student drinking motivations may go some way to addressing this. A review of literature relating to drinking motivations, explored in chapter 4 provides evidence that there is little research focussing specifically on students, tending to focus more broadly on younger people in general. A dominance of the use of positivistic methods, which attempt to categorise drinking motivations, do not capture the complexities of motivations or the wider context. Kuntsche et al (2005) argue that prevention and/or intervention strategies to target the student population are likely to be more effective if based on an understanding of student drinking motivations. In addition, Seaman and Ikegwuonu (2010) argue that in order for health educationalists and policy-makers to develop responses to preventing problematic drinking that make sense to younger people, an understanding of the meaning and motivation behind young people's drinking is necessary.

1.2.   Overview of the thesis

In this chapter, alongside this overview of the thesis, I discuss the rationale for my research, outline my research journey and provide my research aim, objectives and questions.

In chapter 2, I provide an overview of the political and historical backdrop, discuss changes in the way alcohol is consumed, particularly amongst young people, and how this has resulted in changes in policy and legislation.

Chapter 3 is an exploration of the literature relating to the transition to university. There is very little research relating to both drinking and the transition, and none relating to the drinking motivations and the transition to university. I therefore explored literature relating to the transition to university to gain a better understanding of how students experience this, and to identify if there was anything relating to drinking and drinking motivations within this research.

In chapter 4, I discuss research relating to drinking motivations amongst young people and students. Whilst I wanted to focus on students only, I found there was very little that was specifically about student drinking motivations and therefore I broadened my research to incorporate young people, however some of this research also uses students as participants. Chapter 4 also provides an overview of theories and models developed from the research on drinking motivations.

Chapter 5 outlines my method of research, outlines my reasons for choosing the FANI method and, shows how I used and adapted the method. I also provide an overview broader epistemological perspectives relating to qualitative research and interpretive

approaches, and provide an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the FANI method.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are my findings and analysis chapters. Chapter 6, explore the relationship between drinking motivations and belonging. Chapter 7, explores the relationship between the Fear of Missing Out (FoMo) and drinking In chapter 8, I discuss how each of the participants talked about alcohol problems, showed awareness of health issues around excessive drinking but were keen to show they did not consider their drinking was problematic.

Chapter 9 summarises my findings and brings them together show how they relate to my original research aim, objectives, overarching questions and the published research. I also provide discussion relating to the implication of my research and limitations of my study and finally my conclusion.

1.3. Rationale

It was not until I started at university that I began to drink on a regular basis. Although the term "binge drinking" was not in common usage at that time, by current guidelines, I would have been classed as a "binge drinker" (Berridge et al, 2009). It was a rocky road, often alcohol fuelled and full of highs and many lows. I carried on drinking in a similar way throughout my twenties. Although guidelines about safe drinking limits were available as early as 1984 (House of Commons, 2012) I was unaware of these at that time. By current guidelines, my drinking would have been classed as problematic, even hazardous at times, although, apart from horrendous

hangovers and a vague understanding that it was not particularly healthy I did not

consider it to be problematic and it seemed to be just what everyone else was doing. It

was probably not until my late twenties that I became more aware of recommended

guidelines, partially paying attention and thinking I should cut down but largely

ignoring them. It was something that everyone was doing and I felt it was a normal

part of being a student. I continued to drink in much the same way in to my late

twenties. I never considered my drinking to be problematic, mainly because I did not

consider myself to be "addicted". I use quotation marks here because of the contested

nature of this term (May, 2010). Whilst not the focus of this thesis, I return to the

concept of addiction briefly later in the thesis. Back then I do not think I gave a great

deal of thought as to why I drank so much. I am sure if asked I would have probably

said "for fun" or because I like getting drunk. However, having reflected on it I feel it

was more complicated than this. This experience is why I became interested in the

research. It raised questions about what constitutes problematic drinking, who defines

it, why people drink, and, how our attitudes about alcohol consumption are formed.

I did not initially set out to explore drinking in relation the transition to university and

only decided to focus on this after finding there was a gap in the published literature.

Given there was very little research focussing on the transition to university and

drinking in general, or drinking motivations specifically, I began to explore the

literature relating to the transition to university.   I had always considered my

experience of the first year at university to be unusual and everyone else seemed

happier, more confident and more adjusted than I was. Whilst I developed friendships

and became part of a group, and had some "fun" times too, I also found it difficult and

lonely at times. However, as my research progressed and I read more about the

experiences of others, I realised my experience was not particularly unusual. I kept a diary whilst at university and, having not looked at it for many years, wondered if it would provide any useful insight in to my research. It was interesting to read it through the new lens of researcher and from a completely different perspective. Whilst it did provide some insight, I was also surprised by the content, and I will return to this later in the thesis.

1.4 Research journey

In section 1.2, I provide an overview of the thesis, however such an overview does not convey the complex processes that were involved and here I provide a more detailed account of my research journey. I began my research with the view that there is a "right" way to do a PhD, but I found, as highlighted by Lambotte and Meunier (2018) that research does not always follow a linear process and can be "messy". I experienced anxieties about my shifting research aims and was frustrated by the messiness of the process. This was particularly the case as my research shifted from a focus on drinking motivations, then to research about students and drinking and then finally to exploring the transition to university and drinking. However, as I progressed, and, when I began to explore some of the theoretical underpinnings of my research method, I realised that this was just a necessary part of the journey. One that provides validity and rigour to the research, which is discussed further in chapter 5.

I began my research with a broad focus on drinking motivations and by exploring a range of relevant literature. However, I found it was difficult to separate this from the debates around problematic and excessive drinking and addiction. This is something that resulted in much reflection. However, it is this that led me to better understand

the importance of context and the psychosocial nature of the research, which I discuss

further in chapters 8 and 9. I also quickly realised that the idea of drinking motivations

is amorphous, personal and slippery.   Whilst accepting drinking motivations are

personal, I wanted establish whether there were commonalities. I also wanted to

explore the cultural context and understand how environmental factors might

influence an individual's reasons for drinking. I had many research questions and a

very broad research aim which I realised I needed to narrow down. I also noted that

within the literature, when research appeared to be about drinking motivations or

reasons for drinking there tended to be a focus on amounts drunk, "problem" drinking

and the consequences drinking, and I found this frustrating. I wondered if other

researchers encountered similar problems to mine in that they too found the subject

difficult to pin down. Indeed, Kuntsche et al (2005), whose research I explore in

chapter 4, found the research on drinking motivations conflicting and there to be little

consensus within the field.

Another challenge was how to acknowledge my place in the research. My interest

was, in part, related to my experience of drinking. I wanted this to be recognised in the

research but was unsure how to show this. In the early stages I was still somewhat

wedded (if perhaps unconsciously so) to the idea of researcher neutrality and

objectivity, not yet being particularly familiar with research methods that embrace

researcher positionality. I briefly considered an auto-ethnographic study but decided

against this.   I spent of lot of time considering my place within the research, how, or if

I needed to remain objective and, if I were to place myself within the research, how to

go about doing this.

It is only in hindsight that I realise I was stuck between two research paradigms. This

dissonance extended to other areas of the research. This was particularly the case in

relation to the change in the direction of my research, from a focus on drinking

motivations, to a narrower focus on the experience of going to university and, how it

might relate to drinking. Having explored a wealth of literature relating to drinking in

general and to drinking motivations and then finding a gap in the research, I narrowed

the research to focus on the transition to university in relation to drinking motivations.

At this stage I realised I was deviating from my original research aim and this troubled

me. It is important to note again, that whilst I did not realise at the time I

acknowledge, in hindsight, this was a key part of the research process. It troubled me

at the time because I was perhaps still stuck, as I have said, with the idea of a "right

way" to do research. One that starts with specific research aims, followed by a

literature review, followed by a study that addressed gaps in the research and ends

with an analysis of the study in relation to the original research aims. This conflict, the

change in direction of my research and a shift in research paradigm is perhaps evident

within the thesis although maybe not fully apparent. Although I wanted to be honest

about the process, I felt conflicted. I considered such an approach might be construed

as contradictions or flaws in the research. I also wanted to present the thesis in a

coherent way and felt that discussing this as I went would break up the flow of the

writing. It is also not possible to pinpoint exactly at which point of the research

process these conflicts occurred. They happened slowly over a period of time, in subtle

ways, and involved much reflection. These changes rarely emerged as sudden

revelations and, are apparent only in hindsight.

I was particularly troubled after conducting the first interview, which, on reflection, was a key turning point. At that stage I had only just begun to familiarise myself with the FANI method and some of the theories underpinning it.   Having considered other methods for my research, discussed in chapter 5, I considered this method lent itself well to my research and might enable me to explore some of the complexities that I considered were missing from the existing research on drinking motivations, outlined in chapter 4. I was attracted to this method partly because of the concept of free association. I felt this would allow the research to move away from the discourse around problematic use and addiction that I considered dominated the existing research and I discuss this in chapter 8. I had not envisaged that the idea of allowing someone to speak freely would initially result in unease and concern about the research going "of piste". During the first interview, a slight sense of panic arose as the participant began to talk about things that were not necessarily connected, either to drinking, or the transition to university. I remember thinking, and noting after the interview, how little of what had emerged would be useful or relevant. I wondered how I was going to link it back to the research aims. The worry was of course unfounded. As I listened to the recording, read and re-read the transcript and reflected on the interview, I was surprised and relieved at what had emerged and was excited at the richness and depth of what had been covered.

As I began to understand the FANI method better, I developed a deeper understanding of its philosophical underpinnings and that of other narrative research methods. I became more aware of what Denzin and Lincoln (2008) refer to as the "qualitative revolution", discussed in chapter 5, and I became more comfortable with what I was doing. I realised there are different ways of doing research that move away from the

more "traditional" positivistic approaches.   I was then able to recognise the richness

of what had come from the interview with the first participant and consequently

became more comfortable when I was conducting interviews with the other

participants. As I had not used the FANI method before, my lack of experience and

understanding of how to apply it initially made me question whether this was the right

method for the study. However, as the research progressed I began to understand its

value. The use of "free association" allowed the research to veer away from my initial

aims, which I had not anticipated and I was worried about losing the focus of my

research.   However I then began to see this is the purpose of the method and that in

allowing participants to talk freely about what was important to them (albeit within a

framework) meant that I was not guiding or steering the research by asking specific

questions. In this case specific questions about why they drink).

Agee (2009) discusses the research process and outlines the way in which research

questions are developed and reworked.

> Good qualitative questions are usually developed or refined in all stages of a
> reflexive and interactive inquiry journey. Flick (2006, 105) noted that
> 'reflecting on and reformulating the research questions are central points of
> reference for assessing the appropriateness of the decisions you take at
> several points.' To extend the journey metaphor, it is helpful to think of
> research questions as navigational tools that can help a researcher map
> possible directions but also to inquire about the unexpected. (Agee,
> 2009:432).

Earlier, I mentioned the struggle I had, had with my place in the research. Not only did

I realise, through using the FANI method and developing an understanding of this and

of other narrative research methods and their theoretical underpinnings, that my

"place in the research" was an essential part of the research. I realised too this did not

have to be matter of "either", "or" (as in either have a central role within the research

via auto-ethnography or, being completely objective).

1.4. Research aim, objectives and questions

Research aim: To understand how young people in the UK, leaving home for the first time, experience the transition to university and how it relates to their drinking motivations

Objectives:

1. Explore of the complexities of drinking motivations.
2. Obtain an alternative perspective about student drinking, particularly in the transition to university, that moves away from the focus on problem drinking, binge drinking and the stereotypical perspectives of student drinking
3. Examine how the relationship between student drinking motivations and the transition to university and wider policy debates relating young people's drinking

Research questions.

Underpinning my research are a number of broader questions, which relate to wider

debates, both about alcohol consumption across the population as a whole, and

specifically to student drinking. These questions relate to conflicting ideas about risk,

responsibility and the nature of problematic drinking. The terms problematic drinking

or problem drinking are recurrently used within the literature. Though not disputing

that alcohol can, and does, cause problems, it has been argued that the concept of

alcohol problems is socially constructed (Reinarman, 1988). Also, to be considered is

whether student drinking is a problem, or should be of concern. One perspective is

that when students leave home to go to university they are legally adult and therefore

fully able to make informed decisions about their drinking and therefore it is not

something that is of any greater concern than those relating to the wider adult

population.   Another perspective is that they are emerging adults, potentially

vulnerable and at risk which, given evidence that students drink more than same age

peers in the wider population (Berwick, et al., 2008;Davoren et al, 2015; Mobach and

MaCaskill 2011;Taylor and Nestell, 2014; Dawson et al., 2004; Kypri et al., 2005)

requires addressing.

Chapter 2: Political and historical context

This chapter explores literature relating to increasing concerns about levels of alcohol consumption in the United Kingdom, and in particular, the perception that young peoples' drinking has become problematic. In doing so, it provides some background to the origin of some of the problems explored throughout the thesis and to the policy landscape. It explores explanations for the change in the way young people consume alcohol, outlining how this, and concerns about excessive consumption, across the population as a whole has led to the implementation of initiatives and policies to tackle this. Whilst the focus of this thesis is student drinking, discussion in this chapter concentrates on young people in general because existing policy tends not to address student drinking specifically

In 2004, alcohol consumption reached the peak of what had been a steady increase since the 1950s. In the same year Tony Blair, then Prime Minister, concerned about this rise, and an increase in binge drinking and alcohol related public disorder referred, to "Alcohol as the 'New British Disease'" (Measham, 2008). That year, the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England (Unit, P.M.S.S., 2004) was published. During that period, alcohol consumption in the UK had doubled (IAS, 2013). Although there has been a fall since this peak, the UK still ranks 25th out of 191 countries in relation to average yearly alcohol consumption for those aged 15+, and highest out of the European Countries included in the World Health Organisations Reports (WHO 2014, 2016). Drinking across the population as a whole remains high in comparison with other countries. There has been a steady decrease in drinking amongst young people aged 11-15 (IAS, 2016). However, although young people age 16-24 are likely to drink

less than other age groups, they are more likely to "binge drink" (ONS, 2017).

Measham (2008) has suggested the increase in binge drinking was the result of changes in the way young people consume alcohol and the way alcohol is marketed, which is discussed further in chapter 4. Evidence suggests that consumption amongst students is higher than those of similar age in the wider population (Berwick, et al., 2008;Davoren et al, 2015; Mobach and MaCaskill 2011;Taylor and Nestell, 2014; Dawson et al., 2004; Kypri et al., 2005). Over the last 20 years, there has been a concerted effort by Governments in the UK to address the problem resulting in the development of a number of initiatives and policies.

At this point, I will provide some clarification about the term "young people", in particular because, at 18, when most young people start university, they are legally an adult or what could be referred to as a young adult.   Policy relating to young people's drinking falls loosely in to two categories. One is concerned with tackling underage drinking and therefore focussing on young people who are legally still children. The other is concerned with young adults, generally 18-24 and focusses more on binge drinking and alcohol related disorder. The latter category is the focus here. The concept of "young adult" will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis, but I will continue to use the term "young people" as it is a term generally used within the literature.   I have pointed out already that within alcohol policy there is little focus on students as a distinct group (although there is brief mention of students in the more recent 2012, Alcohol Strategy). In this chapter I outline why there is merit in developing a better understanding of drinking motivations amongst students and therefore conducting research relating specifically to students, and in particular, students during the transition to university.

The 2004 peak, mentioned earlier, marked a growing concern about drinking amongst young people. Images of drunk young people, brawling, vomiting and unconscious on city streets made a regular appearance in tabloid newspapers. In the same year a series, called "Booze Britain" (Wetherall, 2009) was aired for the first time on Granada Television further fuelling concerns about the levels of drinking amongst young people. Measham (2008) suggests this has been presented as just another "periodic media demonization of youth and young adults" (Measham, 2008:26). However, she argues this is not the case and that attitudes towards drinking and drunkenness have seen a significant shift in the late 21st century, leading to what she has referred to as a "new 'culture of intoxication', resulting in increased sessional consumption and 'determined drunkenness' "(Measham, 2008:28).

Measham suggests this shift was the result of a combination of factors. One was a re-commodification of alcohol. This resulted in the production of drinks such as alcopops designed to appeal to a younger generation and to compete with the perceived threat to the alcohol industry of an increase in recreational drug use as a result of the rave scene. Another factor was a concerted effort of local authorities to improve the night-time economy as a way of increasing footfall in failing city centres and this led to a doubling of licenced premises in the 1990s (Measham, 2008). This also coincided with the introduction of 24-hour café style culture that was intended to encourage a more paced, European style of drinking, and to reduce the incidences of violence at pub closing time. Measham (2008) also suggests that another factor has been a change in life choices with the move to adulthood happening later and the responsibilities of parenthood and mortgages delayed. This has resulted in extended leisure time and more money to spend on leisure.

Regardless of whether this was a moral panic and/or a demonization of young adults or, a real shift in young people's drinking and a change in attitudes towards drinking and drunkenness, the UK Government was keen to tackle the problem. In 2004 they published an Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy (PMSU, 2004). Concern about the rise of problematic drinking is not confined to the UK. In 2006, the European Union published a strategy to support EU members in addressing alcohol related problems (European Commission online, no date). These strategies marked a move away from the disease model, which views problem drinkers as distinct from moderate drinkers, to a model that views alcohol problems as occurring on a continuum that need to be tackled at a national or even trans-national (Kneale and French, 2008).

Joyce (2009) argues that whilst public health has been of concern to societies for at least 2,000 years it was only in the 1970s that the current "social model of health" emerged. She refers to this as 'new public health' and argues it differs from what has gone before "in the way it increases the scope of surveillance, gears behaviour to health targets and generalises danger" (Joyce, 2009:3). She suggests this is a period of imposing moral regulation on the population" (Joyce, 2009:3) a period of "nannying" (Bennett and DiLorenzo, 1999, in Joyce 2009) or a series of "regimes of power and knowledge that are orientated to the regulation and surveillance of individual bodies and the social body as a whole" (Peterson and Lupton 1996, in Joyce 2003:3). Kneale and French (2008) suggest this is a new dominant paradigm in alcohol policy focusing on the reduction of risk and harm across populations.

Interestingly, Measham argues that this shift towards control and surveillance could potentially be contributing to the increase in alcohol consumption providing another

reason for the rise in excessive drinking amongst young people. She suggests that "criminologists such as Young (2003) have noted the irony of the post-9/11 world resulting in a growing "culture of control" (Garland, 2001), of increased surveillance, and state control being combined with increased individual ontological insecurity" (Measham, 2008:30). She goes on to argue that a perceived lack of control in one's life potentially means that intoxication is a way of regaining that control. Concerns about risk do not relate just to the harms caused by excessive alcohol consumption. They coincide with increasing concerns about risk and harm in all spheres of life in late modernity, leading to what has been referred to as "Risk Society" (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1990). Alongside increasing concerns about problematic drinking amongst young people, this period also saw a marked increase in legislation to control the behaviour of young people. The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act resulted in a number of pieces of legislation aimed at tackling behaviour typically associated with young people such as anti-social behaviour orders, curfews and dispersal orders which restricted freedom and increased surveillance (Muncie, 2014)

Since the 2004 Alcohol Strategy, there have been a range of initiatives, in the UK, aimed at tackling excessive and problematic use to reduce consumption. Such as "Drinking Responsibly" in 2005, "Know your limits" in 2006 and "Safe Sensible Social" in 2007. These aimed to educate and remind people about safe drinking limits, encourage responsible drinking, and reduce consumption. In 2012 The Government's Alcohol Strategy was published (HM Government, 2012) in which there is a heavy focus on binge drinking. The introduction to the Strategy begins with the use of the phrase 'binge drinking' thus setting the tone;

"Binge drinking isn't some fringe issue, it accounts for half of all alcohol consumed in this country. The crime and violence it causes drains resources in our hospitals, generates mayhem on our streets and spreads fear in our communities. My message is simple. We can't go on like this". (The Government's Alcohol Strategy, 2012)

Having provided some broader context about the policy landscape I now explain the significance to student drinking and how this relates to this thesis. The concept of university as a period of hedonism, during which copious amounts of alcohol are consumed, is perhaps a rather stereotypical perspective perpetuated by stories in the media, films, fiction and no doubt by word of mouth. Regardless of whether it is a stereotype or not it is an enduring representation of the student experience and in particular, about what being a new student or *fresher* is like. However whilst evidence does suggest students drink more than same age peers and there is no doubt some truth in the stereotype, it does present a rather one-dimensional perspective of the student experience, in particular the idea that it is "one big happy party".

In the introduction, I referred to two opposing perspectives about student drinking and/or student drinking during the transition to university. One, that the transition to university and being at university and the drinking that goes with it is simply as a rite of passage, a normal path to full adulthood and something that students will eventually mature out of when they leave university and therefore nothing to be too concerned about. The other is that drinking amongst students is high in comparison with same age peers, that students, especially when they first come to university, are not fully adult and therefore vulnerable, that excessive drinking poses potential risk to short and long-term health and wellbeing and therefore it should be of concern and

addressed. These perspectives are in effect, arguments about individual freedom and choice of adults versus utilitarian principles and the duty of the state to protect and minimise risk.

I will address these two perspectives, particularly in light of recent accusations of a young generation less resilient than previous generations. The term "Snowflake Generation" (Fox, 2016) has been used to describe young people who are deemed less resilient, less self-reliant, more likely to be offended and more likely to report that they have mental health problems. Furedi (2017) suggests that university students have become increasingly infantalised, arguing that since the 1990s there has been the infantalisation of campus culture where undergraduates are no longer viewed as young men and women, but as "biologically mature children". He argues that this, in part, is the result of an increase in litigation cases within universities in the USA that has resulted in an expectation that universities should take on the role of "in loco parentis". This has led to rise in "raising 'awareness' of health and safety issues, in relation to issues ranging from sex and stress to drugs and alcohol" (Furedi, 2017:7). Furedi expresses particular concern about an increase in the medicalisation of psychological issues, an increase of a risk culture and increased awareness of potential harms.

However, although legally adult there is evidence that some young people at the time they go to university may still not be fully equipped to deal with the responsibilities and in this sense may not necessarily be making fully informed decisions. Antrobus (2013) suggests at the age young people go to university, though legally adult, the may not yet have reached "adulthood" and suggest there is evidence that the brain may

not become fully adult until the age of 25. She argues that some are still in need of support and help beyond the age of 18. Although for some, excessive drinking at university is transitional for others problematic drinking patterns may be formed whilst at university and particularly in the first year (Jackson et al, 2001).

Considering that alcohol consumption, and problematic use, is higher amongst students than those of a similar age in the general population there is merit in conducting research which explores reasons for this in more depth. Added to that is the evidence that problematic drinking patterns may start in the first year of University (Jackson et al, 2001), and that some may use alcohol as a coping mechanism to help ease the transition to university (Sadava and Park, 1993).

Another factor to take in to consideration is the increase in student numbers in the last twenty years. In 1999, Tony Blair pledged that by 2010, 50% of young people would attend university. Whilst this target was not met in 2010, by 2012 almost 49% of young people aged 18-30 attended university. By 2017, 27% of 18 year olds attended university (Adams, 2017). Not only have student numbers increased but also the Widening Participation agenda has resulted in a change in the demographic of students. This has led to an increase in the numbers of students potentially needing support (Vignoles, 2016).

Having found little research relating to the transition to university and alcohol consumption this thesis focuses on the transition to university and drinking exploring how students who have left home for the first time experience the transition to university and how it relates to their drinking motivations. The study, conducted as part of this thesis, involved gathering in depth stories from students about the

experience. The findings presented feed in to this wider debate about individual freedoms versus duty of care and whether students, and in particular those who have left home and who are just starting at university, as adults should be free to make informed choices or, whether they are potentially vulnerable and at risk and in need of support.

Chapter 3: The Transition to University

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of literature relating to the transition to university discussing the way in which it may affect individuals. There is evidence that moving away from home to go to university may be challenging for some students. Some may experience a sense of loss, homesickness anxiety and loneliness. It may also affect one's sense of identity and trigger the attachment system adding to anxiety and feelings of insecurity (Maunder et al, 2013; Jackson et al, 2001; Chow and Healey 2008; Scanlon et al, 2007; Bernier, 2005, Bloom, 1987).   Additionally there is evidence that expectations about what university will be like are not necessarily met, which can have a negative impact on how students adjust to university (Kantanis, 2000). Having established there is little research relating to drinking and the transition to university a review of literature, relating specifically to the transition to university, was undertaken. This was to gain a general understanding of how the transition is experienced and to ascertain whether there was anything of relevance relating to student drinking and drinking motivations. A preliminary search of databases found only a small number of studies and therefore no exclusion criteria was necessary. A search was then conducted using databases such as Scopus, Assia and Google scholar using search terms "transition to university" and "going to university" and "leaving home to go to university". Given there were so few studies the literature review covers studies from several different countries. A number of themes emerged from the search and accordingly the literature is presented under these themes.   In addition included in this chapter is a section that touches on the definition of the "transition to

university". This draws on a study that used the concept of liminality as a way of explaining the transition.

3.2. Attachment

Bernier et al (2005), drawing on Bowlby's (1982) theory of attachment found the anticipation of going to university can trigger the attachment system. Their study supported "Bowlby's (1982) proposition that stress activates (and thus magnifies) individual differences in attachment organisation" (Bernier et al, 2005:183). In other words it is possible that the need an infant displays, to seek comfort from a care giver in times of stress (Prior and Glaser, 2006), are still in existence even in this age group and the process of going to university may understandably prompt particular feelings of insecurity and fear. Bernier et al (2005) interviewed 67 young people attending a USA university, 27 of whom had left home to go to university. They conducted three interviews with each participant, one before they started university, once mid-term and once at the end of the first semester. The aim of the research was to look at the effects of leaving home in relation to the four main styles of attachment developed by Ainsworth et al (1989) (secure, anxious-preoccupied, dismissive-avoidant). They found that different attachment styles were relevant to how young people, leaving home, experienced the transition to university and suggest that "individual differences related to attachment state of mind in adolescence may be magnified by a stressful life experience" (Bernier et al, 2005:173) and this helps to explain why some may find the experience more difficult than others.

Fisher and Hood (1987) interviewed sixty-one, 17-18 year olds about to start university and noted that separation from parents by adolescents, although accepted as a normal

part of life, may be experienced as a major loss, which can arouse emotions such as anger and depression. He notes that separation often triggers intense emotional reactions accompanied by attempts to re-attach to the lost person. Emotional reactions vary, but may include nostalgia, depression, anger, and guilt. Kenny and Donaldson (1991, using questionnaires with 226 students in a USA university, also argue that the process of separation may activate the attachment system. Larose and Boivin (1998) conducted a study in Canada in which 298 students completed a questionnaire, 54% of these students had left home to go to university. Their findings also support the idea that the transition to university is especially stressful for those adolescents who leave home, and may thus activate their attachment system.

Kenny and Rice (1995) explored attachment theory in relation to the transition to university by exploring different attachment models. They suggested that the transition to university presents a unique set of experiences and that, according to attachment theory, successful adjustment depends on the "attachment figure", which in most cases would be a parent, being available to provide support when needed and provide a secure base. This "highlights the adaptive value of supportive interdependent relationships throughout the life span and especially during periods of stress such as the transition to college" (Kenny & Rice, 1995:435). They suggest these contrasts with earlier theories that emphasise the importance of "individuation and psychological separation for late adolescents" (Kenny and Rice, 1995:435).

3.3. Identity

Chow and Healey (2008) examine the transition to university in relation to attachment, place and identity. They interviewed ten students from Gloucester University, UK, using semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Their aim was to examine place identity during the transition from home to university. They suggest there is a sense of loss of this identity when moving to university and the seeking of and forming of a new identity. One respondent said, "home gives you an identity. It makes you who you are", another, referred to the experience as being like a "roller-coaster".   One student said the anticipation of going away made her sick but that when she got to university she got on with it, saying "(Y)ou just throw yourself into everything that people are willing to do, so you don't get left out".

Scanlon et al (2007) also note the importance of identity during this transition. Their research involved the use of questionnaires, completed by 602 students in two Australian universities, which asked students to rank significant life changes and identify help-seeking and coping behaviours. The questionnaires were followed- up with semi- structured interviews with 27 volunteers who had completed the questionnaire. Sixty five percent of this cohort were aged 18-20 with just under half living at home. They conclude that identity is important, and their findings point to feelings of loss in relation to home and friends, feelings of isolation, loss of identity and the "re-mooring" of identity.   They also referred to the high numbers of students who drop out of university in the first year.

> "Research on the first-year experience indicates that many students encounter difficulties in the transition to university. These difficulties result in a 'lack of connectedness and involvement' (Perry and Allard 2003), 'unhappiness and

dissatisfaction' (Yorke 2000), 'loneliness' (Pargetter 2000), 'isolation' (Lawrence 2001), 'disequilibrium' (Jackson 2003) and 'alienation' (Mann 2001). As a result, large numbers of students who enter university do not complete their studies; for example, in the United Kingdom Jackson (2003) estimates that 'dropping out' might be as high as one in four. In Australia a third of all university students fail to graduate and of these students "some 50 per cent withdraw in their first year," (Scanlon et al 2007:223)

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, online no date) recorded that 1 in 5 students in the UK dropped out by the end of 2016.

3.4. Expectations

A number of studies also looked at how expectations of what university will be like may affect how students adjust. Maunder et al (2013), conducted research at the University of Northampton in the UK. Four undergraduate psychology students formed part of the research team and conducted research with 19 first and second year undergraduates, which involved interviews with 9 students and four focus groups. They found that students, prior to coming to university, "held internal images about university, shaped through cultural experience, which were used to form expectations and interpret experiences". Hoverer, they found these expectations were rarely met. Brinkworth et al (2009) also conducted research at the University of Adelaide, Australia in which 189 students, and their lecturers and tutors, after six months of being at the university, completed a questionnaires about their expectations and experiences of their first year. Their findings pointed to students finding the first year of university an "eye-opener" and that students underestimate the amount of adjustment needed. Crisp et al (2009) conducted research during Orientation week at the University Of Adelaide, Australia. They conducted two surveys in 2007 and 2008 with 979 students and 1774 respectively. They found that whilst students know, through what they have

been told, that university is going to be different they actually do not expect it to be so different. The study highlights how students expected there to be more support overall and are surprised at the amount of autonomy they are expected to have, and many struggle with this.

Scanlon et al (2007), mentioned earlier, and Jackson et al (2000), also suggest that an important aspect of adjustment to university is what students expect university to be like. Jackson et al (2000) conducted their study over four years, using questionnaires, in a Canadian university at five points from the beginning of the first term to graduation. Of the 356 who completed the first questionnaire, 30% remained to complete the final questionnaire. However, there was no indication as to how many of these students had left home to attend university. They suggest that students who have more positive expectations do better, and those who are fearful experience poorer adjustment. They also looked at those with indifferent expectations and although this group reported lower stress levels than the fearful group were more likely to drop out than the optimistic group.   They note however that those who took part in the study may have been particularly committed students.   However, they suggest that, "some students seem to blossom in university, developing personally as well as academically, whereas others become alienated, or struggle to cope with changes in life-style or workload (Jackson et al, 2000:2101). They suggest that to some degree it is about expectations and suggest that this accounts for the high percentage of dropout rates for first year students. Although these studies were not conducted in the UK, a UK study conducted by the Higher Education Statistics Agency, showed that in 2016 in some universities the drop-out rate was 1 in 5 (Weale, 2018). Scanlon et al (2007) also point to the large numbers who drop out and argue that university not

meeting expectations can lead to a lack of connectedness, loneliness, unhappiness, dissatisfaction and isolation and alienation. Additionally they suggest that this can have an impact on those dropping out in the second and third years if issues have not been resolved.

Scanlon et al (2007) suggest that students use their prior experience and knowledge of what they already have knowledge about, and experience of, to make a judgment about what the new experience will be like and they also they draw on what they have been told about what the experience will be like.   In other words they use their experience to date of a learning environment, school/college, and of making friends in order to make a judgement about what the new experience will be like. They also make a judgement about what university will be like through media images, films, stories from friends and families who have experienced it. However, they suggest this is "knowledge about" the university rather than "knowledge of" the university that, they argue, is naïve and decontextualized.

Some studies looked at the concept of expectancies in relation to friendship and social life. Kantanis (2000) conducted research in an Australian University about friendship and the social aspect of university also looking at the way in which expectations are not always fulfilled.   Their research involved the use of questionnaires with 57 first year students taking part in the study. The research found that student's expectations of what university would be like are not always met. They expected it to be about fun, meeting new people, enjoying freedom, for studies to be less regimented, to have more choice and to being mentally stimulated. They found almost 70% of students felt their expectations were not met. They found it difficult to make friends, that

university was not as exciting or fun, staff were not as accessible, workloads were heavier and some subjects were complex. They found almost 50% had not had success in the establishment of a friendship group by the end of the first semester. Richardson and Tate (2013) conducted a project at Newcastle University, in the UK, aimed at improving the transition to university for Geography students.   The project involved recruiting 27 students already studying on the course to become involved with the induction process and help new students to adjust to university life. They found students talked about the importance of the social aspect of university and of finding groups of people and/or friends they identify with.   Students also point to the fear of being alone, needing to find students to identify with and that this fear can result in one "latching on to anyone".

3.5. Liminality: Defining "The Transition"

The definition of "transition" is "the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another" (OED, no date). However, this definition is not adequate for how the transition to university is experienced.   Some students may adjust quickly, in which case the transition could be considered to be short-lived, but others may struggle to adjust with the process taking longer, or even finding they do not adjust. The evidence of how many students drop out in the first year shows many are unable to complete this transition. It may be helpful then to consider this through research conducted by Palmer et al (2009) and through the concept of "liminality".

 Palmer el (2009) conducted a study at a UK university with 18 students on a marketing course. The study was conducted in three parts which involved writing down thoughts about what the transition to university means and how they experienced it and

reflecting on this and thinking of a "critical turning point" in their first year. The final phase was an open discussion within the group about their experience and "turning points". They suggest these "turning points" are specific events, which lead to a student starting to feel they belong. Palmer et al (2009) refer to the concept of liminality as a useful lens through which to examine the period of transition to university for those who leave home. The notion of liminality was introduced by Van Gennep (1960), and further developed by Turner (1969), referring to a period of disorientation as one moves from one status to another. It is a useful concept through which to view the transition to university. Palmer et al (2009) suggest there is an assumption that students, once at university feel located within university and instantly belong but, in reality, students may not always immediately fit in. They suggest there is a period, the first six to eight weeks, in which they develop, or do not, develop their sense of belonging and during that time they are transient. They suggest they are suspended between one place and another, between university and home and, Van Gennep (1960) refers to this as 'in-between-ness' or 'a betwixt space'. They discuss how being in this "betwixt space" results in a feeling of "placelessness" during which they feel self-conscious and this affects their sense of belonging.

> " – a form of identity crisis – whereby betwixt spaces allow them to unmask, build or redefine identity (and possibly more than one). This change in identity, then, became a blueprint for enculturation within the university life, and shifted the students' perceptions of the sense of belonging."(Palmer et al 2009:47)

3.6 Summary and conclusion

This chapter explored research relating to the transition to university. It highlighted a number of ways the transition can have a negative impact on students and how this can potentially lead to students dropping out of university. The published research outlined above shows only how some students experience the transition. In doing so, it tends to portray a negative perspective, which is not necessarily representative. I am sure many students find the transition unproblematic. However, given the high numbers of students now entering higher education in the UK, understanding how students experience the transition is of value for those within universities exploring how they can support students. However, I consider it is of particular interest in relation to drinking motivations given the evidence cited earlier, that students are more likely to drink than non-student peers are. It is also of interest in relation to drinking motivations during the transition to university given the alleged abundance of cheap alcohol and drinks promotions during this period. I use the term "alleged" because whilst evidence relating to this appears to be largely anecdotal I have no reason to believe this is not the case.

Of particular note was the lack of reference to drinking within the published literature on the transition to university. A reason for this of course will be that the focus of the research was not alcohol related and participants would not have been asked directly about their drinking. Nevertheless, given the high rates of alcohol consumption amongst students, particularly in the UK, it is noteworthy that, regardless of whether students were asked about their drinking, it features so little, particularly in the UK research.

Chapter 4 Drinking: Young people and students

4.1. Introduction

Earlier in the thesis I discussed the way in which research is not necessarily a linear process and showed, in chapter 1, that my research journey did not follow a simple linear route. I have already explained that I began exploring the research on alcohol consumption and drinking motivations before researching the transition to university but chose to present the research on the transition to university first. I chose to do this because I considered the research in Chapter 3 provides context, particularly because of the use of qualitative approaches. Thus, they provide insight in to how students experience university during this period. This context, and the insight in to experience, is something I considered an important element. One that was missing from the research on drinking motivations. One of my main criticisms about the research on drinking motivations amongst young people and students, and even some of the wider research on student drinking in general is that it lacked this context, and certainly lacked linkages to a wider political and cultural context, which I considered was in part because of the use of large-scale surveys.

After an initial exploration of the literature on student drinking motivations, I found a heavy focus on the use of quantitative methods of research and consequently I found a lack of qualitative research relating to drinking motivations. Therefore, a reason for extending the review further to include research on the wider literature around student drinking was to explore some of the qualitative research conducted in the field. I conducted this further review for two reasons. The first was to establish whether studies that had used a qualitative approach would provide some insight in to

the complexities of drinking motivations missing from the quantitative research. The second was that having established that quantitative methods were not necessarily suitable for exploring the complexities of drinking motivations I considered an exploration of research using qualitative methods would provide confirmation that this approach would be suitable for my empirical study.

This chapter highlights the complexities of drinking motivations and shows there is little consensus amongst researchers on the subject. The chapter explores the literature relating to drinking motivations amongst young people and students and some of the wider literature on student drinking in general. It starts with an overview and discussion of a literature review of young peoples' drinking motivations conducted by Kuntsche et al in 2005. Their review attempted to synthesise and make sense of a number of studies. It also provides an overview of theories and models relating to young peoples' drinking motivations.

I conducted my initial literature search relating to drinking motivations in three parts using databases such as Scopus, Assia and Google scholar. The first search focused on drinking motivations and students which I then extended to include young people because there was so little relating specifically students. I used the terms "drinking motivations" and "reasons for drinking" and "motivations for drinking" all preceded with either student or young people. My aim was not to do an extensive, systematic review but to develop a broad understanding. I had initially decided to focus on research conducted in the UK primarily because I would be conducting my study in the UK. I considered cultural differences and differences in legal drinking ages might result in making comparisons more difficult. However, a large proportion of the research is

conducted in the USA and there is very little UK research relating specifically to drinking motivations. This meant having to broaden my search.   The second search of the literature was to explore qualitative research relating to young people's drinking in general which I conducted, as I have already explained, because of the lack of qualitative research relating to drinking motivations. Again, this was not intended to be an extensive review. The purpose was to gain a better understanding of complexities of drinking motivations that is lacking in the quantitative research. Finally, I conducted a review of the literature relating to student drinking in general.

4.2 Why do young people drink?

This section provides an overview of literature relating to young peoples' drinking motivations.   After a preliminary search of the literature, I found Kuntsche et al (2005) had already conducted a review of literature relating to young peoples' drinking motivations and I start with a summary of their research.

The aim of the review conducted by Kuntsche et al (2005) entitled "Why do young people drink? A review of drinking motives" was to analyse literature relating to drinking motivations in young people (some of the studies they looked at focussed on student drinking too) and to examine some of the theories and models developed to explain and assess drinking motivations in young people. The review, conducted by Kuntsche et al (2005) focussed on research relating to the drinking motivations of young people aged between 10 and 25. It also focussed on publications post 1989, after the development of the Motivational Model of Alcohol Use (Cox and Klinger, 1988, 1990), discussed shortly.

Kuntsche et al (2005) suggest that the "The concept of drinking motives is based on the assumption that people drink in order to attain certain valued outcomes" (Kuntsche et al 2005:84) for example, to get relief from feeling stressed, to enhance a fun night out, to make a social situation easier, or to relax. Kuntsche et al (2005) note that traditionally, reasons for drinking were grouped into two broad categories. One concerned with drinking to be sociable, having a good time, to celebrate or to become more confident and the other, to regulate emotions, to cope and alleviate stress (McCarty and Kaye 1984; Smith, Abbey, and Scott in Kuntsche et al, 2005). However, Cooper et al (1992) extended this to four categories - drinking to enhance mood, to obtain social rewards, to cope with negative emotion, to avoid social rejection. Based on these four categories, Cooper et al (1994) went on to develop the Drinking Motivations Questionnaire (DMQ). The DMQ is informed by Cox and Klinger's (1988) Motivational Model of Alcohol Use which suggests that motivations for drinking are to achieve "affective changes" for example to change mood and emotions, and it suggests "motives for drinking are the final common pathways to alcohol use" (Sun et al, 2015:1590). Additionally, it is based on the idea that "drinking motivations are intertwined with wishes, aspirations, and goals that people have (or do not have) in other areas of their life" (Cox and Klinger, 2011:200). They suggest, that whilst there are neurochemical factors at play which are specific to the biology of individuals, ultimately whether someone drinks or not comes down to their expectations of negative or positive outcomes which is based on their past experience of drinking (Cox and Klinger, 2011:122). The model, designed specifically to address addiction, was developed by synthesising existing literature on alcohol use and the literature on

emotion and motivational theory, and from data gathered in laboratories using rats.

Cox and Klinger concluded that;

> "People are motivated to bring about affective changes through the use of alcohol to the extent that they do not have satisfying positive incentives to pursue and enjoy and to the extent that their lives are burdened by negative incentives that they are not making satisfactory progress toward removing" (Cox and Klinger, 1988:178)

The Drinking Motives Questionnaire, DMQ (Cooper et al, 1994), later revised to the DMQ-R (revised) and then the DMQ –R SF (revised, short form) was developed to assess young people's drinking motivations based on scores relating to the four categories Social, Coping, Enhancement, and Conformity which is further divided into 20 (originally 15) reasons for drinking (Kuntsche and Kuntsche, 2009).   Kuntsche et al (2005) suggest this is an accepted method of assessing drinking motivations in young people and all DMQ and subsequent versions have since been validated and replicated in a number of studies in a number of countries. (Stewart, Zeitlin and Samoluk, 1995; Kuntsche et al, 2015 and Grant et al, 2007; Németh et al, 2011; Mazzardis et al, 2010).

The purpose of the DMQ (and later versions) is to assess drinking motivations in young people and identify which are most likely to lead to problematic drinking in order aim to inform interventions to reduce problematic drinking. However whilst the DMQ has been tested and validated there appears to be no evidence of how it has been used to inform interventions or whether interventions have been developed as a result and whether these have been successful.   Kuntsche et al (2005) also noted that the DMQ is not the only method of assessment and a number of other tools have been developed to assess drinking motivations. For example the Reasons for Drinking Questionnaire

(RFDQ Farber, Khavari, and Douglass, 1980), the Reasons for Drinking Scale (RDS) (Carpenter and Hasin, 1998b), and the Social Context of Drinking Scales (SCD) Beck et al (1999). Again there is a lack of evidence of the way in these have been used to inform interventions.

Kuntsche et al (2005) reviewed 85 studies in total and identified several different approaches to measuring motives, which they appraised and grouped. One group, which formed the majority of the studies used, questionnaires such as those mentioned above, including the DMQ, DMQ-R and DMQ-R SV. Another group consisted of research that simply looked at previous research. Another group consisted of those that used multidimensional questionnaires devised specifically for the research being conducted and finally, a group of studies using qualitative approaches. Of all the studies they reviewed only five used a qualitative approach (none of which relate to students).

A problem that Kuntsche et al (2005) found was that motives, though quite similar in name, may differ substantially in the items used to indicate this particular motive. For example "Cronin(1997), Beck et al (1995) and Thombs et al (1993) put "drinking to get high" under social motivation whereas Carpenter and Hasin (1998), Cooper (1994), Cooper et al (1992), MacLean and Lecci, 2000 and Weinberger and Bartholomew (1996) all put this under enhancement motives" (Kuntsche et al, 2005:850). They noted that the terms "drinking motives" and "drinking reasons" are often used interchangeably but they believe there is a subtle difference between the terms "drinking motives" and "drinking reasons", suggesting that whilst they mean roughly the same thing it is important to acknowledge and be clear about the differences to

avoid misunderstandings. "Reasons", they propose, tend to be more rational, whereas "motives" appear to be based on more unconscious decisions. They suggest that

> "most young people reported drinking for social motives, some indicated enhancement motives, and only a few reported coping motives. Social motives appear to be associated with moderate alcohol use, enhancement with heavy drinking, and coping motives with alcohol-related problems" (Kuntsche et al 2005:84)

It appears then, that whilst there is a wealth of research relating to young people's drinking motivations there seems to be no general agreement. For example, Cooper (1994) and Cooper et al (1992) found that those who drink to cope are more likely to experience drinking problems than those who drink for social or enhancement reasons, whilst McCarty and Kaye (1984) concluded that it is enhancement motives which are more likely to lead to problematic drinking amongst university students than coping motives. A more recent study, conducted by Van Damme et al (2013), who conducted an online survey relating to substance use in Ghent with 16,953 undergraduates, suggests social motives can be related to heavy drinking. They argue that social motives seem to be the most common drinking motivation in higher education whereas previously coping and enhancement motives have been associated with heavy drinking and problematic drinking in students. They point to the lack of consensus suggesting methodological differences might explain this lack of consensus. They also suggest that generalizing results to all university students is not always possible. Coleman and Cater (2005) highlight that there is a potential crossover between drinking for pleasure, leisure and drinking to cope. In addition, Leigh and Lee (2008) argue that, whilst drinking to cope is seen as the opposite of drinking to be

sociable, the two are often connected with young people being taken out by peers for a drink to help them relax and forget their problems.

Kuntsche et al (2005) concluded that "(D)rinking motive research is highly heterogeneous, making it difficult to compare studies" (Kuntsche et al 2005:850) and suggest there is no clear consensus on drinking motivations. The review conducted by Kuntsche et al was conducted in 2005 and there has been no similar review since.

Given the lack of depth or context in the research discussed above, I considered that an exploration of wider research, relating to young peoples' drinking in general, that used qualitative approaches, might contain some evidence of the complexities of drinking motivations missing in the existing research. I also considered this would provide further insight in to the merits of using qualitative methods and further strengthen my rationale for using a qualitative approach for my study. The next section provides an overview of this research. The section following on from that goes on to explore literature relating specifically to student drinking.

4.3. Drinking: Young people

This section starts by looking at literature relating to young people's drinking that draw on interviews and focus groups. The aim is to show how such studies provide a more in depth understanding students' experiences and reasons for drinking. What is of particular note is that studies tend to focus on what might be considered, excessive drinking. Although not disputing that young people and students frequently engage in this type of drinking it provides a rather one-dimensional perspective perhaps feeding into a stereotype of what student life is like.

De Visser et al (2013) conducted research in the UK using focus groups with young people aged 13-25. The aim of their research is primarily about interventions to encourage moderate drinking but it also examines differences in drinking motivations between age groups and genders. De Visser et al (2013) found that participants demonstrate multiple reasons for drinking.

> "Interviewees gave multiple motivations for drinking – especially those related to image and reputation, and played down the health implications of heavy drinking. Negative aspects of drinking – caring for drunk friends, being cared for when drunk and suffering through hangovers with friends – were considered to offer opportunities for closer interpersonal bonding than other social activities" (De Visser et al, 2013:1450)

Niland et al (2013) also examine this idea of drinking and being part of friendship groups and drinking to loosen up. Their study, conducted in New Zealand using focus groups with 50 male and female participants aged 18-25, also reveals the shared experience of getting drunk and about the "caring and protection" of friends whilst drunk. They use terms like "friendship with fun" and "friends with a buzz. Frederiksen et al's (2012) study of Danish 16-17 year olds using semi-structured interviews, also found that alcohol helped make them feel included in a group but conversely reported they do not need a huge amount of alcohol for this to happen. These studies highlight the way in which young people use alcohol to develop friendships and bond with peers, to help ease social situations, to bond and to loosen up.

Griffin et al (2009) conducted research in the UK with 18-25 year olds focus groups, which included one group of university undergraduates. The aim of the research was for participants, via focus groups, to share "passing out stories". The finding showed

that the experience of passing out after excessive drinking provided "banter" for the following day. Participants discussed how it provided a chance to bond over the shared experience. Participants talk about passing out in toilets and friends videoing embarrassing moments and the importance of these in providing entertainment.

The studies outlined above show that although there is an element of hedonism in the way in which these young people get drunk the motivations rather than just being about fun are clearly multifaceted. Whilst there is an element of fun and to obtain a "buzz" there also a social payoff in getting drunk. Measham and Brain (2005) conducted research which involved interviewing 352 young people, with a mean age of 25, whist they were on a night out in Manchester.   From their findings they suggested that young people now have fewer social responsibilities enabling "unbounded hedonism" and conclude there is a "culture of intoxication" and "determined drunkenness" amongst young people which suggests fun and pleasure seeking as a motivation.   However, Martinic and Measham (2008) conducted research in five different countries making use of focus groups to gain an understanding of cross-cultural attitudes amongst young people who drink "to intoxication". Their research focuses on "extreme drinking" and considers cultural differences. The narratives that emerged as a result of this research provide evidence of the way in which drinking motivations are complex. Participants talk about drinking for a whole range of reasons such as drinking for fun, to alleviate stress, to increase confidence, after relationship breakups, after exams or to initiate "hooking up" with someone. The participants talk about insecurity, inadequacy and about alcohol helping them with communication, sharing your private thoughts and allowing you to "see each other's hearts".   Indeed,

Leigh and Lee (2008) also discuss how wide ranging drinking motivations can be. They make suggestions about some of the motivations behind extreme drinking and list a number of explanations such as facilitating peer relations, coping with problems, exploring increased freedom, and for fun.

Seaman and Ikegwuonu (2010), in their UK study, which involved interviewing 35 young adults, including those in higher education, further education, employment, training, or not in employment, found the social aspect of drinking was important. They argue that drinking to achieve drunkenness is a 'default' choice for peer socialising and that alcohol plays a central role in assisting group belonging and developing and maintaining friendship groups. The use of the word 'default' choice is an interesting one implying almost that some young people have lost the ability to socialise in any other way. There is a perhaps a similarity with the use of the phrase "unbounded hedonism" used by Measham and Brain (2005) which also implies there is a lack of thought or carelessness about the drinking. Again I am not refuting this is a component but suggest it presents a one-dimensional perspective. Also of note is that this separates young people's drinking motivations from those of the rest of the population. This implies it is only young people who drink in this way. Whilst the settings, situations, types of drink or drinking patterns might be different between young and older people there seems to be an almost a taken for granted assumption that drinking motivations are different too.

4.4. Drinking: Students

This section provides an overview of some of the literature relating specifically to students. It draws on a range of research that use both quantitative and qualitative methods. The section starts with an overview of research that partly continues the subject of drinking motivations. It aims to provide evidence that students drink for a wide variety of reasons which are not quantifiable and do not fit neatly in to categories. It then goes on to explore styles or types of drinking that are generally associated, although not exclusively, with students or "student drinking culture". I use the term "drinking culture" with caution here as it implies that students are a homogenous group with similar behaviours. It also implies that students drink in different ways from the wider population which I would argue is debatable and which I touch on later in the thesis. However, I use the term loosely to describe the type of drinking behaviours that are typically associated with students such as drinking games, pre-loading, and binge drinking and student-athlete drinking.

Young et al (2005) conducted research with 42 female undergraduates via focus groups in a USA university. The study explored the way in which women feel they need to match men's drinking in order to feel, or be viewed as equal. They discuss how the young women feel the pressure to both demonstrate masculine drinking traits but also to garner respect from male peers. This study provides an example of how drinking motivations do not always fit neatly into categories. Earlier in the chapter, I argued that research relating to drinking motivations attempts to categorise drinking motivations. However, whilst such research is useful in identifying patterns, and attempts to produce data that is generalizable, I suggested such methods fail to

acknowledge the complexities of drinking motivations. Indeed, Kuntsche et al (2005) also took this stance, following their review of the literature. The study conducted by Young et al (2005) is an example of how drinking motivations do not necessarily fit in to neat categories, that they are multi-layered and, that context is important. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Cooper et al (1992) identified four categories, drinking to enhance mood, to obtain social rewards, to cope with negative emotion and to avoid social rejection. It might be possible to fit what emerged from Young et al's study into one or more of these categories but doings so would strip away the context and the complexity. There are many layers to this study, particularly around gender, relationships and perhaps even power within relationship, which might be lost in a study that focused just on drinking motivations or drinking behaviours.

Guise and Gill (2007) conducted a study in the UK involving interviewing 20 students. As with the studies conducted by De Visser et al (2013) and Niland (2013) there was emphasis on bonding with mention of "letting go of yourself", "socialising" and being part of a group. Their research also explored the role of alcohol in terms of drinking to "get happy". One student says she drank "to get drunk, to get happy and just to, not to forget things, there's nothing really in my life to forget when I think like that so, it's just to have a dance". This sentence in particular is of interest as there is an indication here of it not only being drinking for fun but that there is more to it. The use of the phrase, "it is not to forget things", is interesting. It is either an indication of an awareness that people drink to forget things or that this is something she has done. The sentence seems contradictory and although it is not possible to know exactly what she meant here it is not only a good example of the way in which drinking motivations

are multifaceted it also highlights some of the problems in taking what someone says at face value. In terms of drinking motivations, it would be very difficult to categorise this. Is she drinking to cope, is she drinking because she is happy? It is possible it is both of these things and shows it is multi-layered. Additionally she says, "it's just to have a dance" which adds another layer in that she is saying alcohol gives her confidence to dance.

Vander Ven (2011). Undertook a six-year study on three university sites. The study used a mixed methods approach, 469 surveys, 25 interviews and participant observations. Although the title of his book, published as a result of the study, implies a focus on drinking motivations "Why college students drink too much and party so hard: Getting Wasted" the research questions tend to focus on drinking occasions, amount consumed, how it felt to be drunk and the consequences of drinking. However, a number of themes emerge from Vender Ven's study that are congruent with those in others outlined earlier. He also found evidence that students drink to facilitate friendship, develop a sense of belonging, to "feel loved" and to provide fodder for shared stories.

Findings from the above two studies shows the role alcohol plays in assisting students in developing friendship, maintaining bonds and creating a sense of belonging. This is particularly interesting as these themes were apparent in literature on the transition to university explored in chapter 3, with students feeling a heightened sense of urgency to make friends quickly during this period. Given the lack of literature relating to the

transition to university and alcohol consumption, a study focussing on the role alcohol plays in helping develop friendship and a sense of belonging during the transition to university would add to the existing body of research and provide new insight in to how these two things relate.

Another area of research that I considered of relevance was the research around drinking to cope. There is a wealth of research on this subject, some of which relates to students and I wondered, given the difficulties some students have in adjusting to university, whether alcohol would have a role during this period in helping them deal with this, in other words, it is used to help them to cope. I was interested in developing a better understanding of how drinking to cope might be relevant during this period. Here I provide a brief overview of some of this research with some discussion about how a further study relating to the transition to university might add to this existing body of research.

Armeli et al (2008) conducted research in a USA university with 458 participants completing questionnaires. Their study looked at drinking to cope. This research however, whilst identifying the numbers of students drinking to cope does not provide insight into why they might be drinking to cope. There is no evidence of the context, the environment, how this relates to what is going on in the university, the student's individual lives or to the wider social context. The same is also the case with a study by Rice and Arsdale (2010) who conducted quantitative research in the USA using 354 students to explore drinking to cope and how it relates to stress and perfectionism. Park and Levenson (2002) conducted a study using questionnaires, with a sample of 275 undergraduates from a USA university. They concluded that drinking to cope is

prevalent amongst students and is on the increase, concluding this is more likely to lead to problematic drinking. Another example is the research of Gonzalez and Hewell (2012) who conducted a survey of 109 students in a USA university exploring drinking to cope amongst binge drinkers and how this might relate to suicidal thoughts. Although there is potentially value in gaining evidence of a link between suicidal thoughts and binge drinking the study merely focuses on this being a link and again as with the others studies still does not provide a more in depth insight in to why those students might have such thoughts or why they are binge drinking.

There are a number of more recent studies relating to drinking to cope (Young et al, 2016; Ehrenberg et al, 2016; Bravo and Pearson, 2017; DiBello et al, 2018). Ehrenberg et al focus on the relationship between depression and drinking to cope and DiBello et al (2018) on drinking to cope and identity. These studies provide evidence that many students are drinking to cope and can be linked with issues such identity, depression and suicide. However, as I have argued in relation to previous studies, the context is missing and do not explain why students might be struggling or what might be leading to depression or suicidal thoughts. As students are the focus of the research, evidence of how being a student might be connected with drinking to cope, feeling depressed or having suicidal thoughts could provide further insight and context.   Without such evidence, there is no differentiation between student drinking and the wider population. This does not address the question as to whether there is something about being a student, or the university environment, that leads to a particular type or style of drinking.   A way of addressing this would be to conduct a study that explores the subject in a more holistic way and takes a psychosocial perspective. This could provide greater insight in to how the student's experience being at university, their

perspective on that experience, how it relates to an immediate context (such as transition to college) and to wider context. Context then is important, and I pick up this idea of context later in the chapter.

There are a number of studies focusing on the role of drinking games. Whilst it is not just students who take part in drinking games it is something that is particularly associated with students (Kenney et al, 2010; Osberg et al, 2012). A study conducted in Australia, using questionnaires and structured interviews, explores the way in which drinking games are used as a badge of honour (Polizzotto et al, 2007). Johnson and Sheets (2004), who conducted their research in the USA using questionnaires, found there are a variety of reasons for taking part in drinking games such as competitiveness, boredom, social lubricant and fun. A study conducted by Moser et al (2014) explored the way in which students had expectations prior to coming to university about the part drinking games play in university life. Fairlie et al (2015) and Zamboanga et al (2013) both focus on problem drinking and the outcomes of such drinking games. Similar to research discussed earlier, much of the research relating to students and drinking games is conducted in the USA and is largely based on questionnaires. Also, as with other research there is a focus on the link between drinking games and excessive and/or problematic drinking (Borsari et al; 2003; Johnson and Sheets, 2004; Kenney et al; 2010; Samboanga et al, 2013;LaBrie et al, 2013; Moser et al, 2014; Fairlie et al, 2015). I have presented a sample here of research relating to student, which show there are a multitude of reasons why students might take part in drinking games including competitiveness, boredom, fun and to ease social situations. What is evident is that the reasons given do not differ particularly from the reasons found in wider research on drinking motivations and/or student drinking which then

raises the question as to whether it is useful to explore it separately. Indeed, in the next section, which looks at research about pre-loading, Foster and Anderson (2013), in relation to pre-loading, question the usefulness of exploring it as a separate entity. This also adds to my argument earlier about the usefulness of separating particular phenomena from a wider context. The existing research tells us that students take part in drinking games and that this may result in excessive or problematic drinking, and whilst this is informative it provides little in relation to a wider context.

Another drinking practice that is associated (although not exclusively) with further and higher education students is pre-loading (Pederson and Labrie, 2007) which is also referred to as pre-partying, pre-drinking or pre-gaming. There are concerns about this type of drinking because it may result higher alcohol consumption because drinking often starts earlier and alcohol can be consumed rapidly (Whitworth, 2014).

Pederson and Labrie (2007) suggest that pre-loading is associated with students, although not exclusively a student practice, and Read et al (2010) suggest this focus is primarily because the practice is about saving money. However, Østergaard and Andrade (2014), who conducted a study in the UK, based on questionnaires, suggest it is not just about cost and the overriding reason has more to do with creating group cohesion. This is interesting given that earlier in the chapter, I noted much of the literature relating to student drinking and young peoples' drinking in general points to the way in which alcohol facilitates social bonding and helps develop group cohesion. I have also noted that the need to develop bonds quickly during the first few weeks of university is also a common theme within the literature relating to the transition to university. Bancroft (2012), who conducted interviews with female university students

in the UK, also noted that whilst there is an element of money saving, pre-drinking amongst women was a way of drinking safely and of creating group cohesion. Foster and Anderson (2013), mentioned earlier, conducted a review of the literature relating to pre-loading. They argue that pre-loading should be considered next to the wider drinking culture rather than exploring it as a separate entity. Also, as with the case of drinking games, the same argument can be applied in that, as well as looking at this in relation to wider drinking culture, it would also be useful to look at in relation to a wider political and cultural context.

Labrie et al (2012) conducted research to explore motives behind what they refer to as pre-partying drinking and they too refer to the importance of context. They used their research to develop the Preparty Motivations Inventory (PMI). They argue that it contributes to the drinking motives literature suggesting that motivations for drinking are context and event-specific. Interestingly then, whilst Foster and Anderson (2013) argue that drinking should be explored with regard to the wider student drinking culture, others suggest it should be explored in relation to a given context, and I touch on this later in the discussion section.

Another area associated with student drinking, although perhaps more so in the USA, is that of the relationship between sport and student drinking, or what might be referred to as student-athlete drinking (Yusko, 2008). Two studies, drawing on questionnaires, conducted in the USA are a study by Neal et al (2005) which explore drinking in relation to sporting events and, Hummer et al (2011) explored drinking games amongst college athletes. Martens et al (2006) conducted a review of the literature relating to the prevalence of drinking amongst student-athletes in

comparison to non-athletes, the factors that motivate use, and the type of

interventions that might work with this group.   They found alcohol might be used as a

way of engaging with other team members and a way of promoting group cohesion.

Martens et al (2006) also suggest the environmental factors are important. Yusko et al

(2008) point to the prevalence of literature which shows that drinking amongst

student-athletes is higher and riskier than amongst non-athlete students. They point to

a range of reasons for drinking amongst this group such as higher sensation seeking,

and higher enhancement and coping motives within this group.   This differs from

Martens et al (2006) which suggests it is more about group cohesion.

Zhou and Heim (2014) sought to identify theories relating to the phenomena of

student-athlete drinking and conducted a literature review of existing research.   They

highlight the link between excessive, problematic and risky drinking amongst student-

athletes. They note the prevalence of USA based studies and found that student

athletes were more likely to drink for social reasons than non-athletes and that the

majority of studies show the role that alcohol plays in facilitating social cohesion. They

were particularly interested in the sociocultural link between alcohol and sports, and

they highlight the relevance of context. Previous studies tend to focus on students as

a homogenous group and thus do not take in to account the environment, the social

context or group dynamics. These studies, in focusing on drinking within specific

contexts and within a specific group, show the importance of considering context and

environmental factors.

In chapter 2, I touched on binge drinking which Measham (2008) has referred to it as

the "new British Disease" and which features heavily in the 2012 Alcohol Strategy (HM

Government, 2012) as something of concern to public health and dis-order. It is

something that is particularly associated with young people and students. There is a

wealth of research relating to binge drinking and a number of recent studies relating to

students (Sharma et al, 2018; Edkins et al, 2017; Kuntsche et al, 2017; Adan et al 2016;

Reckdenwald, 2016; Norman et al, 2012;Gonzalez and Hewell, 2012; O'connor and

Colder, 2005). The concept of binge drinking is contentious, with debates around what

it actually is and its usefulness as a concept (Berridge et al, 2009). I do not wish to get

in to debates relating to this here but include the subject of binge drinking because it

provides another example of a drinking practice that has been presented as something

that is separate from wider drinking practices. In doing so, as with the other practices

outlined, it means it is explored as a separate entity and somewhat separated from the

wider context.   For example the research conducted by Gonzalez and Hewell (2012)

mentioned earlier shows a link between binge drinking and drinking to cope and

suicidal thoughts. However Martinic and Measham (2008) suggest it is part of a

"culture of intoxication" and point to a range of reasons for binge drinking such as fun,

to alleviate stress, to increase confidence, after relationship breakups, after exams or

to initiate "hooking up" with someone. Al Abri (2017) whose research focuses on the

relationship between drinking and FOMO suggest that binge drinking can also be

connected to FOMO. Finally, Kuntsche et al (2017) conducted a literature review

relating to binge drinking. Whilst not specifically about young people and/or students

their findings also point to a range reasons why people binge drink which show they

suggest these reasons are no different from other styles of drinking. This adds further

weight to the argument that the reasons people binge drink are perhaps no different

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from other reasons for drinking and again raises the question of the usefulness of separating this from the wider context, which I address in the next section.

4.5. Discussion

The evidence presented in this chapter raises a number of questions about existing research in to drinking motivations relating to young people and also relating to the wider research relating to drinking in general amongst young people and students. It provides evidence that the research relating to drinking motivations is dominated by the use of quantitative methods and, as a result, lacks depth and insight in the complexities of drinking motivations. It also shows there is a lack of consensus within this research (Kuntsche et al, 2005),.Attempts to try to categorise motivations and human emotions and experiences in to scientific facts is clearly problematic. In addition, despite much of the research, having been conducted in order to inform interventions, there is little evidence of the way it is being used to inform interventions and/or to tackle problematic alcohol consumption amongst students, which raises questions about the purpose of such research.

As there is so little qualitative research relating to drinking motivations amongst young people I explored qualitative literature relating drinking in general amongst young people. The second half of the chapter provided an overview of this research presenting evidence of the way in which drinking motivations are multi-layered. However this still does not provide adequate explanations but does show that qualitative methods, and in particular, narrative methods give space for these

complexities to emerge, confirming that a qualitative, interpretive or narrative approach would be more fruitful in obtaining the explanations I was seeking.

After conducting the literature review on drinking motivations, I found there to be no research relating to the transition to university and drinking motivations. I then conducted a brief literature search to ascertain whether there was research relating to the transition and drinking in general. What emerged was negligible and tended to focus on the first year at university rather than the transition. I therefore conducted a further literature search focusing just on the transition to university, which I have presented in chapter two, in order to gain a better understanding of how students experience this. I also wanted to ascertain whether this contained relevant material relating to drinking motivations.

The research relating to the transition to university was interesting and enlightening. Of particular interest was the use of qualitative methods that contrasted with the research on drinking motivations. This resulted in rich descriptions of how students experience the transition. Of particular note was the lack of reference to alcohol. I considered this to be in part because some studies are conducted in the USA where the drinking age is higher but also because the research questions asked would not have been drink related. Finally, the most important thing for me was that it provided evidence of the benefit of obtaining narratives about the experience. The research that emerges presents experiences rather than "hard facts" and includes information about emotions allowing the reader to engage more with the experience and making it feel more real and human. It is a different kind of information or knowledge and whilst

it may not be generalizable nevertheless provides valuable evidence and insight into the experience.

The evidence of the complexities, lacking in the research on drinking motivations is acknowledged when it comes to interventions to address problematic drinking, such as Motivational Counselling (Kaschel and Khul in Cox and Klinger, 2004) or Motivational Interviewing (Miller and Rollnick, 2012). These interventions help individuals explore the way their drinking relates to experiences and individual psychology and this is implicit in helping clients to understand their drinking motivations.   In essence, such methods, acknowledge that drinking motivations are individual and are the result of a complex interplay of individual emotions, and wider influences. In contrast, research and, in particular research adopting quantitative methods, in attempting to generalise drinking motivations, completely ignores the very personal and individual reasons why someone drinks and also ignores does not take in to account the wider context or the individual's immediate context.   This may go some way to explain why wider campaigns to reduce drinking have limited success (Marteau et al, 2010) and this is discussed further in chapters 8 and 9.

There seem to be a number of assumptions and contradictions within the research relating to drinking motivations and the wider research on drinking amongst students and young people. One assumption is that young people's drinking motivations and/or student drinking motivations, or the way in which students and young people consume alcohol are different from the rest of the population. Another assumption is that drinking motivations are different amongst those whose use becomes "problematic". In other words, once drinking becomes a "problem" interventions need to be

individualised. Here, there is recognition that motivations are personal and driven by past experiences, psychological makeup and reactions to external pressures and stresses, in other words, that they are complex. However if deemed less of a problem, or "normal", or perhaps more accurately do not to fall in to a category that could be described as "addiction", then wider interventions or less individualistic interventions, such as health messages will suffice. Again, there is an assumption that drinking motivations differ depending on the amount drunk. I hasten to add here, this is not an argument for individual interventions for anyone who drinks alcohol but merely to point out the contradiction. This is something I will return to in chapters 9 and 10 ten when I discuss public health models of alcohol consumption.

Of particular note is the question of context, which I have referred to a number of times in this chapter. I now go on to provide further discussion relating to this in order to strengthen my argument for conducting a study that draws on individual experience, addresses of issues of agency, and one that adopts a psychosocial approach. Monk and Heims (2013) highlight the importance of exploring the specific context of an event and suggest that consideration of environmental factors is also key. They argue there is an expanse of research within the alcohol field that is not useful in terms of practical application. Furthermore they suggest that whilst qualitative research instinctively acknowledges context there is little uptake of this contextualist approach and that In relation to student drinking they discuss certain environments are more commonly associated with consumption than others and this is an areas that remains under-examined in quantitative psycho-social research.

It would be useful at this point to discuss the concept of context briefly, as I do not wish to assume a shared understanding of what it means. It could be considered to have a multitude of meanings and explored at a macro and micro level. In relation to this field, context could refer to the wider political landscape, concerns about health and a focus on the "problem" of alcohol consumption or the wider cultural landscape, shaped by history and in which we see the binaries of alcohol as a problem "addiction" versus alcohol as pleasure. It can also refer to perhaps an immediate physical context such as the university, or drilled down further such as student accommodation, or could refer to an event or experience such as pre-loading, being member of a team or the transition to university. Describing it in this way shows how broad the term "context" can be. Furthermore, it can be understood too in terms of the researcher's reasons for wanting to conduct the research and of course, how this is shaped by a variety of phenomena both at a macro and at a micro level. It might even relate to an individual's personal context, their family background, friends and upbringing. The point I am making here is that actually all of these things could be considered context and thus interrelated and should not be separated from the phenomena being explored. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) pointed to the need for ensuring that greater consideration be to context when evaluating what researchers obtain from their data. O'Connor (2010) suggests we should be explicit "about the way in which attributions have been shaped by the circumstances in which they occur" (O'Connor, 2011:421). Furthermore, he suggests there needs to be;

> "clear justification for the early emphasis placed on describing the personal characteristics, background and reflexivity of the research team in Tong *etal's* (2007) consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ Guidelines), a document to which I frequently refer when making decisions about the rigour or methodological robustness

of a qualitative research manuscript submitted to the journal, and are no less pertinent when examining our own practice, cognitions, feelings or experience since, as Engel (1999) reminds us, context is everything (O'Connor, 2011:421)

This idea of context is a reason for wanting to adopt a psychosocial approach to my study and to move away from methods that attempt to reduce drinking motivations to data, which decontextualize and attempt to categorise.

Cox and Klinger (2011), whilst adopting methods that attempt to categorise actually do in fact acknowledge this context. In the development of the Motivational Model of Alcohol, they do acknowledge these complexities by suggesting the model "accounts for the biological, psychological and sociocultural determinants of drinking behaviour" (Cox and Klinger, 1988:122). However, these are not evident within their research or, as Kuntsche et al (2009) point out in the other research on drinking motivations. This is not to argue, in any way, that such research does not have value, or that it is meaningless. Indeed, it could be argued that studies exploring specific types of drinking such as pre-loading, or drinking games do provide some context. They provided evidence that specific contexts result in students drinking more, or leads to more risky drinking. However, the context is very specific. The evidence of how this relates to the wider socio-political or a psychosocial context is missing. It still does not get to the core of what students are experiencing. Whilst providing statistics, for example, on how many drink excessively, drink to cope, how drinking to cope might result in suicidal thoughts, or how pre-loading might be connected to excessive drinking, they do not show the complexities behind these, or whether there is something about being a student or the university environment that might lead to

these. I found when reading the studies that I wanted to know more about the stories behind the statistics.   I also argued that, whilst figures on a sheet might be useful in providing information about the nature of a particular problem and the extent of that "problem", focussing on problematic use was getting in the way of obtaining a broader understanding of why people drink. The heavy emphasis on alcohol consumption as a "problem" keeps the focus on the alcohol itself and ignores how it relates to the wider context and not acknowledging that the "problem", if there is indeed a problem is wider than alcohol as a product.

4.6. Summary and conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of some of the literature relating to drinking motivations and drinking in general amongst young people and students. I showed that literature relating to drinking motivations fails to provide depth and context and argued this was largely because of the dominance of quantitative methods in the existing research, attempts to produce data that is generalizable, and a desire to categorise drinking motivations. I argued that the existing research was conflicting and that the reasons students drink are multiple and multi-layered. I suggested that consideration is not always given to wider contexts or environments, such as the transition to university, or the university environment, or the wider political, historical, and cultural context. I then went on to explore broader literature relating to drinking amongst young people and students that utilised qualitative methods. I showed that whilst this research was not specifically about drinking motivations it provided some insight in to student's experiences of drinking and strengthened my rationale for using a qualitative approach in my study.

A particularly strong theme within the literature is that alcohol provides a mechanism for developing and strengthening bonds amongst students. I concluded that given the evidence (explored in chapter 3) that students feel a sense of urgency to become part of groups, develop friendships and a sense of belonging when first coming to university that research exploring how this and drinking motivations are interrelated would be of value. I argued there is currently a lack of research relating to the transition to university and drinking and that a study in this area would produce new knowledge that would be useful for those interested in research on alcohol, those working with students during the transition period and those who are interested in alcohol consumption amongst students. I concluded the best way of addressing these would be to conduct a qualitative study. I also felt that adopting an interpretivist approach, which focuses on human experience and rejects the idea that experiences can be turned into factual data (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009), would be the most appropriate. I also considered such an approach would take in to consideration wider contexts. Having found that interpretive methods, and in particular, those using a narrative approach tended to provide a richer perspective on human experiences I felt this approach would enable me to gain a deeper understanding of how students experience the transition to university and how it relates to their drinking motivations and would ensure that wider contexts were taken in to consideration. The next chapter now goes on to provide information and discussion about the research method I used for this study.

Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1 Introduction

I chose to use the Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) method for my study and this chapter provides an overview of the epistemological framework that informs it and outlines the theoretical underpinnings of the method. It then provides suggestions by Hollway and Jefferson (2013), who developed the method, on how to apply it. Finally, I discuss how I used and adapted it. However, before I start I provide my rationale for adopting this particular method over others, outlining some of the frustrations that Hollway and Jefferson (2013) and other researchers had with existing methods and why they felt there was need to do research differently.

5.2. Epistemological background

Having decided that I wanted to adopt an interpretivist approach for my study I considered using Interpretative Phenomenological Narrative Analysis (IPA). Smith et al (2009) suggest that whilst this method does use an interpretive approach, the analysis involves the de-contextualisation of the narrative and a fracturing of the narrative flow during which the experiences recounted are fragmented and then re-ordered into data. It also relies on the use of semi-structured interviews making use of set questions. Mishler (1986) argues that even though such methods are qualitative they still sit within a positivistic paradigm as they are still attempting to mimic scientific methods.

There has been an expectation for qualitative research to produce data deemed "scientific" and generalizable. Mishler (1986) argues that;

"Survey research interviews of this kind, where answers can be quantified on a Likert scale, are so prevalent as to be taken for granted in their capacity to produce evidence" and argues that the "standard approach to interviewing [the survey interview] is demonstrably inappropriate for, and inadequate to, the study of the central questions in the social and behavioural sciences" (Mishler, 1986: ix).

The data is coded and then re-assembled into different groups in an attempt to find themes but, in the process, what results does not represent the real world. She suggests this type of analysis breaks up the coherence of the individual and their 'story' and that the more formal the format of the interview, such as having set questions, the more likely it is to suppress respondents' stories. She argues that coding decontextualizes what is said and then answers become disconnected from socio-cultural grounds of meaning. Reissman (2001) also argues that in her experience participants often attempt to deviate from questions within structured or semi-structured interviews. She outlines how she finds that people want to talk about their lives and want to tell their story and therefore do not stick to the questions. She suggests this is participants resisting their story from being fragmented.

I felt than that using a method like IPA would not necessarily address some of the problems relating to context and depth that I had identified with the published research on drinking motivations. I considered that because it makes use of narratives, IPA might go some way to addressing some of these problems but still felt that the structured approach, in the form of semi-structured interviews, would mean making decisions about what questions to ask and therefore driving the interview in a particular direction. I also felt breaking up the data would remove the context. I also

wanted to ensure that what emerged acknowledged some of the socio-cultural influences on how the students framed their drinking, how they related it to the experience of the transition to university and to their own personal experiences. Another consideration I gave in making my decision related to my place in the research. I considered this was important and I wanted to move away from the idea of objectivity within research but was unsure how I would go about doing this. I will discuss this idea of researcher subjectivity and positionality later in the chapter.

I have already mentioned that Hollway and Jefferson (2015) developed the FANI method to address frustrations that they, like other researchers, had with the dominance of positivistic research methods. They, alongside others, feel that such methods, in their quest to be "scientific", value neutral and objective are not suitable for research into human experience. I now go on to discuss this in more detail outlining some of these broader epistemological issues and then go on to provide an overview of the specific theoretical underpinnings of the method.

5.3 Researcher subjectivity

Hollway and Jefferson (2015) developed the Free Association Narrative Interview because they felt the need to develop a way of doing research differently. Having established that survey-based research did not give satisfactory answers to questions they had about their research relating to the fear of crime they wanted to find an alternative way of approaching their study. They felt that qualitative research interviews, which relied on the use of set questions, did not enable them to obtain the

depth of information they were seeking. They suggested that a number of problems arose from this type of interview. Alongside some of the issues I have just discussed relating to IPA they argued it also raised questions such as; how do you know that what is said in the interview is the truth, how will you know you have been told everything is relevant, or how do you know if people have remembered things correctly? They also believed there were difficulties with the analysis of data produced from these interviews because the accounts are full of contradictions and attention is not paid to these in the analysis. They suggest that there is an assumption that, just because survey-based research does not address a particular question that qualitative research, using structured or semi-structured interviews automatically will. Indeed, they suggest that they actually do not because these are based on the assumption that "participants are 'telling it like it is', that participants know who they are and what makes them tick" (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013:3). They argued, not only do many research methods not take into account the contradictions in what is said, they also do not take into consideration the way in which participants defend within in an interview (which I will discuss in more detail later).

Alexandrov (2009) suggests that attempts to gain knowledge about human action conducted within a positivistic paradigm do not recognise the messiness of human interaction. I established that drinking motivations are complex and multi-layered and that existing research into drinking motivations does not capture this or acknowledge that it is "messy", opting instead to try and categorise motivations. In doing so they miss out experience and the richness of what is happening.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) argue that over the last four decades there has been a "qualitative revolution" and a blurring of disciplinary boundaries. They suggest that in the past, scientifically based research paradigms, which rest on claims of neutrality and objectivity, have gained the upper hand in many quarters arguing that organisations such as the National Research Council (NRC) have "appropriated neo-positivist evidence-based epistemologies" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:viii). They argue that interpretive methods have been deemed "unscientific" and unsuitable for informing legislation and policy but suggest that the "days of value free inquiry based on Gods-eye view of reality are judged by many to be over" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:viii) and that there has been an acceptance by many that all inquiry is moral and political. They suggest that, regardless of the method used, all researchers have values and opinions and, although they may attempt to be objective, the research is driven by these values and opinions, even if they are not aware of it.

This attempt to remain detached and objective is believed to result in more valid and reliable knowledge. However Clarke and Hoggett (2009) suggest that this notion of an objective researcher is misleading and suggest that all researchers, whether using positivistic methods or otherwise come from a position that is not objective. This is often referred to as "positionality" and recognises that the researcher is part of the social world they are researching. It rejects the idea that "social research is separate from wider society and the individual researcher's biography" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:18).

Clarke and Hoggett argue that "(I)nterpretive and relational knowledge, as defined by Park, challenge the positivistic idea of value-neutral observer acknowledging the

inevitable imprinting of the values espoused by the researcher on the process and the outcome of research" (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009:37).   Furthermore, they suggest that consideration must be given to why someone is interested in a particular area of research and that these reasons may relate to wider political agendas.   Researchers exploring social action and experience, whether quantitative or qualitative are not conducting the research in isolation and research does not take place in a vacuum. Jootun et al (2009) suggest that rather than the emphasis being on objectivity and detachment, and attempts to remove bias or pre-conceived ideas, there is merit in acknowledging one's position which, they argue brings rigour to the research through the use of reflexivity (discussed in more detail later in the chapter). They also argue that no research method is superior to another and that the method depends on the research question.   Alexandrov (2009) suggests there is a

> "growing awareness of the complex involvement of the researcher with the explored social system brings forward the need for rethinking the concept of "knowledge", bequeathed by early modern positive science, as a linear relationship between the subject and object: knowing subject contemplating the studies object from a privileged, detached perspective" (Alexandrov, 2009)

These arguments are relevant to the field of alcohol research, which is not value neutral and I suggest is highly political. Those conducting the research will have opinions about what they are researching and furthermore are conducting the research within a particular moral, political or cultural framework. In addition, the methods used in research are often driven by the need to attract funding and this is something I return to in the final discussion chapter. However, for now the issue of researcher positionality was something I reflected on and struggled with at the start of my research. I felt it was important to acknowledge my reasons for wanting to

conduct the research, but at the time was unclear how to do this. My research interest

is driven by my own experience of drinking which means my research is subjective in

that I have opinions and ideas about alcohol consumption, and in turn, I have opinions

about the wider political, moral and cultural context too. I am therefore not starting

from a value neutral point. Having outlined some of the broader epistemological

issues that the FANI method aims to address I now go on to discuss theoretical

underpinnings of the method before describing the process.

5.4. The Free Association Narrative Interview Method

5.4.1 The Defended Subject

The FANI method is a psychoanalytically informed epistemology which works from the

notion of the "defended subject" (Hollway and Jefferson, 2009). It draws on Kleinien

theory (Klein, 1959) which hypothesises that we cannot disconnect our adult world

from our infant world and to a greater or lesser degree (depending on individual

experience) we develop defence mechanisms to protect ourselves.   It also works on

the premise that these are intersubjective and that it is through relationships between

people these emerge. In other words, in an interview setting the relationship between

the researcher and the participant can reveal what is hidden. This moves away from

the notion of the "expert" researcher doing research, and is acknowledgement that

what is produced in the research is a co-construction.   The idea of the defended

subject also brings to my mind the concept of attachment discussed in chapter two. At

18 or 19, the age when most young people leave home to go away to university in the

UK, students are considered adult. Although no longer needing parents to survive on a

physical level, according to Bowlby (1982) the emotional attachments from our infancy remain and are still relevant to our emotional well-being.

Qualitative research using structured or semi-structured interviews or focus groups tend to work on the assumption that participants are able to talk openly and honestly about their experiences, thoughts and feelings. They tend to take at face value what is being said, relying "on a taken-for granted notion of the research subject, one which assumes not only transparency to the other but self-transparency" (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008:299).   These methods do not always acknowledge the way in which subjects "defend" in an interview. They work on the premise "that an interviewee can 'tell it like it is', that he or she is the incontrovertible expert on his or her own experiences, that respondents are transparent to themselves" (Mishler 1986: 26). This is not to suggest that participants deliberately lie (even though it is likely there are occasions when this is the case) it is more that there are unconscious thoughts at play which even the participants are unaware of. Clarke and Hogget refer to Bion's (1984) concept of "liar" (Bion, 1984) suggesting that participants are not deliberately telling a lie but are "engulfed in primitive defensive states of mind, where the boundary between truth and lie is blurred" (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009:39). Further, they discuss that perhaps it is not relevant whether they lie consciously or unconsciously because both come from a positon of defence. The FANI method also recognises it is not just the participants who come from a defended position. There is acknowledgement that what is produced in the interview is co-constructed and is a product of the relationship between the researcher and participant. In other words, it is intersubjective. There also therefore needs to be acknowledgement that the researcher also comes from a

defended position. This happens in part with the use of reflexivity (discussed in more detail shortly) through which the researcher examines their own position, their views and interpretations and questions their biases and preconceived ideas. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) referring to Klein suggest;

"Her proposition (based on clinical work) is that the most primitive defences against anxiety are intersubjective, that is, they come into play in relations between people. The unconscious processes of projection (putting out) and introjection (taking in) of mental objects results in splitting: the separation of good and bad. This splitting of objects into good and bad is the basis for what Klein terms the 'paranoid-schizoid' position; a position to which we may all resort in the face of self-threatening occurrences, because it permits us to believe in a good object, on which we can rely, uncontaminated by 'bad' threats which have been split off and located elsewhere. (Hollway and Jefferson 2013:20)

Although Klein (1958) developed the theory of the defended subject in relation to early childhood experiences this theory can be extended to acknowledge the influence of real events in the external, social world throughout the life course. We defend against being judged, of being perceived to step outside social norms, which more often than not, are connected with moral norms (Harms and Skyrms, 2008). This is of particular relevance to alcohol research. Alcohol consumption can be viewed in terms of the binary oppositions of "good" drinking and "bad" which have developed over time and I touched on this in the introductory chapter. It is this splitting that Klein mentions and the concept of "bad" or problem drinking that can lead for the need to defend against being perceived as drinking in a particular way. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 9, but this emphasises the need to examine alcohol consumption through a psychosocial lens, which acknowledges wider political, cultural, historical and moral influences.

5.4.2 Psychosocial theory and Psycho-social research methods

The FANI method draws on Psychosocial theory. Psychosocial theory originates from Erikson's concept of the 8 stages of psychosocial development which describes the influences of the external world on human development (Elkind, 1970). However, psycho-social research methods acknowledge not just the influence of the external world on the individual but recognise that it is a two-way relationship. I discussed earlier that new methods of research have emerged to address a dissatisfaction with existing qualitative methods that continued to sit within a positivistic paradigm. Psycho-social studies emerged as a new paradigm in the 1990s in part to address this and also as Clarke and Hoggett (2009) suggest to address the way in which researchers tended to stay at a discursive level assuming that those being interviewed did not have unconscious defences.

Frost and Hoggett (2008) suggest that, "the "psycho" and "social" elements are not two parallel paradigms, but represent a whole epistemological shift into theorising the passionately rational subject … impacting on and impacted by its social world"(Frost and Hoggett 2008:440). Taylor and McAvoy (2015) suggest the "term "psychosocial" is increasingly used and has become associated with its own "turn" in social theorising and research (Taylor and McAvoy, 2015:1). They do however suggest the status of a psychosocial turn is not clear-cut, in part because of the "odd relationship of the psychosocial to psychology more generally, including rejection its main traditions of qualitative research" (Taylor and McAvoy, 2015:1) and because the term psychosocial has a range of definitions. For example;

"One end of the range is perhaps represented by a Wikipedia entry which refers to therapeutic interventions ("psycho-educational or psycho-pharmacological") to assist people to find "solutions for individual challenges in interacting with an element of the social environment." (Taylor and McAvoy, 2015:6)

Or, for a more academic definition they refer to the website of the Psychosocial

Studies Network based in the UK, which provides a definition of psychosocial;

"as a trans- or interdisciplinary "field of inquiry concerned with the tensions between and mutual constitution of the social and the psychic." Although terminology is inevitably difficult in a new field, "psychic" suggests a link to psychoanalysis and psychodynamic theory; however, the website claims a wider reference, stating that "psychosocial studies draw inspiration from a range of sources including critical theory, post-structuralism, process philosophy, feminism and psychoanalysis, and various 'dialects' are in the process of emergence." (Taylor and McAvoy, 2015:6)

They suggest that the psychosocial is not simply about rejecting the idea of the division

between society and the individual but that it requires developing an understanding of

the inextricable interrelationship between them that involve the weaving of complex

connections.

May (2011) suggests that as "neither the self nor society can be understood

independently of each other, sociologists should be focusing on the relationship

between them" (May, 2011:366).

5.4.3 Transference and countertransference and intersubjectivity

The FANI method takes in to consideration the "unconscious dynamics" between

researcher and participants. It acknowledges that both come from a defended

position, that these defences are intersubjective and emerge as part of the interview

relationship.

Clarke and Hoggett (2009:5) suggest that psychoanalysis and hermeneutics recognise that individuals may or may not have access to their inner world and this often remains hidden. Within an interview, setting there will be things individuals consciously do not want to talk about and, things they unconsciously do not want to talk about. However, an interview that allows the participant to say what comes to mind, in which there is no set structure and in which the researcher is free to ask questions which come to mind, transference and countertransference occurs between the participant and researcher and this becomes a way in which the hidden world of both parties can become apparent.

> "Of course self -deception is not confined to research participants; researchers too can deceive themselves. This can happen by not attending to transference countertransference issues in the research relationship; in other words by mistaking their own concerns for other" (Holloway and Jefferson, in Clarke and Hoggett, 2009:43).

5.4.4 Reflexivity

Another key component of psycho-social research and the FANI method is reflexivity. Pillow (2003) suggests reflexivity is used by qualitative researchers who are not necessarily explicit about what reflexivity means to them and how they use it in their research study, that researchers are using reflexivity without defining how they are using it and that it is difficult to define and is "slippery". However, she argues we should not let this deter us from trying to define it.   Whilst much discussion about reflexivity focuses on what happens in the interview. However, Pillow proposes it is about much more than what happens in the interview. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) also suggest that reflexivity means utilising things that happen outside the interview setting, arguing that, "interviews" can be considered of less importance than the noting of events, feelings, hunches and even conversations in the corridor.

Several years ago, two colleagues and I published an article in which we discussed the subject of reflexivity (Yarwood et al, 2015). All at different stages of our PhDs, we met regularly to discuss our PhDs and provide support for each other and consequently wrote an article about our PhD journeys.   In the article, I discussed that whilst reflective practice was familiar and I had used it regularly in teaching practice reflexivity was a new concept to me. Kleinsasser (2000) suggests;

> "Researcher reflexivity represents a methodical process of learning about self as researcher, which, in turn, illuminates deeper, richer meanings about personal, theoretical, ethical, and epistemological aspects of the research question. Qualitative researchers engage in reflexivity because they have reason to believe that good data will result". Kleinsasser, 2000: 155

We concluded that learning about oneself as a researcher does not just happen in isolation or whilst sitting at the desk, reading and writing. It can happen as a result of reflecting on conversations with colleagues, experts in the field, and of course through the process of data collection (e.g. the interview or focus group) but perhaps less obvious, more random sources such as conversations, at the bus stop, a television programme, lyrics from a song, a novel, teaching, or an unrelated academic text.   All these things enable the researcher to think about their research differently. For example, when people ask me what my research is about I say it is about why people drink. Their initial response is often "well isn't that obvious". This naturally made me question what I was doing but the conversations were useful confirmation that it is indeed a complex subject area and as people reflected and though more deeply about why they drank they realised it was not straightforward and "not obvious" at all.   This reflexivity occurs throughout the research process. In the early days, it was not

something I was conscious of, or gave much thought to, but as the research progressed

my understanding of what it is and of its value grew. Having an awareness of it,

practicing it and harnessing makes it an incredibly useful tool in the research process

for uncovering what might otherwise remain hidden. More importantly, researcher

has an awareness of their role in the production of the knowledge and the relevance of

their own, beliefs, emotions, prejudices, and pre-conceived ideas. I was conscious of

my views on alcohol which relate to my own experience of drinking, my individual

psyche, my political leanings and I also became aware as I began to focus on the

transition to university that I had a perspective about "going to university" and how it

related to my drinking. I knew that I had to consider this and think about how these

could emerge both in the interview (discussed earlier as transference and counter

transference) but also in my analysis of the interview.   Gemignani (2011) suggests that

behind the terms we use in research such as, epistemology, analysis, theory, method,

is the researcher's personal biography and reflexivity is a way of uncovering that and

utilising it.

> "When doing research on topics that are sensitive and involve core dimensions
> of significant emotions, attachments, and reactions that transgress traditional
> forms of data and research positions. If embraced and addressed, the
> researcher's emotional reactions can be an important source of reflexivity and
> data as well as creativity, motivation, and engagement". (Gemingnani,
> 2011:701)

Reflexivity then is about recognising the place of the researcher within the research.

Clark and Hoggett (2009:7) suggest that at the heart of psycho-social research is the

reflexive practitioner. In contrast to the idea of the researcher being objective, and

"clinically" analysing data, is the notion of the researcher who is subjective and brings

their own thoughts, beliefs and emotions to the research, but who has awareness of this and recognises that this subjectivity is part of the data. Berg and Smith (2008) propose there are "complex emotional and intellectual forces that influence the conduct of our inquiry" Berg and Smith (in Hollway and Jefferson, 2008:30) and similarly, Lincoln and Denzin (2003) argue that our involvement is subjective and that this should be taken into consideration because it is relevant to how we interpret the interview.   Trahar (2009) suggests the traditional approach to research using interviews is that the interview provides data later to be analysed by the researcher who remains impartial and objective.   However, in contrast, within psycho-social research the relationship between the researcher and participant is central.   She argues that in an interview situation, information/data is created by both parties and that it is as a co-construction and therefore should be examined together.

5.4.5. Narrative research

Having outlined some of the philosophical underpinnings of the FANI method I now go on to provide an overview and discussion relating to narrative research, given that "narratives" are a key element of the method.

According to Andrews et al (2013), narrative research emerged from two parallel academic "moves" (Andrews, 2013:4). One, which approached research from a humanistic perspective, focussing on individual case studies, biographies or from a person-centred focus. Another, which followed in the footsteps of poststructuralist, postmodern, psychoanalytic and deconstructionist approaches to research. The latter, Andrews suggests is concerned with "narrative fluidity and contradiction with

unconscious as well as conscious meanings" (Andrews et al 2013:4). Andrews (2013) suggests there are multiple subjectivities in the production of narratives or stories that involve both the storyteller and the person to whom the story is being told. She goes on to suggest there are many convergences between these two approaches within current narrative research and this is certainly the case with the FANI method

There is evidence of both the 'moves', described above, within the FANI method. For example, Hollway and Jefferson (2001) use a single case study to explore an individual's account of how she developed agoraphobia and how she did not understand why this had happened. Through this study they began to "construct an analysis of Ivy's agoraphobia in the context of her concerns for the sexual respectability of her daughters and herself" (Hollway and Jeferson, 2001:104). Thus, they were able to explore this individual's biography and, in allowing her to speak freely and tell her story, they began to understand this within a wider context, and in particular, about sexual respectability. The FANI method, in relation to the second 'move', explores contradictions in what is said. Adopting this deconstructionist perspective means that what is said can have multiple meanings and contradictions and what is written or said can viewed in relation to its opposite (Smith, 2016). Hollway and Jefferson (2001) suggest the FANI method differs from "typical narrative research" in that it stems from the notion of the defended subject and from psychoanalysis and moves away from taking at face value what is said. Hollway and Jefferson (2001) suggest that much narrative research tends to work on the basis that the story is told in a linear way with a start, middle and end when in fact stories jump around and are full of contradictions. In focussing on these contradictions and moving away from the 'typical life story', they argue, "the practical techniques used by

researchers for eliciting narrative have powerful effects in the understanding of identity, or subjectivity that follows" (Hollway and Jefferson, 2001:104). The FANI method has been adapted to draw either on single case studies (Hollway and Jefferson, 2001) or from interviews with several participants (Peacock, 2012) which were explored briefly in the previous section.

Andrews suggest the academic moves, referred to above, and consequently the development of narrative research, were in part developed to address issues of power within research (Andrews et al, 2013) and typically are used to conduct research in to areas where these wider power imbalances are evident, for example race, sexuality or domestic abuse. Parker (2005) suggests that "(N)arrative research explores how individual selves in capitalist society are performed" (Parker, 2005:71). He notes how, within research, individuals may be treated as objects and, that consequently, their sense of purpose is restricted to the narratives they construct about themselves. Narrative research, he argues, allows us to explore the way in which we, as individuals, are constructed out of cultural resources and, that such an approach enables us to respect an individual's story. In addition, the approach allows an individual's identity to emerge. An identity that is not shaped by "culturally given images of self" (Parker, 2005:71) which allows individual agency. Parker outlines the way in which 'narrative psychology' emerged to address the way in which research within the field of psychology dehumanised people and instead allowed a way of representing stories that people tell about themselves. Restoring agency then is a key aim within such methods (Parker, 2005). This is of particularly relevant to my criticisms of the research on alcohol consumption. I argued that attempting to reduce experience to categories or statistics means the stories are either lost or never even told and the human

element is removed. Ultimately, I argued this might be a reason that the attempts to reduce alcohol consumption have limited impact, in that they are based on assumptions about peoples' motivations for drinking and on the consequences of excessive consumption, rather than a real understanding of peoples' experiences and how they relate to wider contexts.

McAlpine (2016) suggests, "narratives provide a window into the process of identity construction" and that "(T)hrough the construction and recounting of narratives, individuals form and re-form who they have been, are presently and, hope to become" (McAlpine, 2016:33). She argues that narrative research is attractive because the 'story' "is one, if not the fundamental, unit that accounts for human experience" (McAlpine, 2016:34). With regard to the value of narrative inquiry, she argues that it

> "offers sound methodological tools to the researcher who seeks to pay closer
>
> attention to the diversity of human experience and finds a good alignment
>
> between his/her epistemological stance and the range of methodological
>
> stances on offer in narrative research" (McAlpine, 2016:47)

Frosh (2007) points to its emergence of the use of narratives as an attempt for those in the field of psychology to move away from reductionist approaches to explain human behaviour to try to find a more holistic understanding of human behaviour. However, similar to Hollway and Jefferson (2001), he also highlights the importance of not taking what someone says at face value. Frosh (2007) suggests that when a person tells a story, it is not necessarily well told as it has twists and turns, gaps and contradictions. He argues it is the role of the researcher to "uncover broader contexts which give meaning to the story, for example by reference to societal discourses, or maybe even

to the Freudian unconscious" (Frosh, 2007:636).   Frosh (2007) does point out that it might seem wrong to talk about re-building narrative for those who find themselves on the margins of "hegemonic discourse"(Frosh, 207:637) but argues that it is about allowing people to speak their stories and then have them reflected back in a way that allows them to be owned

Parker (2005) suggests that narrative research gives agency to individuals and that it offers a 'voice' to people, often those who would otherwise be marginalized. This does not mean it should not be used for research with those who would not necessarily be considered marginalised. As the FANI method draws on the idea of the defended subject it is useful for exploring many subjects that attract some societal judgement. Given the discourse around problematic use and "addiction", which I discuss in chapter 8, alcohol certainly fits this description. I considered that people are not necessarily open or honest about their alcohol consumption, something which became evident through the study , which I discuss in more detail in chapters 8 and 9. In the drinking diaries I gathered as part of a pilot study, also discussed in chapter 8, I found that people were quick to make excuses about how much and what they were drinking. I felt then that the FANI method would lend itself well to the subject.

5.6 Using the FANI Method

I now explain briefly how the FANI method works and then go on to show how I applied it, outlining the selection and recruitment process, how I conducted the interviews and how I recorded analysed the data.   The method is relatively new and, although Hollway and Jefferson (2013) outline how they use the method they point

out it is something that can be adapted depending on the nature of the research subject. One of its main features is the use of two interviews. The first interview is conducted within a framework that can be unstructured, or can make use of a research schedule, which I touch on shortly. The second interview is more structured and is a follow up the second interview to check ideas and interpretations. There are no specific guidelines or instructions for the method but the following is a brief outline of some of the key features.

Hollway and Jefferson (2013) drew on a number of other approaches when developing the method. One is feminist approaches that acknowledge issues of power within research and reject the idea of the value neutral researcher. Another is narrative approaches which recognise the importance of the story and the "whole person in real-life contexts" (Hollway and Jefferson (2013:30) and the way in which people defend against anxiety. Another, and perhaps the most influential method, is the biographical –interpretive approach, which also recognises the way in which people defend but also focus on the importance of the *Gestalt.* This being that "a whole that is more than the sum of its parts, an order or hidden agenda" Hollway and Jefferson, 2013:32) that informs each person's life. It is the researchers role to allow this *Gestalt* to emerge intact and to now follow their own concerns or agenda.

From this, they adapted four principles for conducting interviews which are;

1. Use open ended, not closed questions. The more open the better

2. Elicit stories

3. Avoid 'why. questions

4. Follow up respondents ordering and phrasing

They also emphasised the importance of free association within interviews. This allows participants to say whatever comes to mind, which provides access to a person's *Gestalt*. They suggest that free associations allow the analyst to pick up on incoherencies and assess the significance of these.

The biographical-interpretive method suggests asking one single question. However, in their research about crime Hollway and Jefferson decided the nature of the research required a particular framework and for this reason, they decided on a research schedule, which involved the use of six questions. They argued that this was because they wanted to keep the research within a particular framework. I now outline how I used and adapted the methods.

5.6.1 Selecting participants and sample size

I advertised the project by distributing flyers at Manchester Metropolitan University to (MMU) students union, and I also contacted members of staff (not on courses I taught on) to ask if I could drop into teaching sessions to talk to students about the project. Although I managed to reach a wide number of students, I initially had difficulty recruiting and only managed to recruit one to start with. I did wonder if this was because it was so early in the year and students were still trying to "find their feet. I am aware that in the early days of university students are inundated with flyers and information. However a second attempt proved to be more successful and I recruited six participants overall. The method is not designed to produce generalizable data and emphasis is placed on the way in which knowledge is co-constructed between the participant and interviewer and the use of reflexivity to interpret meaning and explore how these relate to wider contexts. Such an in depth exploration would not be

possible with larger numbers. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) do not indicate a preferred number and a quick exploration of studies that have used the methods shows that participant numbers can range from single case studies to 15 participants and I discuss issues relating to participant numbers shortly.

I interviewed one participant in November of the first term and the second interview with this participant took place in early February the following year. Hollway and Jefferson suggest a period of a few weeks between interviews but this was not possible because of time constraints and the university holiday in between. I interviewed the second participant in February and the third in March. The last three participants I interviewed in April. This means that none of the participants were interviewed in the very early stages of the transition. My initial plan was to   recruit participants early on the first term but as I had found it difficult to recruit this was not possible. Second interviews with participants were conducted between 2 weeks and 6 weeks after their first interviews. However, I did not feel this was particularly detrimental to the study. In chapter 3 I discuss what is meant by the transition to university, suggesting it is difficult to pinpoint a particular time frame. Palmer et al (2009) suggest a period of six to eight weeks during which students begin to feel as if they have adjusted. Although the participants had passed this stage at the time of the interview, I felt the experience of the transition was still relatively fresh in their minds and they all clearly were able to convey their feelings about the experience. There are advantages and disadvantages to this. An advantage of interviewing students two or three weeks in to university would have meant obtaining a very fresh perspective on the experience. However at this point emotions would be heightened and potentially

quite raw and I wonder how much they would have been able to articulate these. Of course, I am only able to speculate on this. I do think that interviewing a few months later meant that they have had some time to reflect on the experience. I interviewed six students, and conducted nine interviews in total. Rianna, Lucy and Lisa (pseudonyms) all agreed to take part in a second interview.

5.6.2. Participant information, ethics and consent

I followed Manchester Metropolitan University's (MMU) guidance and framework on ethical standards in research and obtained ethical approval for the project (appendix 2). I was also guided by the principles outlined by the British Psychological Society (BPS) (2014) which suggest, "Ethical research conduct is, in essence, the application of informed moral reasoning, founded on a set of moral principles. In common with the Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct, this Code of Human Research Ethics introduces the notion of underlying principles to inform psychological research practice" (BPS, 2014:6). These provide guiding principles relating to mutual respect between investigators and participants, consent, respect to privacy, confidentiality and dignity and, issues relating to power, and physical and psychological risk. I observed these in the following way.

The advert for the project provided brief information (appendix 1)about the project but those who showed an interest in taking part were provided with a more detailed information sheet (see appendix 6) providing an outline and framework of the project. To ensure informed consent I gave participants the option of meeting for an informal discussion prior to the interviews or a discussion over the phone so that they could ask

further questions about the research and the interview process. Only one participant wanted to do this and therefore detailed discussions with participants about the project took part when they came for the interview. Prior to each interview I spent time explaining the research process, ethical issues, issues about confidentiality how the information would be kept securely and about confidentiality. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the project at any point of the process that they would not be asked or required to give a reason for doing so.

I was mindful that the nature of the research had the potential to cause discomfort or distress. Although I considered the risk to be minimal, I discussed this with participants prior to the interviews, suggesting to them that the nature of the research might result in particular emotions arising unexpectedly. Before commencing the interviews I gave all participants a sheet with names and contact numbers of support agencies and with the name and contact details of my Director of studies (appendix 7). I was aware that during the interviews there is a possibility that what is said may cause harm or distress to a participant. Holloway and Jefferson (2009) argue that it might not be possible to avoid distress but it does not follow that distress is necessarily harmful. Everyday interactions with people create situations where what is said may cause hurt, or distress. Whilst it is something to consider it is an inevitable part of the research, particularly when researching emotive subjects. The researcher needs to weigh up the value of asking particular questions or checking interpretations with the potential harm or upset it may cause. However, in everyday interactions it is not possible to second-guess whether something said may cause offence or an emotional reaction. For me this meant thinking carefully about questions asked and how I framed them.

However, I considered following the guidelines offered by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) about not asking "why" questions and following ordering and phrasing would assist in this and go some way to avoiding this.

Consideration also needs to be given to issues of power within research relationships. I was aware that my position as older adult, and lecturer, meant that participants could perceive me, either consciously or subconsciously, as being in a position of power. Whilst it is not possible to alter this fact, actions can be taken to alleviate some problems relating to this. I tried to be open, friendly and warm and to reassure participants that the process was informal and that although the word "interview" is used it is not at all a formal interview at all more like a conversation (I also included this on the information sheet). I conducted the interviews in rooms within the university during the working day. I ensured participants were seated closest to the door, which I considered helps with providing a feeling of control that one can more easily leave the situation.

With regard to confidentiality I informed participants that when writing up the research they would be given pseudonyms and that any information that would identify them, such as names of people they spoke about, or names of places would either be avoided or changed. I did inform them that when writing up the interviews I would be using their wording which would mean that it would be possible for them to identify themselves but they would not be identifiable by others.   I informed them that recordings and transcripts would be password protected and their names would

not be connected to either of these. I informed them these would be destroyed/deleted once the research was complete.

The BPS suggests a de-briefing session following the interview. I provided some time after each interview for participants to discuss any issues or concerns and asked them to get in contact with me following the interview if any worries arose. At the start of the second interview, we discussed their thoughts and feelings about the previous interview and any concerns or questions they had about this and indeed had asked them if they would reflect on the first interview for discussion in the second.

It was not until I began conducting the interviews that I began to realise the extent to which the participants were sharing their lives. Some of the participants were particularly open than others. As I have already said, the interviews are not designed to be therapeutic however, by drawing on methods used in a therapeutic setting and they encourage participants to be more open. The difference of course is that in a therapeutic setting what is said is remains confidential but in research, elements of what is said, although anonymised; do not remain confidential in the same way.   One participant said, "this is not how I had expected it to be". We discussed this in the second interview as it troubled me.   She explained that it she had not meant this in a negative way just, that it was different from how she expected it to be. She said that although I had explained that she would be free to talk about what was relevant she had not given it very much thought and did not realise she would end up talking about her family and childhood. However, she said she really enjoyed this aspect of the interview and that it had made her think about things, and had made her more aware of her drinking and made her give more thought to why she was drinking.

I did have concerns about how I present personal details and of not assuming things or misrepresenting people. Although the second interview presented an opportunity to discuss some of my interpretations it was not possible to discuss every aspect of the interview and in that respect I consider I had a duty to think carefully about what I included. Although interviews are anonymised, I am aware that unlike research using positivistic methods the very act of trying not to break up the narratives means it is possible for participants to identify themselves, but in using pseudonyms and avoiding using place names, they are not identifiable to others.   One of the features of the method is to try and preserve the *gestalt*, to present them as human as emotional beings to which others can relate. The ethical dilemma for me was to find a balance between staying true to the data but avoiding the possibility of causing distress by my interpretations.

5.6.3. The interview

Earlier I mentioned that Hollway and Jefferson (2013) made use of research schedule, which consisted of six questions. This differs from set research questions that are used in structured or semi-structured interviews. They are not designed as set, structured questions that each participant must be asked in order of turn but serve as a framework and guidance. Peacock (2012) who used the FANI method for her thesis, which explored women's experiences in inequalities in health, also used a schedule but pointed out that questions were asked as the interview unfolded and there was no attempt to "get through" the questions. In this respect, I consider the schedule to serve as a prompt for the interviewer. I considered having a research schedule, but decided against this and adopted the approach informed by the biographical –

interpretive method of having only one question. I decided that I wanted to work in

the spirt of free association and to avoid as much as possible influencing the direction

of the interview. I considered that as participants had the information about the

research this provided an adequate framework within which to work.

I started each interview with the following question.

 "Tell me about yourself. About your childhood, growing up, where you come from and when you first started drinking".

Although this was broad, I considered it gave the participants the opportunity to start

where they wanted and with what was most important to them. I felt it was a relaxed

and informal way of starting the interview, making it feel more like a conversation, and

it gave them the opportunity to tell me about themselves.

Questions that followed were then based on what students spoke about. Often, rather

than asking direct questions I would reflect back what they said which served to make

participants feel like I was listening but also help to seek clarification on particular

things said. For example;

"You say that it was awful that your mum was so cross with you?"

Or

"You say that it was awful that your mum was so cross with you. Tell me more about that"

Or "You say that it was awful that your mum was so cross with you. Tell me more about how you felt about that.

This method of interviewing in part replicates a therapeutic setting and provides a

space in which they feel able to talk openly and in which they feel listened to.

However, the parallel stops there. The interviews replicate the style in order to

develop trust, and whilst some participants may find value in having space to talk about themselves, they are not intended to be therapeutic. It draws on the concept of reflective listening, developed by Carl Rogers (Arnold, 2014) which involves reflecting back, or 'mirroring', what is said in order for the client to feel listened to. Originally based on the idea of self-restraint on the part of the therapist this was later developed into the concept of empathic listening and testing understandings. This idea of empathic listening lends itself equally well in this case enabling the participant to feel comfortable and to build up a sense of trust. The concept of testing understandings is also useful in not only helping to clarify points but also to provide confirmation for the participant that they are being heard. Testing understanding happens in both the first and second interviews however, the second interview allows a further opportunity to discuss my analysis of the interview and to check my interpretations.

The second interview

All participants were aware that the research involved two interviews and each had agreed in principle to take part in both although I had informed them they were not under any obligation to do so. At the end of the first interview, I explained again that the method required the use of two interviews and I said that I would be grateful if they were able to do this. I explained that prior to the second interview I would listen to and transcribe the recording and from this would develop questions for exploration in the second interview which would allow me to check things that I have not understood, ask if my interpretations were correct. I also informed them it was an opportunity for them to raise any thoughts they had had about the interview and what they had spoken about. I asked them if they could reflect on the interview and, if they

felt comfortable to do so discuss this at the second interview. I re-iterated that that although it was an important part of the research they were under no obligation to take part in the second interview. Five of the participants indicated they were keen and one seemed a little non-committal, and I did not push the matter with this particular participant. However, as I have said for a number of practical reasons, I was only able to conduct three, second interviews.

5.6.4. Analysis

It is not just interview recordings and transcripts that are considered, "data" in the FANI method.   Data takes the form of notes, reflections on the process, and pen portraits. I tried to make brief notes straight after each interview. Although it was not always feasible to do this immediately, I made notes as soon as possible about my thoughts, feelings and reflections on how the interview went. More importantly I made notes about body language or feelings about the relationship between us which would I felt could be forgotten over time but also would not be captured on the recording. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) suggest the use of a case summary, which includes information about the individual's biography such as age, gender, and where they live. Rather than using a case summary document, I opted to allocate an electronic folder for each participant (saved under their pseudonym) to which I would transfer notes and reflections. I found I made notes continuously as I reflected on the process, on the interviews and on the individual participants. Sometimes these would be jotted down in notepads or sometimes voice recordings on my phone. I would transfer these to the individual files to refer to when I started the analysis. Although I say, "started" the analysis I felt this was happening even as I was making these notes. I consider analysis, which I discuss shortly, was not always about sitting down and

reading the transcript or listening to the recordings but was a constant process. In

other words, I felt that reflexivity was in constant play from the beginning of the first

interview right through to the last. I mentioned earlier the paper that colleagues and I

wrote regarding reflexivity (Yarwood et al, 2015) and in which we suggested that

research happens constantly.   Analysis was often prompted after conversations with

others, watching a film or reading a book. From the notes and from the transcripts I

developed pen portraits for each of the participants. Hollway and Jefferson (2013)

suggest producing these is another way of assisting in preserving the Gestalt of each

person.

I transcribed the recordings as soon as I could after each interview. I put the transcript

into a table with a separate column in which to record my thoughts, observations and

feelings about what was said. I listened to the recordings a number of times because I

found that each time I listened I heard things differently or noticed different things. I

also read the transcripts a number of times.

After analysing each of the interviews, I found I had many questions and

interpretations that would have been interesting to follow up in the second interview

but realised I would need to be selective. From these I developed a set of questions for

the second interview and it would have been difficult to ask all of these questions

within the second interview. I gave careful consideration about what I wanted to ask

and what I felt was relevant to explore further in the second interview, giving

particular thought to whether the questions might seem too intrusive, or may cause

upset.   Even though I only managed to obtain second interviews with three of the

participants, I still followed this process for each of the participants as I felt it was a

useful process in thinking in more depth about my interpretation. I was able to obtain second interviews with Lisa, Lucy and Rianna. An example of the interview schedule is included in the appendix, this was for the second interview conducted with Rianna.

Although I made notes and observations from the interviews, the analysis goes far beyond what is spoken about in the interview. Earlier I mentioned the role of reflexivity as a key part of the analysis process involving a constant re-thinking of ideas and interpretations and something that happens constantly. Holloway and Jefferson(1997) write about "thick description" which they describes as accounts of field experiences showing the relevance of cultural and social relationships and putting them in context and Pillow (2003) suggests that in order to incorporate this researchers should keep a research log, make field notes and keep a research journal. I did not keep a research journal but as I have said I made notes constantly and collected these in electronic files and I consider these served a similar purpose to a journal. I found that the analysis process involved not focussing specifically on what each participant talked about but also involved giving consideration to how it related to the other narratives and to a wider context. For example, all the participants referred in some way to the concept of problem drinking. I did not consider this to be personal to them, or that they were indicating that their drinking was problematic but reflected a wider discourse around problem drinking. This was an example of the psychosocial nature of the research. I found that the process of analysis changed as I conducted more interviews. I started analysis of the first interview some time before I conducted the other interviews. In hindsight, it felt more like conducting a single case study because I had nothing else to compare it with at that time. Clarke and Hoggett (2009) discuss differing approaches to data analysis with psycho-social research and in

particular the difference between single case analysis and cross-case analysis. They suggest that most psycho-social researchers agree on the importance of a holistic analysis of individual cases. However, some argue this is only possible by drawing on single cases and which can "trace the many different facets on an individual's subjectivity…..This involves staying close to the data rather than searching the data for already conceived categories" (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009:19). However when using multiple cases they acknowledge themes will begin to emerge but this then brings the potential problem of being less able to stay close to the data for each individual case

In analysing the first interview, I found myself becoming immersed in her personal biography and, as suggested, able to stay close to the data. However, after conducting more interviews I found I was able to do this less. This was partly because with more interviews to analyse I had less time to spend exploring each in the same depth. However, it was mainly I found similarities between the participants narrative and themes began to emerge. I found I did indeed start moving away from each individual case and starting to compare and cross check with the other narratives.

At the start of my study I did not know whether there would be any similarities emerging between their stories and whether or not I would even find common themes occurring. It was not until the third interview that these themes began to emerge. For example, I had noted in Lisa's interview that she talked about the need to make friends and used the word bonding but until I had interviewed the others, I saw this as something personal to her and perhaps connected to her anxiety even though she had said she felt she had managed to overcome much of this anxiety. When I was analysing her interview I wondered whether, even though she had said she overcame this

whether she had and that this was a reason for her difficulties in the first few days.

At this point, I interpreted her anxiety about making friends as something connected

to her personal psyche. It was not until I listened to the other interviews that I

realised this anxiety was felt by all of them, maybe not in exactly the same way or to

the same degree but it was clear there was a commonality that I felt was connected

with the transition to university. Although it is possible her individual psyche did play a

role I felt it was far more to do with the experience, and the anxiety around the

transition and the other stories corroborated this.

5.6.6. The participants

I do not claim that the participants are in any way representative of all students or a

particular group. I did not ask the participants questions about how they identified in

terms of their race, gender, sexual orientation or religion as this aim of my research

was not concerned with identify themes, differences or similarities in relation to these.

My only stipulation when advertising the study were for participants to be first year

students who had experience of drinking and who had left home to come to university.

After each interview, I wrote down my initial thoughts about each participant whilst

they were still fresh in my mind. I then spent time, after listening to the recordings

and writing the transcripts, putting together a pen portrait of each participant.

Hollway and Jefferson (2009) suggest doing this as part of the FANI method in order to

maintain an idea of the whole person and maintaining the idea of the Gestalt and

keeping the person as a whole. In the appendix, I provide an example of one full pen-

portrait that I produced to show how I did this but here I provide a summary of each of

the participants.

I was surprised at how open each of the participants were. My experience of first year students is that although some are very confident others struggle. However I realised after some reflection that those who lack confidence or who are likely to struggle with talking are less likely to volunteer to take part, nevertheless I was surprised at how comfortable some of them were with talking about their feelings and experiences.

Anna

Anna was very lively and enthusiastic and straight away seemed very comfortable about talking about her feelings. Anna seems close to her parents but refers to some rocky times as a teenager where she rebelled against them as she considered them to be over-protective. She talked about occasions on which she would lie about where she was and that she felt angry about the restrictions placed on her by her parents. Anna said she had been excited about coming to university where she felt she would gain some freedom to do what she wanted, which includes going out drinking and "partying". She was looking forward to meeting what she referred to as "like-minded" people and it was at this point she began to rebel a little, wanting more freedom to go out and drink.

I felt that Anna's expectations about university had a lot of bearing on her experiences in the first few weeks and months of university. She had a clear idea of how she wanted it to be and therefore I felt she sought out opportunities to make friends quickly. She came across as quite confident and seemed to be the one to often initiate social gatherings or nights out. She was clearly keen to develop a strong friendship group. Although she appeared to have achieved her aim and talked about her "little family", I wondered how solid this was.

Anna is emotionally articulate, talking easily and readily about her emotions. I warmed to her quickly and was able to relate to a number of things she talked about.

Rianna

Rianna is one of two children. Her sister had a car accident a few years prior her coming to university and understandably this has had a huge bearing on how she has felt about coming to university. There is a real mixture of emotions. Her sister would have been at university the year before her if the accident hadn't happened so she feels guilty that she has come and her sister has not and she also feels guilty that she has left her family behind to cope as her sister still needs a considerable amount of care. For Rianna coming to university has been fraught with mixed feelings. It was clear that she felt enormous pressure not to mess up the opportunity that her sister did not have and therefore although she wants to take part in the drinking and social

part she is also conscious that this could seem selfish. She said that she did not drink much before coming to university. There appears to be an enormous sense of guilt about going out and enjoying herself and drinking when her sister and the family are back at home. This however does not stop her from doing this but it is something she feels she needs to hide from the family both in terms of not wanting them to think she is being frivolous but also that she does not want them to worry about her going getting drunk.

Rianna was open about her feelings and I felt we developed good rapport. I felt there was a sadness in the way she spoke and I considered this connected to her feelings about her sister and what had happened to the family but felt there could have been more to it than this.

Lisa

Lisa comes from a small town where she grew up with her older sister and both parents. She talked about how she became quite anxious in her late teens and said she was never quite sure where the anxiety came from. However, she was able to talk to her mum about it who got her some support and she developed strategies for dealing with it.   Lisa talked about how keen she was to leave the small town she grew up in and come to the city which she sees as much more exciting. She was ready to leave home but also admits she was nervous about it.

Lisa talked a lot about her anxiety but she did not appear anxious during the interview although there were a number of silences. She was quite open with her responses.

Lisa did not drink very much before coming to university after a bad experience of getting very drunk. This resulted in her parents, in particular, her mum's disapproval that lasted for some time. I think she felt embarrassed about getting drunk but she also struggled with her mum's disapproval. When she arrived at university she said that she started drinking more.

She came across as confident and was able to talk relatively easily about her emotions. She talked about her anxiety. However, I did not see any evidence of this in the interview and she seemed to have adjusted well to university life and had clearly managed to find a group of friends she felt close to.

Lucy

Lucy seemed a little apprehensive at first but after I had explained how the interview would be conducted, she seemed to relax a little more. She said that although she had read the information and she knew it was informal she was worried about being "put on the spot". I assured her the interview would be led by her and that if any questions she did not want to answer that was fine.

Lucy started by saying she could not wait to leave home but that she is not a very confident person. She talked a lot about difficulties with making friends. She talks extensively about friendships at school and how, although she eventually made some good friends it took her a long time. She talked a lot about not fitting in and saying that although she has friends at university she feels she that a lot of the time that she does not fit in. She did not drink very much before she came to university but then started drinking and found she liked it. She said that although she had made friends quickly she felt that they did not necessarily have a lot in common but the drinking helped her and helped her to get on with people.

Lucy did not talk very much about her parents so it was difficult to get a sense of how close she felt towards them. In the first interview, Lucy seemed to hold back on her emotions and I felt there were things she did not want to talk about and that I did not want to press her on.

I found myself feeling quite protective towards Lucy as I got a sense of her loneliness. I think it triggered things about my own experience of going to university. I explored some of this in the second interview but was mindful that I did not want to project my own thoughts and feelings about my own experience on to her so gave a lot of thought to how or whether I would introduce this in the second interview.

Mike

Mike was confident and relaxed in his interview and to begin with talked in a very matter of fact way about coming to university. He said very early on that he considered himself a lightweight but clearly likes drinking and it is very much part of his social life. He said that although he sometimes got drunk it was not something he particularly likes to do.

He talked about his family, informing me that they were not particularly big drinkers. His parents had been quite strict about not letting him drink at parties before coming to university, which he felt was very unfair, as others had been allowed to. He was still clearly annoyed about this as he felt it had meant being left out at the time but also had put him behind others in terms of drinking. I thought this was interesting because he considered himself not to be a big drinker. He seemed close to his family and although annoyed that they had been strict, also seemed to respect why they had done this and that it showed they cared.

He was quite open about his feelings at various points talking about how he found the first few weeks of university awful and also later on referring to the need to get drunk every now and again to which he said could be seen as being quite dark. This seemed to be at odds with what he had said earlier about being a lightweight. Whilst not wanting to join in others with getting drunk all the time, alcohol was definitely still central to his social life.

Mike talked a lot about health issues relating to alcohol. He said that although he knew he should probably drink less but that this would not happen because his social life was important. Again, this seemed contradictory, on the one hand calling himself a lightweight but on the other giving consideration to drinking "too much".

Sam

When the interview started with Sam, I realised that he was still living at home and was only doing a one-year course before going to university the following year. Although the information about the study had asked for students leaving home, Sam had quite possibly missed this and it had not occurred to me check. This threw me initially as I considered that the interview might be a waste of time and not fit in with the study. In fact, it turned out to be an interesting interview and provided a useful comparison once I started analysing each of the interviews.

However, I do think this misunderstanding had some bearing on the interview which I found did not always flow well. I found there were a number of silences, which I did leave for a time but then I found myself trying to think of how to open up the interview again. I also think that as he had not left home the transition experience was different and therefore there was less for him to talk about. I felt that he had given some thought to what he would talk about in the interview and it came across as perhaps in that sense almost rehearsed as if had decided what he felt he should say.

Sam talked a lot about his family and seemed close to them. He was very keen to differentiate between drinking when he was younger and drinking now he is older.

5.6. Conclusion

Having outlined how I used the FANI method, and introduced the participants, in the next chapter, I go on to present what emerged from the interviews with the six participants. Given that the research has not followed a linear process I have given considerable consideration as to how best to present what arose from my study. A number of distinct themes emerged, but in presenting these I did not want to lose many of the interesting things that also came from the interviews and discussions I had with the participants. This created a dilemma about what to include and what to leave

out. Given there were three broad themes, I chose to present these as three chapters with chapters 6 and 8 having number of sub themes or subject areas sitting within them. I hoped these sub-themes would allow me to capture some of the complexities, but I realise ultimately it is not possible to include everything. I was particularly keen to not break up the narratives and preserve the Gestalt of each interview. This in itself is difficult. Having identified themes I show what each participant said in relation to these themes but am aware that this has involved some fragmenting. However, it would be too unwieldy to present huge sections of the interview, or even the whole transcript. This does create a quandary about how best to present the interviews, particularly as, when I have presented an excerpt from the narrative, I then want to provide some analysis and reflection that relates specifically to what has been said. However, this frequently leads to further analysis and reflection that is not so specific. I have therefore sometimes included further sections at the end of a participant's section, either entitled further analysis or further reflection or both. This may include reflections on my feelings about what has been said, how the interview went or my worries and concerns about how I have interpreted what has been said. Unfortunately, there is no simple, uniform way of doing this and so what is presented does not follow the order in which the research process occurred.   For example, I did not wait until I had completed all the interviews before I stated to analyse them. I listened to, analysed and reflected on them continuously, going backwards and forwards, and listening to recordings and reading transcripts a number of times. There is then further reflection and analysis as I start writing the thesis and reading over what I have written. It is a continuous process that, arguably, does not have an end point.

Chapter 6 Belonging

6.1. Introduction

> "Not belonging' is becoming a prevalent theme within accounts of the first-year student experience at university".   (Palmer et al, 2009:37)

The principal purpose of university, for undergraduates, is to gain a degree.   However, university has far more to offer than academic qualifications and, for many young people the social side of university is equally, if not perhaps more important. There is a recognition that students do not just choose universities solely on courses they offer but also on what they offer socially. Indeed in order to attract students universities not only provide information about their courses but also promote social activities and those located in towns and cities often point to the vibrant nightlife as a selling point. Going to university then is as much about a new start, gaining independence and making new friends as it is about studying. Making new friends is likely to be a priority for most students but for those who leave home it is potentially more crucial. This chapter provides evidence of how students who have left home for the first time express a need to make friends quickly. The urgency to develop a sense of belonging is a theme running through each of the narratives. What is evident, is the way alcohol is used to facilitate social interaction, help develop friendships and strengthen bonds within groups.   Belonging is a thread running through the narratives. I have presented this as an overarching theme. However, there are several other themes that relate, both to each other, and to the notion of belonging, such as bonding, anxiety, and family/parental attachment.

6.2. Interviews

Lisa: Analysis and reflection

Lisa, who quite early on, describes herself as being an anxious person, provides an example of how even before she comes to university her anxiety is alleviated by the fact she has a cousin living in same city as the university. Knowing there is someone to whom she has a connection, who she can call on, and in this case a familial one, helps with her anxiety and provides what she seems to view a cushion or source of support if things go wrong. There is then a sense of comfort in knowing there is someone she knows, a relative, and to whom she has an attachment living nearby.

> *"Well I was a bit worried because I like um I am quite a nervous person so I thought like I don't know how well I am going to cope in a big city like obviously I am used to a little town and like, I dunno, I was worried like getting adjusted but I think I did it quite quickly, I have a cousin who lives in Manchester so like having some family here has helped, because if it gets too much I phone my cousin".*

Early in the interview, there is insight here into the importance of belonging for this particular student and, in this case, it is to someone rather than a place.

She talks about how, in the first week at university, there is no one at university to whom she feels connected and her sense of belonging is still rooted very clearly with home and her mum. There is a sense that she desperately wants to retreat to this. This need to belong makes her feel unsettled but it is clear from the response she says her mum gives her that going back is not an option, or at least not so early on, in a sense that she has to stick it out for at least a while.

"I didn't like it in the first week cos, I don't know it was like weird being away from home I guess like it was all very stressful, because we had the first week with no lectures and it got to no lectures until the Sunday night with a lecture on the Monday and I was like getting really nervous and I was like no oh like there is no-one I know around and like making friends and I got really scared again, I was like, "I wanna come home" and mum was like "you haven't even started yet"

When Lisa says "I wanna come home" she changes the tone of her voice to a higher pitch, almost childlike thus emphasising what she is clearly expressing here is a need to retreat to somewhere she feels safer, somewhere she feels she belongs. In the second interview with her, I asked her about her mum's response.

"You told me that your mum had made it clear that you could not go home in that first week even though you said you felt nervous and scared. Tell me a bit more about how that made you feel".

"Well I knew my mum was right but it felt bad because I did just want to give up. I know looking back it was too early to give up but I think if I had really wanted to she would have let me…er I don't know um maybe not straight away. Um yes I think she was right."

Lisa did not go into much detail about her feelings on this but I got the impression that she did not feel particularly rejected by this or that her mum did not want her at home. She clearly took on board that her mum was doing it for the right reasons so I do not think this caused any more anxiety for Lisa. She says, hesitatingly, at the end that if it had been really bad then her mum would have let her come back but her hesitation suggests that she probably she would have had to really persuaded her mum on this. There are two issues here. One is the impact this could have had on Lisa if her mum had been less supportive, perhaps leading to further insecurity. However, what is of more relevance is the strength of feeling and emotion she has at this point

and the very understandable feeling of wanting to retreat. Later in the chapter I will

discuss this further because there is an almost taken for granted idea about this idea

that moving away and going to university is a natural progression to adulthood and

that it is a case of toughening up and getting on with it.

The way in which Lisa describes how she makes friends seems to imply it happened

quickly. She recounts the process of making friends in the first few weeks'.

> *"Well I'm in a flat of 12 so it was kind of easy to make friends with them all, um yeah (pause). There's 12 girls, we went out quite a lot like I remember, pretty much every night in the first week, we went out. But our flat, kind of split but which is kind of understandable for 12 people, not we're not going to go out as a big group every time, so like it's like a house so like there three floors and there's like 4 people on each floor, then it kind of, so I'm like really good friends with the top floor, which is the floor I live on um then so like there was a girl from downstairs and like 5 of us who got really close really quickly and did a lot we went out a lot and we just went round exploring"*

What is not apparent from the excerpt above is the part that drinking has played in

developing these friendships. Here it appears initially that friendships happened

quickly and naturally as she is presenting a precis of events. However as the interview

progressed it became clearer it took a longer period of time for particular groups to

form. Whilst in this excerpt she mentions going out there is no mention of the role

alcohol plays in this process. However as the interview continues she begins to talk

about going out and how drinking helps ease the social process, helping with bonding

and assisting with the development of friendships and friendship groups and in helping

her to develop this sense of belonging. The published research regarding the

transition to university explored in chapter 3 does not mention alcohol and therefore

from this it is was not possible to ascertain the degree to which alcohol plays a role in

developing bonds and friendships and no doubt these happen without the use of

alcohol. However, for Lisa the role it played seemed fairly clear and, even though it is likely she will have developed friendships without alcohol, the narratives provide evidence of the way it has speeded up the process.

Lisa talks about how in the first few weeks they were out every night drinking and how this was an important part of establishing friendships. She uses the term "bonding" here which is explored later in the chapter. However what is happening here is the development of a group, one to which she is keen to ensure she belongs. Lisa talked about how in the first few weeks they drank every night. Some young people indicate that peer pressure has a role to play in whether they drink or not, or how much they drink Lashbrook (2000). I wanted to get a sense of whether this was something she chose to do, went along with or felt pressured to do. I asked her how much she had enjoyed this and had wanted to go along to the events during fresher's week.

> *"Um yeah, definitely I wanted to as well but like the every night thing (pause) a night off probably would have been nice it was hard in the first week because you don't want to stay in and cos everyone's still like making friends and like and bonding so if everyone's going out and doing something you're not really like "ooh I'm, going to stay at home" because you don't want to miss out on that bonding time".*

When I conducted the second interview with Lisa I still had not interviewed any other students so the concept of drinking to belong had not emerged as a specific theme at that point, only in a more abstract way. I think I had perhaps focussed more on the way she had talked about overcoming her anxiety and whether or not this had affected her making friends. When I listened back to the interview I noticed the way in which she talked about the group of friends she had and it seemed as if there was a sense of

relief that it had all worked out. However, although she had said she had made a good group of friends I did not get a clear sense of how close she was to this group wanted to gain a better understanding of the role alcohol played in this.

> *"It seems that although you struggled right at the start and wanted to go home, you then made friends quite quickly and now seem to be part of group. You mentioned the word "bonding". I got the sense alcohol played a significant part in developing these friendships and bonds what do you think?"*
>
> *"Yes, definitely I think so … yes it would have been harder without the drinking".*
>
> *"Do you think the friendships would still have developed?"*
>
> *"Umm well yes but it might have been harder and might have taken longer I think. I think the drinking gave us something to (pause) er a reason to do things I suppose"*

This response is evidence that the alcohol helps in speeding up this process for Lisa. Whether or not the friendships that develop because of this are lasting friendships is another matter and not particularly relevant to this research. What is key is that it provides evidence that she needed to develop friendships quickly almost as a way of surviving the first few weeks.

Mike: Analysis and reflection

Mike talks about how at around the age of 15 all his friends seem to be allowed to drink at parties and that their parents provided them with alcohol. Although his parents allowed him to go to the parties they told him he was not allowed alcohol which he said made him feel left out;

"The general consensus from parents of friends was it's ok (pause) I felt like I stuck out, left behind because you know when everyone first starts drinking and everyone gets really drunk off not a lot of alcohol and you're not you feel left out".

At this, this point his sense of not belonging is perhaps temporary and directly related to the parties where he feels left out or that he sticks out. He is part of an established friendship group so not being allowed to drink alcohol does not necessarily bar him from being part of the friendship group. I do not get the sense this particularly affected his sense of belonging, particularly as it seems the parties were infrequent and his friendships were already established. However, the experience made him feel that he was not part of the group temporarily. For Mike, at this stage, this is more about how being left out makes him feel and how unfair he feels it is rather than about any sense of belonging. He talked a lot about how unfair he felt it was and, although he understands why his parents were strict, it still makes him feel cross a few years later. This highlights the importance of feeling part of a group and in this case, the role alcohol played in feeling part of the group on those occasions. As Mike was still living at home with his family and already had established friendships this feeling of being left out, whilst unpleasant and making him feel cross, was not particularly problematic for him. However, in different circumstances such as not living at home and not having an established friendship group such an experience might have a bigger impact. Indeed, Mike goes on to discuss how choosing not to drink heavily or "get drunk" does present him with a dilemma. When he first goes to university he does not want to take part in the heavy drinking that many students seem to be doing because it is not what he likes doing. However, he is also aware that in not doing so means not fitting in with everyone.

He says, "Fresher's week was one of the worst weeks of my life". He describes a situation of not feeling he really fitted in straight away and how he did not want to

take part in the fresher events.   It seems that he did not identify with anyone or at least what they were doing, which was going out and getting drunk and did not see himself as "like them". He said much of fresher's week seemed to be about going out and getting as drunk as possible, which is something he did not want to do, being more interested in going to what he calls "events" rather than specific things organised for Freshers week where he sees the main aim is to get drunk. "For me to go out my aim isn't to get so drunk (pause) but more to enjoy the event. Other people just go hard drinking and I didn't do that".   He has a dilemma of wanting to make connections, to develop a sense of belonging but resisting it because he does not want to do what everyone else is doing. The phrase "the worst week of my life" can be taken literally or just as phrase to describe a particularly hard or unpleasant time but whether it was the worst week of his life or not in using it, he shows a strength of feeling about the impact of not fitting in even though it was his choice.   Interestingly then it seems that whilst there is an indication that Mike wants to belong to a group he resisted going along with what everyone else was doing. In doing so, he going against what Beaumeister and Leary (1994) suggest is a strong innate need to belong.   When I first listened the recording of the interview I did at first think that it was striking that Mike was able to resist going with the crowd and unusual for someone of his age, although I realise that is an assumption on my part. However when I head listened back a number of times I realised there was an explanation for this. It is not until later in the interview that he talks about a close friend from college, completely coincidentally, being placed in the same flat in the student accommodation, which means he is not completely on his own. The college friend is someone with who he identifies with, who shares similar interests and with whom he can go to alternative events from those offered in

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fresher's week. This makes opting out of Fresher's week easier as he has an alternative option.

> "It has got a lot better since that first week. We have made friends with people who have a similar outlook to me. There are weekly nights and there are events where you pay £10 on the door. We just go to these events because that's what we like".

Of course, had his friend not been there and he had continued to "opt out" of fresher's week he may eventually been successful in seeking others who shared his interests. However, had he not, he would have had to decide whether to go along with those he did not particularly identify with, or feel left out.

The link with alcohol and belonging is complex in Mike's case. He excludes himself from those who he describes as going "hard drinking" but does still enjoy drinking and it seems to be a key part of his social life. Whilst he describes himself as a "lightweight" in terms of drinking, alcohol is still central to his social life. He says he pre-drinks before going to an "event" and although his main aim is not to get drunk he talks about how alcohol eases social situations and how not drinking is no fun.

> "It does make a night out easier. Socially easier. Like a night out dancing it makes it easier on alcohol………..It would be frowned upon if I said tonight I am going sober".

> "I have done it like once when I was ill and yeah it was awful there were parties where everyone was drunk and having a good time and so I left at 1am. You are on a different level from everyone else and it's not fun like everyone else is laughing".

In essence, he is suggesting that drinking for him is an essential part of being sociable but it seems that it is not about drinking a lot a getting drunk all the time. It is what everyone else is doing and makes social situations easier and more fun and he is very aware that not drinking means not being part of what is going in. Despite being what he describes as a "lightweight" drinking is important to him.

> *"I am always drinking if I go to the pub. If I am there for a few hours I will only have 2-3 pints. My aim is not to get drunk. I wouldn't go and like have a coke or a coffee I would say drinking isn't key; there are several people in my friendship group who have decided to go temporarily teetotal for various reasons and have still stayed as socially involved. But I would accept that fitting in on a long-term scale would be difficult without drinking because a lot of our meetings as friends do involve alcohol so for them they would feel left out".*

He is almost suggesting here that not drinking is not an option. He suggests that although those who have chosen not to drink are still involved socially he seems to feel that for him it would mean feeling left out.

Anna; Analysis and reflection

Anna talks about her feelings easily and openly. Anna said she was very excited about going to university. She used the words "it's gonna be amazing" to describe how she felt before coming. However, her initial experience was not a good one. "I was so set to move out. I wanted to do my own thing. I was so excited. It was not how I expected".   It is a great sentence and in just a few words she describes the disappointment she felt at her expectations being unmet, which is evident in some of the published research explored in chapter 3 relating to the expectations about university. I will return to this idea of unmet expectations later in the chapter.

Anna finds that when she first arrives she is the only one in her flat, for the first few days at least.

> *"I got in to my flat and there was like no-one there. It was kind of empty and 'oh this is not normal'. But no one showed up for 2-3 days. The first night I did cry, it was kind of frightening, I had not met a single person, it was a bit scary.... I had always been the one (pause) I was so set to move out because of the arguments with my parents and I was so excited and it was not how I expected it to be initially and all my best friends were saying this is the best thing ever and I was like saying oh my god there is no one but then as fresher's went on I made more friends in my block of flats and the first week of fresher's was not kind of quite as exciting as I thought it would be. We were like going out a bit but everyone was still wary of each other, like do we like each other or not and trying to decipher who we liked and then at the end of the first week my new boyfriend kind of broke up with me"*

> **"Oh dear that must have been awful"**

> *"tI was awful and I am here on my own where are my friends, I've got no-one in my flat and then I went home for a few days and then when I came back I just loved it and like oh this is the best thing ever and then I was going out drinking a lot I think to help me get over it and I met all these new people and was drinking to forget and all these really nice people and it must have been 17 days straight of just drinking, going out and sleeping all day. It was actually horrible and I can't believe I am still alive. It was good fun though".*

These two paragraphs provide a rich insight in to Anna's first few weeks, capturing the rollercoaster of emotions so apparent in the literature explored in chapter 3. She follows a similar style to Lisa here in the way that it seems things happen very quickly, again it is a summary of things that happen over two to three weeks. This speeded up version of what happens in a sense mirrors the rush that the students feel to make friends and demonstrates an intensity about this period. Ordinarily very little happens in the space of a two or three week period. However, during this transition period there is an onslaught of new experiences. As a university lecturer, I see the impact of this on students who, two to three weeks in to the term, do look somewhat shell-shocked. We often refer to this as a "rabbit in headlights" look. They also often seem

tired and overwhelmed.   Anna talks about how the experience is not as she

anticipated it to be and her disappointment that it is not how she imagined is clear.

She experiences loneliness, fear and heartbreak but then this turns to excitement

when she returns and finds things are better. The final sentence containing the

phrases "actually horrible" and "good fun" is a great example of the contrasting

experiences, and the different emotions that occur in such a short space of time.

Anna said she was ready to leave home and was really excited and happy about going

to university. This seemed to be in part because she had had such a good summer

after making new friends and finally feeling like she "fitted in".   She seems to think

university would be a continuation of this "fun time", where she has started having

freedom and enjoyed of being part of a group. She talked about a new group of friends

she met at college over the summer, and a new boyfriend. I got the impression this

was the first time she felt she had belonged to and identified with a group of friends.

This seemed important as she had talked about being quite studious at school and "I

wasn't very social at school. I didn't meet many likeminded people". Whilst she did not

appear to get a sense of belonging through friends at school, she seemed close to her

family, despite her admissions of arguments and her rebelliousness. Anna seemed to

feel that university would be a continuation of what she has experienced over the

summer and that she would meet a group of "like-minded" people at university.

Initially, this it is not what happens and because it was so disappointing and she

struggled, she returned home after only having been there one week. In one sense

then she is retreating, albeit temporarily, back to where she feels she belongs and feels

safe. This is not necessarily a bad thing, the "apron strings" don't have to be

completely cut and perhaps this sense that having a safe place to retreat to until you are completely ready is part of what makes the transition easier. Later in the chapter, I discuss this further in relation to the concept of emerging adulthood and the idea that at this age young people still do need this in order to feel secure.

When Anna returned to university, things had changed and she finds there are other people in the flat. She starts to develop friendships and begins a new relationship. It seems that she then quickly develops a sense of belonging and says, "I then merged into a group of friends now who are like my little family". Again, she describes this as if this happened quickly and easily.

Initially, in Anna's story, the role of alcohol in helping her develop a sense of belonging is not clear. She provides a summary of making friends quickly within the halls of residence and here there is little mention of drinking. Indeed, drinking is only part of this picture and students no doubt can and do make friends and develop a sense of belonging without it so I am not trying to argue that drinking is solely responsible for the creation of friendships in this situation. However, as Anna's story progresses it starts to become clearer the role this plays in bringing people together, easing social situations and thus facilitating the sense of belonging.

Within Anna's group, it seems, during the first few weeks of university, alcohol is consumed most nights and she mentions it is normal to have a drink with their dinner. She points out how interesting this is in that she would not have a drink with her dinner every night at home with her parents. Again, this has become part of what they do as a group, coming together to eat, and drinking alcohol seems to be a normal part

of this. It is of course impossible to say whether this group would exist in the same way without the alcohol but it does seem an important aspect. She mentions there are a few friends in the group who don't drink and they don't get excluded, however, that she has given consideration to this indicates there is a concern that not drinking could potentially lead to exclusion and this concern is apparent.

> *"We all enjoy it, it's more like a social thing, we enjoy it, it's like we just want to convene everyone and that's the best way to do it, although we do have some people that don't drink at uni. It's really nice to see they are accepted in our group, it would be really horrible to see them excluded based on alcohol, yeah that's two people that don't drink. That's normal but I do feel sometimes when it gets kind of, where people are too drunk I think it must be awful to be around people who are drunk and it's crazy and I think aah this is the worst ever. But they seem ok about it I think it is more about being round each other than the drinks. It's like when we are saying we are having drinks in the flat it is like, come down and talk".*

Although she says the people who do not drink are "accepted in our group" she says it must be awful to be around people who are drunk and "aah, this is the worst ever" indicates her own feelings about the impact of not drinking and how it could potentially make her feel excluded.

It seems that the drinking is important but these social situations are not mainly about having a drink. The alcohol is, in part an incentive to get everyone together. "we are having drinks in the flat it is like, come down and talk". Alcohol is used, almost as a way of getting everyone together. This does not of course mean that alcohol is not consumed in large quantities and part of what they are doing is getting drunk and this might be part of the draw but of importance is also the getting together. Of course, a non-alcoholic beverage could be offered but in the case of this group, alcohol seems to

be the incentive to get everyone together. The role alcohol plays in the social life of this group is very apparent here.

Anna then talks about how drinking helps with social situations and to overcome the feeling of being "judged". This is not necessarily a problem when it is a group of people you have known for a long time and feel comfortable with, but in the first few weeks or even months of university it is perhaps a situation that happens quite often. Feeling like you are not being "judged" or rather feeling comfortable with those around is perhaps about feeling a sense of belonging, that it doesn't matter what you do or say you will still be accepted.

> *"I think like being socially awkward be a big factor to why I would drink initially, like going in to a social situation like at uni when you walk in to a room everyone is judging each other instantly it's like it's really scary, like when you've got a bit of alcohol in you it's less scary and you become a bit more nonchalant about the situation and easy so I think it could be a coping mechanism".*

Anna's need to belong seems very strong.   Although this is not to suggest it is any different from anyone else's, just that she is able to talk very openly about what she is feeling and what she has experienced and is something other people may feel less able to admit to, or perhaps be less aware of.

Anna talked about the drinking as a way of forgetting things when her relationship ended, but as well as a coping mechanism, it helped her make new attachments. It seems it helped her form new friendships quickly and create new sense of belonging with a new group of people.   So, in Anna's case it seems alcohol not only serves a purpose of helping her to forget or cope with the loss of her boyfriend it also allows

new relationships to develop more quickly providing her with a much needed sense of belonging. This is strong evidence in the way in which drinking motivations are multi-layered. It would be difficult to pinpoint a single drinking motivation from Anna's narrative because she cites so many. Some of these are relevant particularly relevant to the transition to university in the way in which alcohol helps in developing the new friendships but drinking to cope could relate both to the transition to university but also to dealing with the breakup with her boyfriend.

Sam: Analysis and reflection

We talked about making friends, whether he had found it easy and whether or not he socialised much with people on the course.

> *"Um it's been like harder obviously because if you're put in a flat with people you're gonna end up being more friendly with them. Um like there are a few familiar faces from college and from high school so they've been my gateway for meeting new people and vice versa, so it's been kinda nice um it's not been really difficult at all".*
>
> *"My social life is still good, like I don't go out with people much from my course like um I have still got my friends from X and I am out with them every weekend".*

Sam suggests it might be easier to get to know people if you are in shared accommodation. Although he recognises that not being in shared accommodation means making friends could be harder it is not a problem for him as he still lives at home and still has contact with friends outside of university. He has a weekend job and he prioritises this over going out and getting drunk. "I can easily prioritise this over going out and getting stupidly drunk". As Sam talked it became clear that, whilst

he made new friends at university, he was less invested in these friends. His sense of

belonging was still with school/college friends and family and there was less of a need

to make strong close bonds with students on his foundation course. Later I discuss the

idea of being between university and home, which Gennep (1960) refers to as "betwixt

space". Here Sam is not yet in this betwixt space and does not need to invest fully in

university life because it is only for one year. He is still part of his established

friendship group from home, school and college and knows that he will be going to

university the following year.

> " Feel like I am a lot more aware of what kind of night I want to go out on cos I
> kind of like live in X and I'll go to a club of my choice because I've had the time
> to make that choice but people who aren't from here are still getting used to
> things so if they are going to a bad night out I won't really join".

He talks about knowing which are the good clubs, and if a group of people are not

going somewhere he likes he does not feel the need to go along with this. As a fresher

who has moved away from home, alongside not knowing whether the club chosen was

good or bad, he may not have wanted to take the risk of not going and consequently

being left out of friendship groups.

As Sam lives at home and has other friends he can rely on, he feels he can dip in and

out of university friendship and be choosy. He does not feel a particularly strong need

to bond to any groups or develop a sense of belonging with any groups at university.

Sam started talking about drinking in relation to his social life.

> "the act of drinking is something social um it's almost social like, um just
> something to talk over like why do you drink coffee, why do you go to a café it is
> for the same reason it's a social meeting ground almost".

From this, I get a sense that drinking is not really something he does much so I ask for

clarification here. I wanted to get an idea of whether drinking is just like having a

coffee for him and just a case of having a conversation.

"Would you say you don't really do it for a buzz then?"

"um yes um not all the time but sometimes, like if it was my mates birthday"

In hindsight I could maybe have asked for further clarification perhaps asking why not

just drink coffee then. I suppose I wanted to ascertain whether it was about "getting

drunk" or whether it was for the taste. Although that might have seemed as if was not

accepting his explanation.   I think this demonstrated a judgement on my part about

why people drink. I think I was basing that on my own feelings in that there is

something different about having a chat whilst having coffee and having a chat whilst

having an alcoholic drink. I am mindful here that I used the term "buzz" which was not

a term he used. However, I wanted to clarify whether drinking for him really was

similar to having a coffee, that having a pint was just the same. I thought about this in

relation to Mike's narrative as Mike had said he would not go to the pub for a coffee or

coke. So, although they both say it is just about being sociable, that it is just like

having a chat over coffee there does seem to be a difference. I may be stating the

obvious in that of course, there is a difference, but what I am interested in here is that

they say it is no different but they choose one over the other. This could just of course

be about taste preference but I do not think it is. This is why I asked Sam about

drinking for the "buzz".

I get the feeling he has given quite a lot of thought to why he drinks prior to the

interview and his answers seem to be more what he feels he should say. He talks a lot

about not drinking to get drunk and about being responsible. I feel that what he says echoes some of the messages of health promotion in campaigns to reduce drinking, which I discuss in chapters 8 and 9. I discuss this further in the final discussion chapter. I ask him what he thinks it will be like when he goes away to university and he says he has been to visit his brother who is at university and thinks things will be different. He has seen that the students have a lot more freedom and that drinking is big part of what they do. He says he thinks he will probably drink more once he goes to university.

Sam: Further Reflection

Although my advert for participants had asked for first year students who had moved away from home to go to university I did not realise until the interview had started that Sam was still living at home and only attending university as a foundation student, and would not be going to university and leaving home until the following year. I was initially concerned about this as I worried that it would not be relevant and even when the interview had finished I did wonder whether what he had talked about would be relevant in any way. I found this interview more difficult than the other interviews. I think this was perhaps because of my anxiety about it not fitting with the research, but perhaps also because Sam seemed less forthcoming than the other participants did. After listening to the recording my anxiety was unfounded and his story served to corroborate some of my findings, in particular around the need to belong. Furthermore, this interview provided me with a better understanding of, and more confidence in the method I was using.

Lucy: Analysis and reflection

Lucy did not drink before she came to university and talks about how nervous she was about drinking. The first few days were difficult for her as she did not really speak to anyone in the halls and kept herself to herself. She said she felt the other girls in the flat were all going out and she felt left out to begin with. However, this changed when she got chatting to one of the girls one morning who suggested she join them that evening. This seemed like a big deal for her and she seemed particularly worried about the drinking aspect of it. At first, she was reluctant to drink and chose to drink a small amount and watch what was going but is conscious of being the odd one out. She said this made her feel stupid but her friends told her to relax and enjoy it. To begin with, it seems as if she is drinking because it is what everyone else is doing and she wants to fit in but I felt at this point, there was an element of experimentation about it too. I asked her to clarify whether at that time she was drinking because everyone else is doing it and she said it is or was partly to do with this but that is what partly because she enjoyed it. She says it makes being sociable easier and "I think I fit in better when I am drinking".

> *"From what you are saying you are not really that in to drinking, is it just something you feel you do because everyone else is?"*

> *"Um I drink because well partly because it is what people are doing errr but I do like it. It relaxes me and when I do get drunk it feels good (pause) um not the really drunk,I have done that a few times and I don't like feeling dizzy and sick but I do like feeling um yer know sort of well just drunk. I think it helps me to get on with people I think I fit in better when I am drinking it just makes it easier."*

I think the drinking helps here. It helps Lucy to feel more like she belongs to the group even though she struggles to feel she fits in.

> *"What do you think it would have been like without the drinking"*

"Umm I don't know. Harder I suppose. Um I probably would have got more work done but….um then I don't know maybe I wouldn't have made the friends I have made and I do feel closer to them now….but I don't know and um maybe I would have met different people…   I don't know".

"So please could you explain to me how you made friends with everyone"

"Well they were in the same block as me. There are 14 rooms. And two of them were on my course so we met straight away and in the first week there were lots of things on for freshers week. S and A were both from the same town too so they seemed to bond quite quickly. Um I don't really know how it happened it just did but we met in A's room for drinks before we went to one of the fresher things they were putting on in the students union. We got drunk, not really drunk, silly really, it just helped us to talk more and then we drank more when we were there. It was like that for most of the first week really, drinking quite a lot. It was sort of fun but I kept thinking how I didn't really feel like I fitted in but I think the drinking helped because then you just get on with it and it makes it all easier, just getting drunk and being silly and laughing a lot".

As the interview progressed Lucy returned to talk about her time at secondary school and how it had taken a long time to make friends and that even when she did she felt she did not fit in.

"It sounds like you struggled in those first few years so did you think it would be like that when you went to university. Um did you think it would be the same (pause) hard to make friends and fit in?"

"Um well I don't know really um I did make friends with a small group of people at college and one of them was my friend from school so I think I did become more sociable and did realise I could make friends but um I had my boyfriend too and he was in the year above me so it wasn't always easy to see them as well as him.   There were groups of people who met up a lot um I think and there were parties but I wasn't part of that. I suppose I was a bit worried um that fear of not meeting people that you like or are like you is still there or um of being left out".

In the first interview Lucy talked quite a lot about not quite fitting in. She has clearly made friends but she talks about the way alcohol helps her to feel like she fits in. At the time of the second interview I still had only conducted interviews with two other participants and although the participants I had previously interviewed talked about

using alcohol to socialise and develop I had not at the time of Lucy's second interview

begun to look into this in depth in relation to the concept of belonging. However, it

was very obvious in Lucy's story that she did not feel like she belonged or, as she

framed it "fitted in". She did not feel she identified with anyone but said it was easier

to fit in when drinking.   In the second interview, I said that I had noted that her

experience at university had seemed to mirror her experience at school and asked her

if she felt the experience was similar

> *"Yes and no. I did make friends quite quickly but um you know what I said*
> *about not them being like you um or rather maybe it was me being not like*
> *them, um yes it was me being not like them because they all seemed really*
> *comfortable with each other right from the start. Um"*

Lucy is hesitant here. It seems it is almost a bit painful. I read this back to her in the

second interview and she talked in more depth about it. She spoke about feeling that

she got on with people but not quite fitting in but that this wasn't because they made

her feel like that.   She started talking about drinking in this friendship group and she

said,

> **"W***ell we get on more I suppose. It is like, when we are drinking we bond better*
> *so I feel closer, much more like they are my friends. So then I suppose that*
> *when we are not drinking I think that um although I am not like them I still feel*
> *close to them."*

Although some of the other participants had talked about feelings of loneliness

referred to in the published research it seemed to be relatively short-lived or if it was

not it was not apparent. Whereas the sense of loneliness seems to persist with Lucy

because she does not feel like she fits in. She talked about times when her friends

would go back home for the weekend and she would be on her on own. She said that although there were other people around she did not know them well or feel confident to approach them. She considered she might seem desperate but again was not sure about approaching them, as she was not sure she would fit in.   I asked her about going back home and she said that her parents had made it clear that she had left home to be at university.

> " Um well I don't know, um well it's not like my parents don't love me um it's just, it's just um well I have left home and I was really desperate to leave home and be independent (pause)I have left and now they have their space and they even said "you can't come back every five minutes" um not in a nasty way but just making it clear that I can't run home I think they think I need to be "grown up and independent" and um well I do really I suppose and yes I can't keep going back every five minutes and I think if there had been more people staying I wouldn't have wanted to so much."

Lucy is describing a difficult situation here. I can only speculate here and assume that her parents are probably not deliberately trying to make her feel unwelcome and are encouraging her to be independent in a "tough love" kind of way she does not feel she can just go home. She is saying that she was desperate to leave home and have her independence but it is harder than she thought it would be. When she says this she says, "I was desperate to leave home" and then hesitates and it is almost she feels that because she was desperate to leave home she feels she does not have a right to go back home.   She says, "it's not that my parents don't love me" and in reference to not coming back every five minutes she says "not in a nasty way". She does not seem fully convinced and although it is not likely to be their intention, she seems to feel rejected and is, in a way questioning whether they do love her. She seems to be defending them and also feels let down by them too. I am aware, as I have already said, that I am speculating here but when I listened back to the interview I realised this was

something I wanted to know more about but realised too this was moving further away from the aim of the research which was about the relationship with drinking motivations. It felt that relationships with parents was something that could be explored more, both in relation to how students adjust to university but also to how it may relate to drinking motivations. I touch on this later in this chapter and, in the final discussion chapter, when I discuss implications of the research.

Rianna: Analysis and reflection

Rianna seems too pre-occupied with leaving her family behind because of her sister's accident and there is a lot of guilt about being at university and I think in a way this overrides some of the other things that the other participants talk about. I think it is also because she has not really had much of experience of drinking so for her the drinking is still about experimenting, something that all the other participants had done prior to coming to university.   However, there is still a link there;

> *"I was in halls in a flat with 8 other girls and for the first few days we didn't really speak to each other. I came before Freshers week started and there was nothing to do and I was upset about being there on my own without my family, leaving them behind and having no one to talk to but I couldn't ring my mum and dad because I didn't want to worry them because I knew they had other things to worry about (pause) I really wanted to go home but I knew I couldn't. I had been excited about coming and scared but when I got here it was horrible."*
>
> ***"It sounds like you struggled to make friends with people straight away and you wanted to quit but felt you couldn't because it was too soon and you would let your family down."***

Rianna agreed with this and said after a few weeks things got a bit better but she did

not really go into very much detail about this and changed the subject. I followed this

up in the second interview, as I wanted to get a better sense of this experience as I

wondered if things had really improved. She used the term "a bit better" implying that

it was not great. I asked her about her friendships and whether she considered had

become part of a group.

> *"Err yes. I have one or two close friends and am sort of part of a group. Well*
> *sort of several groups really depending on what we are doing. But it is not like a*
> *umm a set group or at least I don't feel part of a set group and I don't know*
> *about other people. But I have made a few closer friends".*

I still found it difficult to get a good sense of how she felt about her friendships and she

seemed vague about them. It was clear she had struggled to begin with but even

though she clearly had made friends, it was difficult to get an idea of how close she felt

to them.

After a few days of being at university, Rianna said she started talking to other people

in the flat and was invited out to a pub quiz. She said she was worried about going

because she had never really drunk alcohol before because at school, although there

were parties she and her group of friends did not go to them. She said she was

worried that everyone would be much more used to drinking than she was. She said

she was worried about getting drunk and the first time she was careful not to get

drunk. However, after that she began to drink more.

> *"Um well I was and thought I didn't want to drink or even like it but then*
> *gradually I drank more I think got a taste for it (she laughs) . In that first week*
> *..or not it was the second because I had gone home at the weekend and I*
> *brought back some wine that I had got for my birthday which had only just been*

before I went to university and we had our tea and I opened a bottle of the wine. Um I am thinking how funny it is now that I had not even thought to bring the wine with me or that I um hadn't even drunk it before then.   Um it was really nice um I had thought I didn't really like wine until then.   Some of the girls had vodka but I didn't (pause). I felt quite drunk after drinking the wine and we went out and had a great time. The girls I was with all said it was good to see me letting my hair down".

It seems then that it does not take Rianna long to start drinking more regularly. She is in a sense falling in with everyone else. I did not feel there was any pressure on her to drink but I do think she did not want to be left out. Her reasons for drinking here were in part experimentation, finding she likes the taste and not wanting to be left out.

She acknowledges that drinking helped her make friends.

"It did help me make friends I think but it was bad that I was getting drunk when my family were at home and my sister was ill".

In the second interview with Rianna, I said that it was clear from her interview that she had initially struggled to make friends. I asked her about getting to know people on her course and how easy it had been to make friends with them.

"I did get talking to people and I have got to know people on the course better but my friends are in the flat. I think it is harder to get to know people on the course because you don't see as much of them and I am seeing friends in the flat all the time.

"So although you get to know people on the course is it more difficult to become friends with them"

"Um yes, um yes because I suppose it is hard to say shall we meet for a drink. In halls it just sort of happens"

It seems that being in shared accommodation that makes making friends easier whereas trying to make friends with people on the course perhaps takes longer because there is less contact.

6.3 Discussion

6.3.1 Belonging

The research explored in chapter two relating to the transition to university provided evidence that making friends is just as important, if not more important than, studies in the first few months at university. Certainly, whilst the main purpose of going to university is to obtain a degree, it is clear the social aspect plays a key role in student's expectations about what university will be like. Some universities acknowledge the importance of this, highlighting the social side in order to attract students, with advertising such as the following;

> "based in the heart of the city, you'll never be bored. Whatever you're in to – from sports and shopping to culture and clubbing – Manchester has it" (MMU website, 2019)

I now go on to show how, from my analysis of the narratives, several themes relating to the concept of belonging emerged and I discuss how each of these relate to drinking motivations. These themes were, bonding through drinking, emerging adulthood, friends as family, identity and "like-mindedness" and expectations about what university will be like.

Palmer et al (2009) suggest the first six to eight weeks at the start of university is crucial in whether or not students develop a sense of belonging. This may also go

some way to explaining the high dropout rate highlighted by Scanlon et al (2007) and more recently The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, online no date) recorded that 1 in 5 students in the UK dropped out by the end of 2016. My study shows the importance students place on developing friendships quickly during this period. There seems to be an urgent need to develop a sense of belonging, and to be accepted as part of a group. Beaumeister and Leary (1995) propose the need to belong is a universal drive for humans. They argue that earlier explanations about human relationships, such as Bowlby's theory of attachment (Bowlby, 1982) and the Freudian view of sexuality and aggression (Freud, 1947) being driving psychological forces, only go some way to explain the way in which humans interact. Furthermore, they suggest the need to belong and form even a small number of close relationships is innate in humans and that we are "naturally driven" towards establishing and sustaining belongingness. Miller (2003) suggests belonging is what constitutes our identity and is "the quintessential mode of being human - in which all aspects of the self, as human, are perfectly integrated – a mode of being in which we are as we ought to be: fully ourselves" (Miller, 2003:218). However, she notes there is disagreement as to what constitutes belonging and how the phenomena of belonging is measured. Indeed Miller's definition is perhaps more akin to what Maslow refers to as "self-actualisation" (Maslow, 1943). Nevertheless, she attempts to provide a definition, proposing the notion of three 'senses' of belonging. Firstly, there is social connection, which is connecting us to a community of people. Secondly, there is historical connection, which is connecting us to traditions or our past, and finally there is geographical connection, which is connecting us to home or an area. Miller notes it is more complex than just our relationship with these, as we are all connected in some

way to our communities, localities and histories, and suggests what is important is how we feel about our belongingness to these things.

> "Belonging is a state of being from which wellbeing is derived; a relation that makes us feel good about our being and our being-in-the-world; a relation that is fitting, right or correct. This being the case, a minimum conception of belonging might be understood as standing in correct relation to one's community, one's history and one's locality" (Miller, 2003:217).

Wilcox et al (2005) suggest making compatible friends is crucial as to whether or not students stay at university with many students viewing their first year as being primarily about their social lives. It was not until I had conducted the third interview that I really began to get a sense of how important the themes explored in this chapter were. When I listened back to the recordings of the very first interview I did, which was with Lisa, the theme around belonging was not particularly overt at that point. I had picked up her sense of urgency to make friends and that drinking did play a role in this, but at this point did not equate with belonging.

6.3.2 Bonding through drinking

Although some of the studies explored in chapter 4 did not necessarily include students as participants, they do provide evidence of the way in which young people use alcohol to help bond with friends. De Visser et al (2013) found evidence of the way in which drinking facilitates "bonding", with participants talking about being cared for when drunk, and sharing the suffering of hangovers and they suggest that use of alcohol is the "modern way of bonding". Niland et al (2013) also found that drinking was an important part of friendship groups with young people using terms like "friendship with fun" and "friends with a buzz" and that also emphasised the way in which caring for drunk friends facilitates bonding.

Frederiksen et al (2012) found that alcohol helped make them feel included in a group. Lisa uses the term bonding "you're not really like "ooh I'm going to stay at home" because you don't want to miss out on that bonding time" and Lucy says "when we are drinking we bond better". Anna talks about alcohol enabling an invitation for a get together much easier. She says having a drink with dinner is the norm, helping the group to bond and become like 'a family'. However I propose, rather than it being about achieving drunkenness, as Seaman and Ikegwounu, (2010) suggest, drunkenness is just one aspect and it seems to not always being about drinking to get drunk and sometimes just about drinking together and getting the group together. Frederiksen suggests that, whilst young people use alcohol to help them feel included, they do not need a huge amount of alcohol for this to happen. Phrases like the 'modern way of bonding' or drinking as a 'default choice for socialising', rather than automatically being a being a cause for concern, when viewed through the lens of belonging, enable a more in depth understanding of how alcohol is used to assist in this process.

Seaman and Ikeqwounu (2010), examine the ways in which alcohol is used to assist in socialising with peers, suggest getting drunk is a 'default' choice for socialising and that drinking is a way of getting groups together, breaking down barriers and improving the way the group functions.

> "Drinking to achieve drunkenness was seen as a 'default' choice for peer socialising. Many found it difficult to imagine realistic alternatives to alcohol consumption for getting groups of young adults together. On drinking occasions, young adults sought the effects of alcohol – particularly openness and the breaking down of barriers – on group interactions and individuals. This was perceived as improving group function" (Seaman and Ikegwounu, 2010:6)

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Published research provides some evidence of the way in which alcohol is used to facilitate bonding and the development of friendships amongst young people and students. However, to date there has been no in depth exploration of how this relates to the transition to university. My study provide new knowledge with regard to this and I now go on to argue that my findings show the need to belong is more significance during the transition to university.

The research explored in chapter 3 demonstrates that the transition to university is a unique time in young people's lives. My study has shown that there is a sense of urgency about making friends, developing a sense of belonging and creating and maintaining bonds. Alcohol plays a more important part than perhaps it ordinarily would. Some of the research explored in chapter 4, relating to drinking motivations, draws on research which focuses on younger age groups will still at school or in further education and living at home with parents. Although they use alcohol to help with developing friendships and maintaining their place in a group there is far less at stake for them. For students who have left home however it is different, and there seems to be an intensity about the situation they are in and there is more at stake if they are unable to develop that sense of belonging. However, there is also another element to consider. Not only are these students leaving home to go to university, they are arguably still going through the transition to adulthood and this adds another layer of complexity, which I now go on to discuss.

6.3.3. Emerging Adulthood

I have outlined some of the reasons why students in this transitional period may feel a sense of urgency to develop friendships and become part of a group. However, the

transition to university also happens at a time when arguably these students are

experiencing another transition, and that is the transition to adulthood. Although at

18, they are considered adult, Antrobus (2013) suggests at that age, though legally

adult, may not yet have reached "adulthood". There is evidence, she argues, that

shows young people's brains may not become "adult" until 25, rather than the view

that it is around the age of 18 and says her "experience of young people is that they

still need quite a considerable amount of support and help beyond that age". A more

recent study conducted by Sawyer et al (2018) supports this view. They suggest that

previously it has been considered that by age 18 one has reached adulthood but now

young people are doing things considered to be the markers of becoming an adult later

in life, such as starting work, getting married, having children and leaving home. They

suggest that,

> "Arguably, the transition period from childhood to adulthood now occupies a
> greater portion of the life course than ever before at a time when
> unprecedented social forces, including marketing and digital media, are
> affecting health and wellbeing across these years. An expanded and more
> inclusive definition of adolescence is essential for developmentally appropriate
> framing of laws, social policies, and service systems. Rather than age 10–19
> years, a definition of 10–24 years corresponds more closely to adolescent
> growth and popular understandings of this life phase and would facilitate
> extended investments across a broader range of settings" (Sawyer et al,
> 2018:1)

 According to this perspective, young people leaving home at 19 to go to university are

not necessarily equipped or prepared to take on the role of adult.   Arnett (2007) calls

this period "Emerging Adulthood" which he suggests is an age between approximately

18-25, when one is, neither a child, nor an adult. He suggests that when asked, if they

consider themselves a child young people of this age indicate they do not but they do

not identify as adult either. However, he suggests this is only the case in industrialised societies where there is a prolonged period of time for independent role exploration. Henderson (2007) points out that we have conflicting ideas about what adulthood actually is. For example in the UK we have differing legal ages, such as 16 being the age of consent for sex and 18 for buying alcohol but young people having to wait until they are 25 until they are able to claim the minimum living wage or minimum wage. Globally there are wide differences. For example, the age of consent for sex ranges from ages 11-21 and the right to vote 15-21 (Unicef, no date). With regard to the purchase of alcohol this ranges from age 15-25 with some countries having no restrictions (ProCon, no date)

Kantanis (2000) suggests the transition to university may be problematic for some as they leave a place where they have been a "child" with few responsibilities and a sense of stability, to a place where they are treated as adults. She argues they are often not equipped to deal with this burden of responsibility, that support for students is often inadequate and that it is not recognised how difficult the transition can be for some students.

6.3.4 Family: Old family and new "Family"

In the previous section I suggested that although legally adult students are potentially still transitioning to full adulthood. This potentially means that attachments to family and particularly parents are still important. Bernier et al (2005) argued that the transition to university can trigger the attachment system and some research suggests parental relationships may influence how the transition is experienced (Kenny and

Rice, 1995; Wintre and Yaffe, 2000) and also the importance of parental contact once at university (Trice, 2000). In such a short space of time, it was only possible to garner superficial insight in to the relationships students had with their parents. However I managed to capture both a glimpse of the liminality that students experience (Palmer et al 2009), discussed in chapter 3, and to see the way in which attachment theory is relevant (Bloom, 1987; Bernier et al, 2005; Kenny and Donaldson, 1971; Kenny and Rice, 1995; Larose and Bovin, 1998). Although students going to university are legally adult this provides some evidence that young people leaving home for the first time to go to university are not fully ready to embrace adulthood and independence and need time to adjust.

The narratives provided evidence of the anxiety experienced in the first few days or weeks and for some that resulted in a need to retreat to the security of "home". Students showed clearly this feeling, discussed in chapter 3, of not yet belonging either to their old life and family, or their new life at university or being "betwixt" places (Van Gennep, 1960). Anna returns home very quickly after arriving and pleas to her mum not to have to go back. I sensed that she was in a way testing to find out if that option was available rather than this being a real need to give up university. I felt that even if her mum had not been firm and told her she had to go back she would have returned anyway. I think it was probably enough that she was able to retreat temporarily.

Lisa talked about having a cousin in the same town as the university and it was clear having a family member nearby as a safety net helped, even though she did not actually need to contact her cousin. Lisa also talks about contacting her mum in the first week and asking to come home. Although her mum says she has to stay

Lisa does know that she can go home if she really has to. Anna actually does go home. It is a temporary retreat and can perhaps be seen as a way of testing that family is still there and that they are still there for her helps her to feel more secure. Rianna says that she really wanted to go home "but couldn't". I felt this was self-imposed rather the reality of physically not be able to and was more about not wanting to let her family down. Lucy did not talked about it being hard to make friends but did not mention that she had felt she wanted to go home. Lucy did not talk a great deal about her parents but it was evidence she had conflicting feelings about their way of encouraging her to be independent. Although they had perhaps not intended to make her feel rejected their actions had made her feel this way.

The study conducted by Kenny and Rice (1995) explored in chapter 3, demonstrated the importance of students knowing these bonds still exist, knowing they can go back does not mean they will but plays an important part in helping them adjust. Knowing they have the safety net is enough to make them feel more secure. Kenny and Rice (1995) suggest that those

> "(W)ho are emotionally stable and self-reliant are likely to have parents who are available to provide support when needed, while also permitting and encouraging autonomy. In attachment model terms, calling home to talk with family or discuss a concern with parents may be examples of health secure base behaviour, rather than signs of maladaptive dependency. The availability of parental support may thus be important for the late adolescent by fostering the personal and interpersonal risk-taking needed to develop new relationships, to attempt challenging course, and to explore self and identity in the context of a changing social and academic environment". (Kenny and Rice, 1995:435).

Anna, provides good example of this moving from one place of belonging to another when she talks about her new friends as "my little family". She says that alcohol is the best way to get everyone together.   Whilst going to university is progression towards independence there is perhaps a tendency to ignore the impact such a move away has on some young people. Griffin et al (2009) suggest that because of changes to communities and family structures in late modernity, with the emphasis on individualism, it is often friendship groups which play a central role in young people's social lives and which take on a different significance. It is not that these friends replace her family but it is an indication of the moving on, the development of new bonds, and a new sense of belonging. However, unlike with one's family where a sense of belonging is generally inherent, a sense of belonging within a friendship group has to be developed, negotiated and maintained and alcohol plays a role in this negotiation and maintenance.

Although the narratives show this "testing of bonds" it would be beyond the scope of this research to assess the relationship each of the students have with their parents, and as I have said this was not the aim of my research. It would therefore not be possible for me to assess how this relates to their drinking motivations. For example, Lucy seems to be less secure in her relationship with her parents. Lucy talked about her parents encouraging her to be independent and to not "run home every five minutes" and I picked up on a slight sense of rejection felt by Lucy here, however she did not go in to any more detail here. I did wonder how her relationship might relate to her drinking but as she had not volunteered any further information about her parents. It was not something I wanted to assume or speculate about and therefore felt it would be intruding to ask further questions.

I reflected on the students' relationship with their parents and considered it would have been interesting and insightful to have extended the conversation further. However, at the time I had felt not only was this intrusive but I questioned my reasons for wanting to know this. This troubled me initially because as each of the students talked about their parents I wondered if I should have included this as a theme. However, after a great deal of reflection, listening to the interviews and reading the transcripts I realised there was actually very little information to go on. To analyse this in any depth would have been to speculate about the relationships rather than drawing on anything significant the students said. I had felt that as I was conducting research within a psychosocial framework that I should be giving more consideration to the psychology of the individuals and to their relationship with their parents, how that has shaped who they are and how that has influenced how they experience the transition to university and how it relates to their drinking. However, after a much reflection I concluded that this would be interesting in terms of future research.

6.3.5 Identity, like-mindedness and expectations about university

Scanlon et al (2007) suggest that going to university involves both a loss of identity and "re-mooring" of identity. Miller (2003) also suggests that our sense of belonging is closely related to our sense of identity. Developing a sense of belonging involves the creation of identity in relation to one's social and material surroundings and finding out what you have in common with others and what makes you different from others. Leach (2002) refers to this as a recognising or misrecognising yourself in others. The concept of identity emerged from the narratives with students talking about meeting people who were "like them" or as Ann referred to it as "like-minded". This relates in

particular to some of the literature explored in chapter 3 regarding the expectations students have about coming to university. Each participant indicated they had an idea about what university would be like and how they expected to meet people similar to themselves. The published research shows however that expectations are not always met which can lead to disappointment and can even result in students dropping out of university (Maunder et al, 2013;Brinkworth et al, 2009;Crisp et al 2009). Although when I conducted the interviews there was no indication that these students were likely to drop out it was clear that in some respects their expectations had not been met.

Mike talks about finding friends with a "similar outlook". It seems that he does not identify with anyone to begin with, or at least identify what they are doing or how they are behaving, which is going out and getting drunk, and does not see himself as "like them". This is important to him and he does not want to go out drinking and getting drunk because he does not identify himself as a drinker, he does not want to or enjoy getting drunk and distances himself from those who do. He prefers to go to, what he describes as "events", and although this involves drinking, the aim is not to get to drunk. Mike describes the first week "the worst of his life" because he feels there is no one like him and clearly feels much happier when he realises his friend from home is there and when he finds a group of people who like doing what he does in other words, people he identifies with.

Anna uses the term "like-mindedness". She discusses how at college before coming to university she finds a group of friends who are "like-minded". She does not explain

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what she means by this but my interpretation from what she says is this that this means a group of people she feels she has things in common with, that she feels comfortable with and fits in with this and for her part of this is going to parties, going out and drinking. She had described how, at school, she felt that she never fitted in and found it difficult to make friends. When she describes finding a group of friends at college with whom she identifies and fits in with I sense the relief she felt about this. Anna seemed to be optimistic that University would be the same saying, "I got in to a good friend group over the summer… university is going to be amazing". However, she talks about how her expectations were not met, or at least not straightaway, and she starts making efforts to rectify this. Of all the participants, Anna seems the most pro-active in getting people together and organising social events. I discussed earlier the sense of urgency that students seemed to feel about making friends quickly and I felt with Anna this was in part fuelled by the need to find this "ideal" group of "like-minded" friends.

Both Lucy and Rianna talk about not fitting in and this is essence about not identifying with a particular group of people. For Rianna this at first seems short lived and is connected with her perceived lack of experience of drinking however she does say that drinking helps her get on with people and this is an indication for me that she is still unsure about how she fits in or whether she "gets on with people".

> Rianna: Um so I drink mostly to have fun I think but then I don't know cos as I said sometimes it is to help me get on with people um

Although Tajfel (1979) developed his theory of Social Identity in relation to the development of ideas around discrimination relating to "in groups" and "out groups", the theory describes our inclination to gravitate to those who are like us, who we identify with. In relation to the situation the students find themselves in, this inclination to be "picky" about whom they choose as friends is potentially unhelpful. It seems they realise they have to compromise and potentially develop friendships with people they do not have things in common with in order to ensure that they do become part of group.   For some of them alcohol provides a mechanism, or a way of finding some sort of common ground, for example, Lucy says it helps her feel she has more in common with people or at least more able to get along with people. Anna says she wonders what it would be like without the alcohol and whether or not she would feel she had so much in common with people and wonders whether what they have in common is the drinking itself.

In this situation students find themselves where there is no safety net of familiar faces and they appear to use alcohol as a way of helping them find ways of identifying with each other. It might be that it is a false identity but in this instance one that is necessary. Richardson and Tate's (2013) researched provided such an example of the need to "latch on". They explain that the fear of loneliness drives students to make friends with those they may not normally identify with so although they have expectations of finding individual friends, or groups who are like-minded the reality is that they are not always in the position to be particularly choosy. Indeed Mike agreed that, whilst he did not want to socialise with those who were going out and getting really drunk, had his college friend not been around it is likely he would have had to become friends with those he felt he had less in common with.

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Coming to university is not about completely cutting off from family and friends but is a slow process of adjusting. From the interviews, it is possible to see this in action, with students talking about wanting to go home initially but then beginning to feel a bit more secure as they get to know people.   Winter and Yaffe (2000) in their study about adjusting to university life and relationships with parents also refer to the potential difficulties some students experience and found that contrary to beliefs that adolescence is a time ties are being severed many young people still need these ties. However, Palmer et al (2009) suggest that whilst appearing to be negative experiences they can also be viewed as positive too. One through which students are breaking old attachments and starting to develop a new identity.

Alcohol plays a complex but important role during this period. It not only makes it easier to make friends, to be sociable, to bond and develop a sense of belonging it allows the students to fit in with those they otherwise might not socialise with or identify, even if this is temporary. The friendships made during the transition period may not be long term but that is not what is important at this point. In chapter 3, there is evidence that students have particular expectations about how university will be and that these are often not met. Although only Anna specifically talked about what she expected university was going to be like, it seemed, as has been suggested in the literature, she felt a sense of disappointment. However, my study has shown that students expectations about what the social side of university will be like and the whether or not these are met are also relevant to student drinking motivations too. Anna in particular seems to have high expectations about what university will be like saying "it's gonna be amazing" and these expectations are clearly not met at first

leading to a great deal of anxiety. When she come back after going home really early

on she seems almost determined to ensure these expectations are met and this I

suggest, as she often appears to instigate social gatherings, manifests itself through

ensuring she develops a group friends, and alcohol seems to play a significant role in

this. One can only speculate what might have happened if things did not improve once

she returned or how whether this could have been achieved in the same way without

alcohol, which I have already suggested speeded up the process.

Chapter 7 Findings and Analysis: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

7.1 Introduction

Fear of Missing Out or FoMO is a relatively new term, which I discuss in more detail, later in the chapter. Research relating to this has focused predominantly on how the use of social media increases the feeling that one is missing out. There is very little research exploring the link between drinking and FoMO but all the students in my study made reference to concerns about the consequences of turning down opportunities to go out during the first few weeks of university and, invariably this meant going out and consuming alcohol. Their concerns ranged from missing out on what might be a really good night or "the best night ever" as one participant described it, not appearing in pictures on social media the following day and not being able to take part in these conversation the following day. Perhaps, most importantly, their biggest concern was how being left out may have consequences for friendships and belonging to group of friends. Not going out and drinking meant missed opportunities to bond, make, develop and strengthen friendships and establish a place within of a group of friends, all particularly important during the transition to university.   One of the participants referred to this period as "window of opportunity", to bond, make friends and become part of a group. During this transitory period and, because of this perceived "window of opportunity", the fear of missing out is amplified as the stakes of not going out and not joining in are perceived to be much higher.

This chapter explores the relationship between FoMO and alcohol during this transitional period and begins with an overview and analysis of how students

expressed this in the interviews. Following this is an explanation of the concept of

Fear Missing Out and a brief overview of research relating to this. Although current

research focuses predominantly on social media use, comparisons can be made to

assist in explaining FoMO in relation to other phenomenon, and here, in relation to

alcohol consumption which has to date has only been explored in one study (Riordan

et al, 2015) and at the time of writing one unpublished study. I then go on to discuss

how FoMO relates to research to literature discussed in chapters two and three. As

with the theme of Belonging, there were two sub-themes relating to FoMO and I

provide some discussion relating to these. Again, I have chosen to focus

predominantly on the theme of FoMO in the main analysis and to go on to discuss

these two sub-themes in order to maintain flow and coherence.

7.2. Interviews

Lisa: Analysis and reflection

> *Lisa: "Um yeah, definitely I wanted to as well but like the every night thing…. a night off probably would have been nice. It was hard in the first week because you don't want to stay in and cos everyone's still like making friends and like and bonding so if everyone's going out and doing something you're not really like "ooh I'm, going to stay at home" (mimicking voice) because you don't want to miss out on that bonding time"*

I assumed, when Lisa spoke about the relentlessness of going out, it involved drinking

but she did not initially drinking this so I felt it was important to clarify this;

> **"Was it was it just going out and drinking, did you go out and not drink or was there always alcohol?"**
>
> *"In the first week there was always alcohol involved like but not so much now*

"Ok, right so you say the first week and did that continue for little bit?

"Yea it definitely continued a little while on but it's slowed down a lot now

When she talks about the need for a "night off" I get the sense here of the relentlessness of not just going out but also the relentlessness of drinking. She says that the going out slowed down somewhat after the first few weeks but I got the impression there was definitely still a pull to go out but one which had started to create a dilemma for her.

> *"Yeah I probably do go out more than I should but it's not like, well obviously there's a part of me that does want to go but there's a part of me that "oooh if I go out today I am not going to like do my assignment tomorrow, but I usually end up going out (laughs)"*

Here, is evidence of the way in which Lisa is caught between wanting to go out and not wanting to miss out but also having an awareness of the impact this on her, and she talks about the impact on her academic work.

I was interested to know more about her perception that she felt she adjusted quickly and we discussed this further in the second interview.   She said she felt it was definitely to do with being in halls, which made it easier to make friends. She re-iterated how the drinking helped with bonding and that in those first weeks there was a pressure to go to everything in order not to miss out. She said it was in part being in halls and partly the drinking and that it might have been more difficult or taken longer without the drinking

> *"The drinking helped um yes definitely. I think it would have happened eventually, making friends but it was just really nice, it err made things easier*

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The going out, bonding and making friends could potentially happen without the drinking but here it is all part of it and during the interview Lisa talks about the role of alcohol in increasing her confidence. Lisa is not necessarily concerned about missing out on drinking but missing out on an event of which alcohol is a part.

Lisa: Further analysis and reflection

The fear of missing out is overt in some narratives and more subtle in others. In Lisa's story FoMO, it is very apparent. Early on, she talked about experiencing anxiety in her late teens for which she had received support to help develop strategies to cope. I asked her if she was worried about this anxiety affecting her when she went to university. She talked about "getting adjusted" quite quickly which she attributed both to having her cousin living in the same city as the university and making friends quickly. It does appear that making friendship and becoming part of a friendship group happened quickly and easily for Lisa but the manner in which Lisa recounts the process is interesting. In the previous chapter, I included an excerpt where Lisa talks about the process of making friends in the first few weeks. She describes this in such a way that it sounds as if everything slotted in to place automatically, with very little effort and over a very short space of time.

It was only after identifying the FoMO theme and reflecting on the interview that I wondered if the manner in which she talked about her experience (which I recounted in the previous chapter) in the first few weeks perhaps reflected how she felt about the actual experience. In the telling the of the "story" she does not include every detail and is clearly giving a summary of events and it is quite possible some very relevant elements are missed out. "One criterion, of course, is whether a life story "covers" the

events of a life. But, what is coverage? Are not omissions also important?" (Bruner, 2004:693). The description she gives is of who was in the flat and how different groups formed. It is a synopsis, a summary, making something that happened, quite possibly over a three or four week period, look like it happened quickly and easily. It leaves out all the details, many of which will be fo*rgotten, such as the conversations, the concerns about what others are thinking, the dilemmas about which girls she likes and those she does not, her worries, fears and so on. Starkly, it leaves out any mention of drinking despite the fact that later discussions indicate that alcohol was integral to this process. It suggests that the drinking was not the most important aspect here, making friends was the most important aspect and alcohol is something that is part of, and which aids that process. What was most striking about this description was the speed at which she described the process. It seemed to mirror the sense of urgency, discussed in the previous chapter, which all the students alluded to, and that was to make friends quickly. It indicated perhaps the way as much as possible was crammed in to a short space of time, that nothing should be missed, because missing out on anything, whatever was going on, meant running the risk of missing out on being part of the group. Of course, Lisa is just trying to provide a synopsis, perhaps because she is aware it is a time-limited interview, so, of course, bits will be missed out, but it does seem interesting that she has omitted any possible difficult bits, the feelings of what it was like. This is in contrast to Anna's story in which she is more candid about how difficult it was.

What Lisa provided was a snap shot with large sections missed out which belie the "effort" that was put in to making and developing those friendships. I use the word "effort" not to imply that it was particularly arduous, or even that it had been a

conscious "effort", but just to indicate that there is almost a relentlessness about the process and Lisa refers to this relentlessness and how important it is in relation to not missing out;

Mike: Analysis and reflection

When I first identified the FOMO theme, I felt Mike's story conflicted with this theory. However, I realised there was a reason Mike was able to resist "going with the crowd" and not worry about missing out on opportunities to bond with other first year students and this was because his friend from college was in the same flat. Whilst Lisa was keen to bond with the people in her flat and go along with everything everyone else was doing in order to not be left out, Mike is able choose to opt out of those things he is less keen on as he has someone he has already bonded with to do the things that interest him.

> *"I wondered, if your friend hadn't been there how you would have felt, do you think you would have felt more left out but still resisted joining everyone else or ended up going along with the crowd?*
>
> *"I would have resorted to going along with the crowd which would have left me considerably unhappier I believe. Because of how much poorer I would have ended up and I would have been having the worst of times on these nights out.*

Although he says this in hindsight and it is not possible to know what he actually would have done, it is clear from his response he is aware that not going out means, "missing out". Even though he feels it would be the "worst of times" on these nights out it seems a better option than not going and ultimately being left out. It is not possible to know whether he would have been drawn in to the "heavy drinking" that happens on

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these nights. Although he says he is a "lightweight" there may have been more pressure to drink more in this situation. Mike's concern about missing out is similar to Lisa's. It is not necessarily about missing out on a good time but missing out on being part of a group.

Mike: Further Analysis

Drinking seems to be far less important for Mike who classes himself as a "lightweight".   In the first few weeks he actively avoided the nights out which involve heavy drinking, in effect running the risk of being left out. He did not want to go along with the crowd and chose not to. Initially, it appears Mike's fear of missing out is not strong enough to force him to go along with doing things he is not interested in doing and he resists going along with the crowd. I wondered if his description of his first week as the "worst week ever" was in part about feeling that he was missing out. Even though he had chosen to not go along with the crowd because he did not like the heavy drinking this would involve he was still missing out on being part of the group.

Anna: Analysis and reflection

Anna's story highlights the way in which drinking motivations are multi-layered and overlapping but FOMO, in relation to drinking, was very apparent within her narrative and she even referred directly to "a fear of missing out", saying, "I'm very scared I am going to miss something". Although she was very open, there were still elements of her story regarding FoMO that I felt merited further clarification. Anna talks about the use of Social media and here it shows how it links with both social media and alcohol;

"(b)ut in this kind of society while we are judging each other all the time, where we all have to be perfect and all your posting on social media "I've been out here and I've been out with this friend" it's really difficult for people like "no I don't want to drink" it's like the more you drink, the more you go out and the more popular you are these days and like aaah it's really difficult to break.

"Is there ever a time when you feel like you would like not to be drinking but you feel like you just have to go along with it".

"I think there's been a couple of times, yeah the things that drive me to do that is a fear of missing out so I'd be sat in the flat…so this has happened 3-4 times I'd be like I'm very scared I am going to miss something. I've been like I just want to stay in tonight I just want to chill and then they've been like come on Anna, you're going to miss out, like they don't even have to say something and I'm like they're going to have a really good time and I am going to see pictures of them later on and I'm like I think to myself that's so bad for me to be thinking oh I need to be with them otherwise people are not going to think I am having a good time at uni and I think oh I should go because I should be having the student experience, and it's only happened once, but then I go and I think "why am I here" and I leave early and I've kind of been like I don't want to miss out on things and then gone and realised it's not even worth going but now I am just kind of sticking to what I want and staying in there is no point in trying to please anyone else".

Anna clearly outlines her concerns here about the consequences of not going out. Her fears, worries and anxieties are very apparent. Alongside worrying about missing out on the event she is also worried about what people might think of her that people might think she is not having a good time and presumably a concern this may jeopardise friendships. She talks about wanting to go along with the crowd and wanting to stay in. She says "it's only happened once" and I think here she means she has only not gone out once. At the end of the paragraph she says she has realised it is not worth going along with crowd and she talks about sticking to what she wants. However, her words "I am just kind of sticking to what I want" imply she is not always doing this. I sense here this is wishful thinking and, that having the strength to not go with the crowd, is something she aspires to rather than something she regularly

practices.   I asked her if she felt there was pressure and her answer indicates that it is not really about pressure from other people but perhaps more self- inflicted pressure.

Anna also talks about not wanting to miss out on the student experience saying, "I should be having the student experience". My assumption here is that her expectation of the student experience is that students go out a lot and drink.   So not only is Lisa worried about missing out on bonding she is worried about missing out on a particular experience. This links with discussions in the previous chapter around expectations not being met and I think FoMO relates to directly to this because it is about a perceived idea, or expectations about what one is missing out on rather than what is actually being missed out on.

> *"I don't think there is any pressure to, I just think people think it's normal to drink so it's difficult to kind of get out of habit if you kind of feel out of place it's kind of easy for people who well it's not easy but for people who are a lot more independent or who don't care what people think".*

She says that not going along with what everyone is doing means you run the risk of being left out and "left behind" and provides an example of what she believes might be the consequences of not joining in which in the case below means dropping out of university.

> *"Yeah yeah, fully like initially if you don't initially get involved at uni then you get left behind".*
>
> *"The girl that I lived with initially, she was like coming out with us but not as much she was like coming out to socialise and then she fell off and then she wasn't kind of the social group and then she left because she wasn't enjoying it anymore …..and I think you have to be constantly involved otherwise you risk being isolated, like isolating yourself from the group which is a really scary prospect"*

Anna's use of the word "scary" is particularly notable and serves as confirmation that the fear of missing out is a real one that for some students is perceived as having serious consequences.

Sam: Analysis and reflection

However at one point he does refer to missing out and actually uses the term "fear of missing out"

> *"Just if there is a whole group of people going out it is just the fear of missing out thing really, and I guess that's to be included.*

He is not referring to himself here. He is just highlighting the possibility that one could be left out or excluded. Sam tends to talk very generally about drinking perhaps providing answers about why he thinks people drink rather than why he does. Sam switches between talking in the third and first person. I interpret this as him wanting to ensure that what he says is not construed as being specific to him. In chapter 8, I discuss the way in which people may "defend" when talking about their drinking in order for it not to be judged a problematic and I consider this to be an example of this.

Sam shows an awareness of the consequences of missing out indicating that he has experienced this to some level, perhaps at college or that it is something he is aware may happen when he leaves home to go to university to do his degree. I would have liked to have discussed this further with him in a second interview but did not manage to get a second interview so was unable to this.

Sam: Further analysis

Sam, on the whole shows the least concern about missing out in relation to drinking and university but this is not surprising considering his course is only one year, he still lives at home and maintains contact with friends from school and college. He has the option of going along with the crowd or not, he can take or leave it. He is not concerned about missing out on going to new places as he is already familiar with the places the students want to go to. "I didn't really have many expectations because I was from XXX I had been to a lot of the clubs that had hosted these events before". He also talked about socialising more in the area where he lives rather than coming in to the city and again this confirms he has friendships locally so he has options to stay local or go in to the city, an option students who have moved away from home would not have. Consequently, he shows little concern about missing out on what students on his course are doing. He is not particularly invested in the group so does not feel the need to go along just so he does not miss out.

Rianna: Analysis and reflection

FoMO is much less apparent in Rianna's story. As she didn't drink very much before she came to university her story is more about the way in which she is introduced to drinking and how although initially a bit scared of drinking how it becomes the norm. She says as time went on she began to enjoy drinking and the "buzz" it gave her. It was difficult to ascertain from the first interview the role of FoMO however, she did say;

> *"As the year goes on we don't go out as much so when people do go out I want to go as well cos I don't want to be left out"*

This does not relate directly to the transition to university and there was not much in

Rianna's story directly about any fears about missing out and when I interviewed her

the second time I had not identified FoMO as a theme. However, as she had talked

about being left out I asked her more about this. I asked her about her worries about

being left out and whether this meant she went out more often and, as a consequence

drank more often.

> *"I don't really think so, um not really. I think I got a taste for it, drinking, so it was probably me saying lets go out, I liked drinking and so now it is often me who organises things. But, it might be a bit, not so much that I am missing out on what other people are doing, just missing out on seeing people and having a good time".*

> *"Well in the first few weeks there was just so much going on and you just wanted to go to everything. It was great but exhausting too and this was partly because it was about drinking so that adds to the tiredness because you are drinking and staying up later and feeling rubbish the next day. But in a way you had to go to everything because it was a bit of a window of opportunity to do things and meet people and get to know people".*

With Rianna, there is no indication that she is going along with things in order not to

miss out. It appears to be the opposite, as she says she is the person who organises

everything. She said "I think I got a taste for it, drinking, so it was probably me saying

lets go out, I liked drinking and so now it is often me who organises things"   It seems

she is organising things so there are plenty of drinking opportunities but also maybe

plenty of "bonding" opportunities too.

Riana: Further Analysis

FoMO in Rianna's story is far more complex, however it is possible her need to

organise "going out" is in part about creating opportunities so there is never any

danger of missing out in that, if you are the organiser, you are not going to get left out.

I note her use of the term "window of opportunity".   This somewhat parallels the

suggestion by Palmer et al (2009) that there is a six to eight period of adjustment.

Somehow viewing it as a window of opportunity places a sense of urgency as there is a

time limit on making friends. This no doubt adds a huge amount of pressure and

potentially exacerbates this worry about being left out.

Lucy: Analysis and reflection

> *"Um well, it's better than staying behind err being on my own left out. I mean if I don't go then it's like missing out on what is happening and then they talk about it the next day and I am not part of that..   um so then you have sort of missed out on the night and then the talking about what happened the next day, usually they are about someone being outrageous or silly, or been sick".*

In the second interview, I asked Lucy more about this. I asked what she felt would

happen if she missed out on the night and the conversations the next day

> *"Well nothing really I suppose, I would just feel left out but then I suppose maybe I am worried they will think I am boring, or that I don't want to be friends with them (pause) um yes that I won't be part of the group.*
>
> ***"So you feel you have to go along to be part of the group"***
>
> *"Um yes, um I mean I don't think I wouldn't be part of the group just that if I didn't go all the time it would get harder".*

By the time I came to interview Lucy a second time the FoMO theme had begun to

emerge and I was able to ask her about this.

> ***"The Fear of Missing Out came across in most of the interviews and you talked about not wanting to miss out on not being part of the group. I think it is really relevant as in the first term as you point out if you don't go out, you miss out on bonding time. Do you think this is something that is relevant to you".***

"Fear of missing out for me personally has always been a massive issue. I don't have much will power to stop myself from going out as I feel people will be enjoying themselves more and I'll then regret not going afterwards. It's always in the back of my mind "what if this is the best night and everybody always reminisces about it and they talk about how good it was and I wasn't there. For me it's even more so about the aftermath. If you didn't go and then whoever did talks about it loads afterwards then it's something you can never relate to and it becomes almost like an inside joke you're not let in on and you'll always wish you went. That's even if it wasn't that great of a night, it's all about how much it's talked about afterwards which is quite shallow come to think of it".

Being able to ask her about this in the second interview was useful as it meant I was able to feedback what had emerged from some of the other interviews but also to feedback to her what she said and to check with her what she meant. Lucy really opened up about this. It was almost as though hearing it back confirmed something to her that this was something that was going on. It was also interesting that she suggested it was "shallow". In hindsight, I wish I had asked her about this as, rather than it being shallow, it appears to be almost a necessary part of making friends, that is needed in order to fit in.

Lucy: Further Analysis

Lucy does not feel like she fits in and the group does things she is not particularly interested in but she goes along anyway. Lucy and Anna recount similar reasons for going along to a social event. Anna says she goes because she thinks it might be the best night ever that she misses out on, and also that there will be stories the next day that she will miss out on. However, Lucy is worried is worried about missing out on the stories the next day but only because she feels it will help her get on better with everyone else. These social events referred to, involve drinking, as both of them mention the stories the next day which, seem to relate to drunken behaviour. I asked

Lucy if the night out was just going to the pub and having a few drinks would she have felt like she missed out any more than one that maybe involved going to a club or a night that involved lots of drinking. She said these nights were the ones she preferred and although they sometimes did only have a few drinks the inevitably became "drunken nights" and therefore not going meant potentially missing out.   These were the nights where she felt most comfortable. However, both Lucy and Anna refer to missing out on conversations the next day. The drinking enables them to do things they would not normally do, it enhances the night, and therefore makes for good stories the next day and it seems for Anna and Lucy this seems to be a concern. Not only is there the potential of missing out on a good night you are then not party to the discussions the next day which in effect means you are left out. Whilst missing one night out may not result in being ostracised from the group there is perhaps a concern that if this happened regularly it jeopardises a stake in the group.

7.3. Discussion

FoMO is a new term, only fairly recently added to the Oxford English Dictionary (Huffington Post, 2013) and Mariam Webster dictionary (Time Magazine, 2016). It "refers to the uneasy and often all-consuming sense that friends or others are having rewarding experiences from which one is absent" (Riordan et al, 2015:1). Riordan et al (2015) suggest it is unclear at what point the term "Fear of Missing Out" came in to common usage and whilst initially used mainly within the media it has only recently started gaining attention in academic research. They suggest the term may have originated from an article written in 2004 in the Harbus, a newspaper produced by the

Harvard Business School. However, Boston, a magazine for the City of Boston, suggested it was coined by marketing strategist, Dan Herman in 2000 (Herman,2000) but took another decade to appear in common usage (Schreckinger, 2014). Regardless of its origins, Przybylski (2013) and Riordan et al (2015) suggest, as a concept, it is not new, having its roots in Self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan,1985).

In 2013 Przybyliski et al conducted research regarding FoMO in relation to social media use and pointed out that, "(D)espite increased interest in and writing about FoMO, it is noteworthy that very little is empirically known about the phenomenon" (Przybyliski et al, 2013:1841). Since 2013 however there has been an increase in research into FoMO, most of which relates to the use of social media and the way in which increased opportunities to stay connected with people, through social media, have ironically led to feelings of anxiety about missing out. There is very little research relating to FoMO and other phenomena. One study, Adam's et al (2017), explores FoMO in relation to lack of sleep in students.   Research regarding FoMO and alcohol is scant, indeed an article in NCADD (2015) suggests there has been only one study, conducted by Riordan et al (2015), regarding the relationship between FOMO and drinking.

Przybyliski et al (2013) designed the FoMO scale based on 10 questions scored on a Likert Scale. (see appendix) . What is interesting about the questionnaire is that only one question relates directly to social media. So, in principle the questionnaire could be used, or adapted to be used, for research in other areas such as alcohol consumption. FoMO then could be a useful theoretical concept through which to understand human behaviour in relation to a variety of phenomena.

Przybyliski et al's (2013) research was conducted in three stages, the first two used a wide range of ages, ethnicity and socio-economic background but in the third stage of the study used first year students particularly in relation to Facebook use, distractions in class and distractions whilst driving. They found that media forums such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat provide a way of keeping in touch, connected and to up to date with what other people are doing. However, they suggest, for individuals who tend to be more anxious and who suffer from feelings of missing out, social media sites can feed in to this anxiety and lead to a vicious circle. The more one is concerned about missing out the more one is compelled to constantly check updates, the more one sees the rewarding experiences people appear to be having and the more one feels left out.

An interesting aspect of the study of FoMO in relation to the use of the social media is that findings are showing that the use of social media provides people with an alternative to face to face socialising which as Turkle (2011) suggests can be both negative and positive. She advances the position that technology-mediated communication carries positive as well as negative influences. She also explores a number of case studies and outlines general conditions under which digital communication mediums can undermine self-reflection and ultimately degrade well-being. She argues the "tethered self" provided by always-on communication technologies can distract us from important social experiences in the here-and-now. Whilst research raises concerns that FoMO, in relation to social media use, results in a reduction in face to face social experiences the converse appears to be the case in

relation to FoMO in relation alcohol consumption where it encourages physical social interaction.

Another study conducted by Adam's et al (2017), who interviewed 15 first year students from USA universities regarding lack of sleep during the first year at university, identified FoMO as a theme. They found that students were sacrificing sleep because of a fear of missing out, suggesting "that the lure of socializing was so strong that students often missed out on sleep because something fun or important *might* happen" (Adam's et al 2017:343).

> "'if your roommate's up or like there's people talking in the hallways … you feel like you shouldn't be asleep'. Another participant responded, 'Everyone else is staying up, [so] you want to stay up later'. And similarly, 'When you go to bed, you could be, like, awake with your friends and, like, be doing other things" (Adams et al 2017:343)

Their finding here is perhaps not particularly surprising, but highlights how the drive to make connections and not miss out is strong. It provides additional evidence to support the relevance of FoMO in relation to first year students and particularly relevant to students transitioning to university where the consequences of missing out are heightened.

Adams et al (2017) provide further similar accounts such as students who do not go to bed because they want to join others who have decided to watch a movie. One student explained even though she had seen the movie before and was not that interested in it, that it was not about seeing the movie but about the socialising and "not missing out" on what happened whilst they are watching it. This is perhaps not that different from what some of the students in my study were saying about going out and drinking. Even though they indicated they would have liked a night off they

went along with it anyway, just like these students who will watch a film again just to be part of something.

> "We found it interesting that very few attributed lack of sleep to homework or academics. In fact, most participants described how they attempted to schedule in homework and 'get it done' so they could socialize. Some respondents reported how staying up late socializing led to exhaustion in the afternoon. So, when he got home from classes, they fell asleep only to wake early in the evening to socialize" (Adam's et al 2017:342)

Adam's et al (2017) discuss how relevant FoMO is in the early stages of becoming a student and here they refer to emerging adulthood which relates to concepts discussed in chapter two about belonging and liminality;

> "As college students engage in the process of identifying new peer groups, it may be anxiety provoking to be the first person to disengage from the group by deciding it is time to go to sleep. First-year students may not want to appear disinterested in their new friends and therefore overcompensate by over-engaging and setting few boundaries on their time. In this study, FoMO was so strong that they had difficulty 'unplugging' from each other both in person and through technology. Participants felt that they 'shouldn't sleep' because they might miss something important. As emerging adults develop mature relationships characterized by increased separation, independence and distance from peers, they may be more able to unplug from peers, engage in self-care, and feel secure in the fact that their friends will still be present in their lives. (Adams et al 2017:6)

Another interesting finding from their research related to a student who lived off campus who said she felt less pressure to socialise and therefore found there was less disruption to her sleep. "She alluded to the FoMO phenomenon, but explained how being physically removed from the residence hall social life allowed her to resist the temptation to stay awake." (Adams et al 2017:4). This may not be the case for all students living off campus, and provides only one perspective of living off campus, but Adams et al (2017) defend this by arguing their research provides snapshots of individuals' experiences providing an opening for further research.

It is worth pointing out at this stage that Adam et al's (2017) research is conducted in the USA and there is no mention of alcohol in their research. This is no doubt because the research is concerned with exploring reasons for students missing out on sleep and students are not asked about their drinking or how it relates to missing out on sleep. In addition, as the legal drinking age is 21, unlike their UK counterparts, their social lives are less likely to revolve around going out to clubs or pubs. However the research explored in chapter three provides evidence of the prevalence of illicit, underage drinking amongst university students in the USA, so whilst it is of course possible that alcohol plays no role in the lives of the students in Adam et als (2017) study it seems unlikely. This difference in culture and legal drinking age makes comparisons difficult. However, my intention here is not to make comparisons, just to point out how the research highlights the importance of "bonding time". It shows how students are prepared to be sleep deprived in order not to miss out in much the same way that the students I interviewed are prepared to sacrifice a "night off" (Lucy) from socialising and drinking, or to go out night after night even though it's "horrible" (Lisa). Adam et al's (2013) study shows that, for these students, socialising was paramount and took priority over sleep and academic work.

There seems to be a close link between the concept of FoMO and those of "belonging" and "bonding" explored in the previous chapter. With the students I interviewed, drinking appeared to be a key component of being part of a group but some also talked about ending up going out drinking when they had either decided they were going to stay in or when they really just didn't want to go out because they did not want to miss out. The role of alcohol in FoMO is complex, it is not necessarily the fear

of missing out on drinking, although this may be an element of it. What seems to be of importance is not wanting to miss out on something or an event that might be "good" (which invariably involves alcohol consumption) and not wanting to miss out on conversations the next day which are generated generally as a result of behaviour driven by drinking. Missing out on both of these lead to a fear of missing out on bonding opportunities and therefore a place in the group.

There is little research relating to FoMO and drinking but there does seem to be a connection. Przybyliski et al (2013) suggest "future research should examine FoMOs' place among a wider nomological web of constructs" (Przybyliski et al, 2013:1847) and this could include alcohol. I would not propose that FoMO is what drives students to consume alcohol, just that it is part of the picture alongside other motivations for drinking. Rather than attempting to pinpoint a single reason why people drink it is useful to build a picture of what is happening in particular circumstances. In the case of the transition to university and drinking FoMO appears to be a relevant component.

The following provides a brief overview of the limited research relating to either FoMO and alcohol or FoMO and the transition to university which provides some evidence of the potential importance of the link between FoMO, drinking and the transition to university.

Riordan et al (2015) claim, that to date, their "study is the first to establish a link between FoMO and alcohol related consequences in college students" (Riordan et al, 2015:7). Indeed, it seems to be the only published study relating to FOMO and alcohol although a more recent study, unpublished study has been conducted (see below). Their study was conducted in New Zealand using questionnaires, with over 400

hundred students. Their research focussed on the fear of missing out and alcohol use

with a view to seeing how it was connected to negative-related consequences. They

hypothesised that FoMO would result in greater risk taking and following their

research speculated "FoMO results in greater risk taking, greater social sensitivity, and

possibly a greater need to belong" , however, future research will need to test these

mediating constructs explicitly" (Riordan et al 2015:7)

A more recent, unpublished, piece of research, Al Abri (2017), regarding the link

between FoMO and alcohol has been conducted as part of a dissertation in the USA at

the time of writing this was not published however it is further evidence which

supports my findings.   The main objectives of this dissertation were to

> 1) extend previous research on the general fear of missing out (FOMO) by
> investigating the effects of perceived peripherality, the need to belong, and
> fear of social exclusion, 2) develop and validate a self-report measure of
> alcohol-related FOMO, and 3) assess the role of alcohol-related FOMO in
> increasing binge drinking intentions through mediating the effect of alcohol
> positive expectancies, reducing alcohol negative expectancies, and enhancing
> susceptibility to peer norms". Al Abri (2017)

I mentioned earlier that the Fear of Missing out does not just relate to missing out on

the actual act of drinking and the night out but the fear of missing out on the

conversations the next day. The conversations the following day are every bit as

important, if not more so, than the actual event. This is not to say that people do not

have conversations the day following a night out where no alcohol is consumed, it is

just that the consumption of alcohol creates a different kind of story or conversation.

This is highlighted in other research, not specifically about the transition to university

but about students and drinking.   It is the stories about what people did whilst

intoxicated that seem to be of significance in helping strengthen the feeling of being part of the group. Griffin et al (2009) suggest that, "stories from the culture of intoxication are constructed as a route to inclusion within student life, but also as providing material for that social life" (Griffin et al, (2009:463). Their research, using focus groups, one of which involved university graduates, highlighted the way in which experiences from the night before, such as passing out in toilets provided "banter" for the next day. One of the students they interviewed said they felt almost like they had to get drunk in order to be able to share funny stories the following day. They also said there was a need to have done something stupid implying that when drunk people behave in a particular way that provides material for the following day. Another student said that in the first year they felt they did not get on with their flat mates because they did not get involved in the drinking and therefore felt separated from the. This was because they could not get involved in conversations about what happened the night before. Niland et al (2013) talk about how the going out is important but so too is the sharing of stories the following day both in person and through Facebook.   "Dave = Like your mates come out on like a Saturday night. You know like the next day you've sort of got those stories = Alex =Sunday morning yarn is a good one "Niland et al (2013:533). Workman and Workman (2001) note how drinking stories allow individuals to confirm the existence of a collective and also, to confirm that position of oneself within the group.   Fjaer (2012) suggests that the day after a party, emotions and the events are transformed into symbols and that through this the party lasts into the next day. Thus, the socialising and bonding does not end with the event but continues in to the next day and very likely beyond that too.

A few of the participants talked about not wanting to miss out on the "banter". Lucy

says she does not want to miss out on "talking about what happened" and usually this

means talking about "someone being outrageous or silly, or been (sic) sick". The main

concern then appears to be missing out on something that has happened as the result

of someone behaving badly, or embarrassingly, because they have had too much to

drink. Although most nights might not result in such behaviour there seems to be a

pressure to go along just in case something happens. It seems that for Lucy it would be

difficult to hear everyone "reminisce" about it and it being an "inside joke that you're

not let in on and you'll always wish you went".

In the second interview with Lucy she provides a goods summary of the experience

describing how the experience can be fun but is not always fun, and that because it

appears that everyone else is having a great time there is pressure to be seen to be

having a great time also.

> *"Sometimes I am, well I am enjoying some of it um like I like my course and I do*
> *have good times but it is just everyone says it is going great and sometimes*
> *everyone else seems to be having a good time. So I feel like, well I think that I*
> *wonder if they really are like you can't be that up all the time can you? So I*
> *wonder is it just me that's struggling or are they just pretending"*

Chapter 8 Findings: "Good" and "Bad" drinking

8.1. Introduction

The findings explored in this chapter do not relate specifically to drinking motivations and the transition to university and in that respect deviate from the original research aim, but are significant nevertheless. The narratives reflect the binary oppositions of "good" and "bad" drinking with students talking about the pleasure and fun aspect of drinking but also about feeling guilty and "bad" either about having fun or drinking too much. They are also relevant because they provide evidence of the value in using a research method that uses unstructured interviews, allowing what is relevant and significant to emerge and one that acknowledges the way in which people defend. In relation to this, I demonstrate how each of the participants were keen to show their drinking was not problematic. Finally, the findings show an awareness of health messages relating to alcohol consumption and that these are not necessarily taken on board.

The first section of this chapter provides an overview and analysis of the narratives and how the findings outlined above emerged. It then goes on to provide further discussion relating to these findings and discussion about the way in which this theme emerged unexpectedly.

8.2. Interviews

Lucy: Analysis and reflection

In the first interview, Lucy focused a lot on friendships. She talked about never quite

fitting in and that, despite having friends at university, she feels different from them.

A major reason for drinking seemed to be about making it easier to fit in. I wanted to

get a better understanding of this and followed it up in the second interview. I said

that I got the impression drinking played a role in helping her get on with people,

making it easier to fit in. She agreed with this but then went on to say that she felt it

was more than that, that it was also about enjoying drinking and how it makes her feel

but she then expressed some guilt about this

> *"Um lots of different reasons I think. Mainly I really like it. I like the feeling you*
> *get when you first have a drink sort of light headed and it relaxes all your*
> *muscles and you just sort of feel happy. It's nice to get really drunk*
> *sometimes… um I know that's a really bad thing to say ….like just silly drunk so*
> *you can act differently be outrageous But it is bad as I usually regret it the next*
> *day, like the hangover and also the worrying about what I did and said".*

A motivation here for Lucy is that she likes the way drinking makes her feel. That it

makes her feel happy and able to relax. However, she expresses guilt about it too. She

says, "it's nice to get drunk" but then follows it up with, "that's a really bad thing to

say". It is not clear whether she feels guilty about how she feels the following day or

about enjoying it. I ask her about this in the follow up interview;

> ***"So it is nice to get drunk but you seem to be saying that is a bad thing and***
> ***also that you regret (pause) regret getting drunk, regret it the next day?"***
>
> *"(Laughs). Well yes, I do regret it. Every time I say I won't do it again but I*
> *always do. The trouble is I like it at the time. I really like how it makes me feel*
> *and then I want to drink more, it's like when you start it is hard to stop. So, if I*
> *could stop at three or four then that would be good but it always seems a good*

idea at the time to go on. Um and um yes you said about how I said it's nice to get drunk and it is but um well yes it is nice but I suppose I feel it is bad to get too drunk so I feel bad the next day".

(laughs) So you feel bad but it is not bad enough to make you stop the next time?

"No, I wish it did (laughs). I end up feeling bad about it for a bit and I know it is not good for me, sometimes after a few days of drinking I feel awful and can tell I have had too much so I stop for a bit but it isn't long before I start drinking again. It is too difficult to not drink because everyone else is and also I do really like it…..um…but when I say stop I just mean that time er that night. I can stop I mean I do not drink all the time.

Lucy is clear here that even though she feels "bad" she is not going to stop drinking. Her response to my question as to whether the worry or guilt about drinking is likely to stop her from drinking is to laugh and say, "no I wish it did". There is may be an underlying desire to stop but she knows she will not stop because as she says she likes it and also everyone else is doing it. Although she does not overtly say it here, she seems to be pulled in two directions. Her use of the word "bad" implies there is some judgement. This may be her concerns about me judging her or consideration about wider judgement, or perhaps both. "Bad" seems to refer to both the practical impact of the hangover and the impact on health but also goes beyond this to a more moral concern of "good and bad" behaviour.   She says, "I wish I did" but she says this in a light hearted way and laughs and I feel the wish to do so is definitely not strong enough to result in her stop drinking. She makes it clear she has no intention of stopping. It seems the concern about health and/or her own moral judgment of her behaviour is not strong enough to make her stop. I noted when I transcribed the interview that we both laugh at this point and for me this felt a little bit like "banter" and perhaps a shared understanding about how it might be difficult to stop after one

or two drinks. The last part of the excerpt was interesting, as she seems to feel the need to add on that she is only referring to drinking too much on occasions rather than all the time.

Lisa: Further reflection

Later when I reflect on the interviews, I discuss whether I should have been more open about my experiences of drinking and if so, at this point, I may have agreed with Lucy in acknowledgement that it is easy for one to become many. I think my question about it not being bad enough to make her stop perhaps indicates an understanding about her dilemma but perhaps a more overt recognition of this from my own experience may have prompted further discussion. However, I am equally that doing so has the potential to change the dynamic of the interview. I am referring to the concept of positionality discussed in chapter 5 and I will discuss this in more detail when I reflect on this later in the chapter.

Rianna: Analysis and reflection

Rianna expresses guilt about drinking too much, but her reasons for feeling guilty are quite different from Lucy's and relate to something specific; her sister's accident and not letting her family down. She said she did not drink before she came to university and to begin with was reluctant to get drunk with the others, but as time progressed, she began to drink more.   She describes a particular incident that occurred in the first few weeks where she went out and got drunk and said she had a great time but it also made her feel guilty.

"It sounds like you had a good time? So how were you the next day?"

"Um well I felt ill the next day, I wasn't sick though and I felt guilty ..um um I felt that I shouldn't have drunk so much um um well I think I partly felt guilty that I had had a good time and that really I should be at university to learn but I also know that everyone else is doing the same and everyone says that's what you should be doing in freshers week. It did help me make friends I think but it was bad that I was getting drunk when my family were at home and my sister was ill".

Her feelings of guilt seem to be centred on her sister being ill and not being able to come to university. She feels she should be making the most of the opportunity and not getting drunk. Although this is connected with her sister, this ties in with this idea of good drinking and feeling guilty about having a good time

"My mum and dad don't really know I drink very much. I tell them that I do drink but I never tell them I get drunk. Um I don't think they would tell me off but I don't think it is something I want them to know. Um so I drink mostly to have fun I think but then I don't know cos as I said sometimes it is to help me get on with people um"

I talked to her in more detail about what she liked about getting drunk and why she liked drinking. I said she had said something about "when I am drunk I don't have to think about anything else" and I had not picked up on that in the first interview so in the second interview I asked her to tell me more about this.

"well I think I think about things too much really. Like I worry about sister and I think I was guilty about coming to university and worried that I wasn't good enough and that she never had the chance to come. When I get drunk it just makes me not think about those things. It is funny because in the first interview I said that I didn't drink very much but when I went away and really thought about it I realised that I do and that it is sort of to escape"

"So the discussion we had made you think about how much you drink and why, do you want to tell me more about that?"

"Well it's not that I drink all the time, or drink in the morning or anything like that. I mean er I don't have a problem, but I did realise that I drink more often than I thought. Like I will always go out when everyone is going out and we now drink in the flat quite a lot. I get really drunk about once a fortnight so it's

not that bad really but um um but yes then I do drink a lot which is really not good.

"Last time we spoke you mentioned drinking was a sort of escape?"

"Mmm yes, I think I just worry er (long pause)"

There was a long pause here and I felt Rianna perhaps did not want to talk about this further and I did not feel it was my place to push this.

Riana: Further Analysis

It is apparent from this narrative that Rianna's drinking motivations are multi-layered. She enjoys it and enjoys the feeling it gives her but she also has said it is a way of escaping her worries. She said the first interview made her think about how much she drinks. She says when she drinks too much she feels guilty but this seems to be more to do with the fact that she is having a good time rather than feeling guilty about drinking, or rather that this is a more pressing concern to her. It could be suggested that Rianna's "guilt" is tied up with her feelings about her sisters. She seems to be imply it is somehow wrong to be enjoying drinking. I wonder if she would feel the same guilt if she was enjoying something else, such as a sport and I will return to this idea of "acceptable pleasures" later in the discussion section of this chapter. She mentions that she does not tell her mum and dad how much she drinks. This is probably the case for most students but here this is probably tied up with her wanting them to see she is working and not wasting university as her sister did not have the opportunity.

As with several of the others, Rianna was keen to stipulate she did not have a problem "it's not that I drink all the time, or drink in the morning or anything like that. I mean

err I don't have a problem". She justifies only getting drunk once a fortnight by saying

it is not that bad but then follows this up by saying I do drink a lot which is really not

good, so there seems to be a contradiction in what she says here. She also, as the

other do compares her drinking with other people

> "Um well no I do drink now but I don't think I am a big drinker still well not compared
> with some of them"

Sam: Analysis and reflection

The first thing he talked about is how much he drinks and was keen to stress he isn't a

"big drinker" that he doesn't drink regularly and that it doesn't affect his health.   What

I found particularly interesting in his narrative was how he switches between first

person and third person.   He starts by talking about his own drinking then generalises

it.

> *"Started drinking in year 9 or 10….when was about 14. I wasn't really a big
> drinker, then I started at uni and I drank more. I wouldn't say it was a regular
> thing or that it affects my health though….. it's much more a social recreational
> thing……. I guess when you meet new people it is more a social recreational
> thing, I guess when you are 18, 19 it is good you can go out it seems to be
> something that is a lot more regular."*

Right from the start he is keen to stress that although he started drinking more at

university it is not a "regular thing" and does not affect his health. It seems he is keen

to stress that it not a problem, or in effect is saying, "I do not have a problem". He

justifies his drinking by stressing it is social and recreational rather than just getting

drunk for this sake of it. He is in effect making a judgment that social recreational is

"good" and getting drunk for the sake of it is "bad". So a clear demarcation here

between what he considers good and bad drinking.

There were a quite a number of silences in the interview and although I tried to leave these to allow Sam to lead I did find myself prompting him at times. I asked him generally about his family and he gave me some brief information about each of them but then focussed on their drinking also.

> *"My dad does…….not like a bad thing or anything. He just enjoys a few drinks when he gets home from work….. it's never like…….he just does it for the fun of it It's not something he does to take stress off, or abuses it. My mum only drinks if she has reason to…and then there is my sister and she is worse than me".*

This piece is revealing as there is huge amount of comparison going on here. There is also evidence of his belief in "good" types of drinking and "bad" types of drinking. There are also several contradictions in what he says. He is keen to stress his dad's drinking is "not a bad thing" and that he does not "abuse it". He is defending his dad here, as he does not what to imply that he has a problem in any way.   He also indicates that drinking because of stress might be a bad thing. There is an indication here of him trying to avoid some kind of judgement, which could be judgment by me or in general. However, I feel he is also reflecting wider attitudes towards alcohol and the judgment that different types of drinking provoke. He then says his sister is "worse than me". This again is reference to the idea of "good" and "bad" drinking. Drawing on social norms theory (Berkowitz, 2003) discussed later, it is usual to compare and in this way to justify ones drinking as unproblematic or less problematic. In relation to his sister, his use of the phrase "worse than" is interesting. In some ways it contradicts what he has said in that to be worse than implies that he considers his drinking may not always to fall within what he sees as acceptable limits and he has been keen to emphasise that he is not a big drinker. The intonation in his voice at this point almost comes across as if he is saying. "I might be had but she/he is worse than me" (my

words).   Finally, he says his mum only drinks if she has reason to and my assumption here (as I did not clarify this) was that this meant particular occasions/events. It was very interesting the way Sam compares how the family drinks almost ranking their drinking.   Not only does he defend against his own drinking being viewed problematically, he is keen to shown that his family does not have a problem either.

Towards the end of the interview I asked him about his expectations of the interview and he said he had thought about the transition thing and how interesting it was that you go from only being allowed to drink a bit, having to sneak around, to then suddenly being allowed. He then says that what comes with this is "responsibility". He says "It is just much easier to go and buy it and then there is the responsibility not to abuse it "Of course, Sam has not moved away but I am taking his reference here to mean not having to sneak around as meaning that once past 18 he has been given more freedom.

Sam then seems to be very mindful of the idea of limits to drinking and ensuring that drinking is within healthy limits.

> *"My attitude to drinking has changed as I have got older. It has always been like, see how much vodka you can drink because that was easiest to access when you are a kid. But now I enjoy it, I do it for the enjoyment rather than to just get drunk"*

His last sentence here implies that he did not particularly enjoy "getting drunk".

Which is particularly interesting as it contradicts some of the literature which suggests the getting drunk is about pleasure seeking and "fun".

I asked whether it is now rare that he "gets smashed" (his words).   He says it does not

happen very often and his reason for this is

>   "It's just a waste and you have nothing to show for it"

He goes on to explain the role that drinking now has in his life rather than getting

drunk for the sake of it.

>   **"**The actual act of drinking is something that's social, it's almost something to
>   talk over, like why do you drink coffee, like why do you go to a café, it's almost
>   like a meeting ground."

I mentioned at the start he often talked in the third person and he does so here. It is as

if this is an observation of a reason to drink rather than it being specifically about him.

>   **"So you don't necessarily do it for a buzz or anything like that"**
>
>   "Yeah, but I mean not all the time but if it's like my best friend's birthday I will
>   go out and get intentionally drunk, or my own birthday."
>
>   **"so you would need to have a reason to get really drunk. So for you your
>   normal reasons are to be sociable. It's interesting you compared it to coffee.
>   So you are not one of these people who wants to get out of it all the time**?"
>
>   **"**no, no"

Sam: Further reflection

I am conscious here that my line of questioning might seem a little judgemental.

Although I am seeking to clarify what he is saying it does feel as if I am questioning

what he says. My use of the words "one of those people" when listening back sounds

a little accusatory but I do not know if he considered it this way. He says "no" twice

and stresses the second as if both agreeing that he does not want to "get out of it" and

that he is "not one of these people".   I wonder whether subconsciously during the

interview that I feel he is protesting too much because I feel when I listen to the

interview that I am pressing him too much. I did however feel that Sam was trying to present a version of himself as a "sensible" drinker that he considers is more acceptable, either to me as "adult". I am reminded of the concept of Bion's liar here, discussed in chapter 5. Although I do not think Sam was deliberately trying to mislead me. Unfortunately, I was unable to have a second interview with Sam as this is something I would have liked to have explored further. This is complex and, as all of the participants did this to some extent, I return to this later in the discussion section.

Sam talked a lot about the health implications of excessive drinking and drinking responsibly. I wondered if he had given a lot of consideration to what he would talk about prior to the interview, or whether this was something he was generally concerned about or interested in. However, I did get a sense it was the former and that he was keen to show me that his drinking was not problematic and that he drank responsibly. This made me consider my position as researcher, lecturer, older adult, parent figure. Whilst I tried to ensure the interviews were conducted in a way that we could chat as equals and to show I was not there to "judge" it is difficult to avoid this dynamic. I did consider that Sam may have seen me as representing "authority" as he repeatedly, throughout the emphasised that his drinking was sensible and unproblematic. I did not manage to get a second interview with Sam, which was unfortunate as I would have liked to have explored this further. His narrative is full of references to amounts drunk (himself, his family and people in general). He seemed keen to separate what he seems to see as immature "getting drunk" when he was at school to a more mature approach to drinking.

After transcribing the interview, I listened back to it again without transcribing. This was the interview I struggled most with because, as I have said, there were many silences and I was conscious that discussions were not focussing on the transition to university and that there was this big emphasis on excessive drinking and health. I wanted to get a better understanding of whether I directed the conversation in any way. However, it was Sam who kept bringing the conversation back to amounts drunk and the issue of responsibility. Even when I asked him about his family, he focussed on the amounts they drank.

As I have said previously, whilst I had asked for participant who have left home to go to university, it became clear at the start of the interview this was not the case with Sam. Whilst I had initially felt this could have been a problem it ended up serving as comparison with the other participants and a way of checking whether differences between those leaving home and that of a student who has not yet experienced this. He does not appear to be experiencing the same sense of urgency to makes friends that the others feel and therefore alcohol does not play the same role. I did ask him if he considered his drinking might change once he went to university and he agreed it quite possibly would. I considered Sam's focus on comparing, on trying to show his drinking was not problematic, in trying to show that he drinks responsibly is the result of a mixture of things. When I reflected further on the interview, I considered that Sam's focus on excessive drinking and health issues was, in part perhaps about the power dynamics between us, but I also think that as he had not yet experienced leaving home and going to university, he just had less experience to draw on and talk about in relation to this.

Anna: Analysis and reflection

Anna's narrative highlights the complexities and "messiness" of drinking motivations.

In a few sentences she cites several motivations.

> *"at first…it's changed for me. At first it was "you're not allowed to drink, so I wanted to drink, that was the thing. Then it was kind of socially that is what is appropriate to do, like if you are going to a party it's appropriate to drink and it's appropriate to get quite drunk then at uni it's kind of like when now we, well like the first week it was I am a bit sad so I wanna kind of forget everything…..I think that can be a motivation quite a lot actually because um depression rates are really high in university students I know like a lot of people like when they are upset the way to deal with it is through drunk or like substance abuse, like a lot of friends, like I know that in me because after that break up I was like I was so drunk a lot of the time because I was trying not to think about it but then the reverse happens that when you get too drunk that's all you can think about and you get really upset and you can't control it and that's happened to a couple of my friends, but then it's also that we like doing it because it makes us happy like it's fun, like when we are going out, it's like just a fun addition"*

Her use of the word appropriate is interesting, again this idea of good and bad drinking.

She switches between first and third person here. When she talks in the third person, she is talking about the "bad" or "problematic" drinking thus distancing herself from this potential label. However, she then she clarifies this and admits that sometimes that this relates to her. She says lots of people drink when they are upset or depressed then acknowledges that this is what she did "I know that in me" and "I was so drunk….. I was trying not to think about it".   However she is quick to justify this as a one off, that it was about the break up. There is a dilemma in wanting to explain this is what she does but not wanting it to appear "bad" or that she has a problem. She then then reverts to it being about her friends or it being about "us". I feel she want to ensure that her motivation for drinking when upset is viewed in context and is viewed as

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"normal" as what everyone does. She talks about drinking to the point that "you can't control it and that's happened to a couple of my friends", again this is what can happen but not necessarily to me. She is distancing herself from and to show this is about the collective rather than it being just about her, or her drinking.   She finishes by pointing out that it is about fun and because it makes us happy which contradicts what she has just said. Anna outlines the whole range of drinking motivations in this section and the way she presents it emphases conflicting feelings towards it.   This conflict and denial continues;

> *"Then as well, having fun is the best part not like I need to get drunk all the time".*

I use the word denial here, not to accuse her of deliberately lying, again as I pointed out in Sam's narrative and Bion's notion of liar, it is an unconscious denial.

So she is in effect saying that drinking helps the social situation but I don't "need" to get drunk all the time, I am choosing to drink but I still have the choice therefore I don't have a problem I am not dependent on it. I am not suggesting here that what she says it not true but what is of interest is that she feels the need to say it. She needs to show she does not have a problem.

After this, she starts talking about health. Again, she changes from first to third person. She refers back to when she split up with her boyfriend.

> *"It's very easy to let your emotions drive and that happens a lot of time with people ….and I didn't care about my health……they do have….like there is so much awareness around uni like we get posters, and people coming around to do talks like "be careful" and in the university, when we go to the doctors it's always on the big screen like how much are you drinking, like how much should*

you have a week and they're always and when you sign up to the health service they ask you how much drink, and I have seen people who have gone in to kind of meetings about their alcohol intake like when they have been too crazy like when they have been put in a taxi home, like safety systems at the union like people being too sick, like the union contacting them about whether they want to come in and talk about it….which I think is a good thing"

She had said earlier during that period she was drinking to help her through the break up and here she says she did not care about what it was doing to her in terms of her health but she then starts talking very generally about how much information there about not abusing alcohol. However, in changing in to the third person distances herself from this.

"do you think these things make any difference? (I meant here the information in GP surgeries and health promotion information)".

"I am not sure. I think it would be..if you did have a drinking problem, like it would be really hard to acknowledge at this age because everyone's always drinking so do you have a problem or are you just being like fulfilling the norm of a student kind of like, well you're drinking every day, that's kind of abnormal but it's not like abnormal if you're a student?   So where do you draw the line between what is ok and what is healthy? It is like a bubble like you never get in to reality until you come home I think, that'll be the point when you realise because if you are in your house with your parents and you are drinking by yourself then that is a problem like but I don't know if it would be acknowledged or not…but I think it is good to have the awareness because I think people are more likely to dismiss…no this is just part….no everyone drinks every day but if they've got like people like "this is not good for you, like you should not be drinking this much even if people tell you should" (she does this in a telling off voice) there's a lot of peer pressure. It's not like direct peer pressure like people saying "you should drink" it's just kind of like everyone thinks it's the norm. I like have peer pressure without even realising of immediately like I have been think I should drink to fit in like."

Anna is almost having a debate with herself and the binaries of "good" and "bad" drinking are very apparent here. She is wrestling with the idea that on the one hand the idea that drinking, her drinking, is absolutely fine because it is what everyone else

does and then feeling there is a line that can be crossed in to drinking that is not fine. This also reflects the wider view of what is acceptable. I did not ask Anna how much she drinks, or even if she feels she drinks too much. However, she answers the question as if she expects me to ask this and, in a way that shows it is something she has given consideration to. She is in effect saying this is normal for a student, and therefore it is ok but by the standards of wider society it is not normal or acceptable but it is almost as if she feels she and other students are protected from the dangers because everyone is doing it.

In other parts of Ann's story, it is clear from what she says that she is sometimes the instigator of social activities, getting everyone together and drinking or going out and drinking. It is interesting she talks about peer pressure because I wonder to what extent this is the case and whether this is perhaps an excuse.

Throughout the interview Anna seemed to struggle with the idea of what constitutes problem drinking, stipulating that her drinking is not a problem but then questioning in a roundabout way whether or not it is. She then ends addressing this directly;

> *"I think I do think about this a considerable amount, I like to think I don't have a problem and I'm very wary about it as i know we live in a society where it is normalised. So you could say I'm both over cautious and in a way in denial as i drink lots and get very severe hangovers.*

> *"I don't consider myself a problem drinker at all. It's all about perspective and I think for some including myself it could take something major, health wise, to invoke a change in behaviour. This is mainly because dangerous alcohol levels and binge drinking are normal and being sick as a result is almost rewarded like a chunder chart- a chart documenting how many times we've all been sick due to alcohol it's almost scary as it is very, very dangerous.*

This part of the narrative indicates an internal debate she has with herself but raises the question about what people personally consider to be "problematic " use.

Mike: Analysis and Reflection

Mike, like Sam, talks about his family and compares their drinking

> *"My mum, she will only have a glass of wine on Christmas day. She gets drunk so easily. My dad is quite a frequent drinker. Yes, he is quite normal in that respect"*
>
> ***"interesting you say normal?"***
>
> *"Yes (we both laugh)"*

We laugh as if in there is some shared understanding that drinking frequently is "normal" and yet it drinking frequently could mean very different things. I asked "interesting you say normal" inviting him to clarify what he meant by normal but he did not take up the cue. In hindsight I wish I had but I wonder if at the time I did not feel it was appropriate to push this.

I have mentioned a number of times Mike's use of the word lightweight. He has come to the conclusion that this is the case because he compares his drinking with others. I will, as I have said discuss this later in the chapter in relation to Social Norms theory (Berkowitz, 2003).

> ***"cos I feel like I don't drink as much as others do…that's cos I am quite a lightweight"***

Whilst I had set out to avoid directly asking about amounts drunk, Mike and I ended up talking about this. I suppose in a way I was seeking clarification of his meaning of the term "lightweight" and I asked him if there were times when he got drunk or experienced getting drunk.

"yeah definitely…….Those places are where drinks were really cheap and I got really drunk because it was my only way to enjoy it because it was so bad…..almost like blotting it out?"

"there's this thing called the XXX bar where instead of doubles you get trebles and you get three trebles, so that's 9 units with a mixer and it's £5. I had three pints of beer at pre-drinks then one round of trebbles and then more in the club but I don't remember that" (we both laugh)

"I am not surprised"

"I was talking to a friend about our weekly limits and how bad it is. If I like go out two nights a week and have 2 pints three times a week not only am I going over the limit my body is not processing alcohol on two nights a week. And that is so bad".

"how do you feel about that"

"well it's bad and the guidelines were are completely not respecting them and just like we are just putting our drinking culture ahead of our health it is all about our social life"

"You say the word bad?"

"Yes… you worry about it but we are not going to change"

"Why …….do you not want to change?"

"Because I feel the benefit of my health I wouldn't put ahead of my social life. I would rather enjoy myself and my social life. Especially while I am at uni as you are paying all this money to get there and just sort of if you are just using it for the education side it is so much wasted because it is so much more…you are growing up as a person."

Mike, in contrast to Rianna talks about not wasting time at university just on studying, implying that being at university is about more than studying. Whereas Rianna, in contrast says she is there to study, and feels guilty about drinking.

Mike is very aware of messages about safe drinking limits and shows awareness that he is "not respecting" the guidelines. He classes himself as a lightweight and yet this contradicts his concerns about his drinking and the possible impact on his health. Although he says he drinks above the recommended number of units per week and, on

occasions, binge drinks, there seems to be a contradiction between his concerns about his drinking and how much he actually drinks.

As the interview began to draw to a natural conclusion, I asked Mike what he thought about it and whether he had any pre-conceived ideas about it. He said he was happy about it how had gone and that he liked the fact that it had been him guiding where it went rather than lots of questions which he said he felt would be him them telling me what he thought I would want to hear. I repeated what I had said at the beginning that it was about having no specific agenda. He then suddenly said that he had something he wanted to mention.

He says that he had talked about not really drinking much before he came to university but then went on to tell me a story about getting really drunk as a teenager. He then said that although he does not consider himself to be a big drinker that he does sometimes feel the need to "get drunk"

> *"it's like, it's quite dark. It's like alcohol is about getting drunk and forgetting about stress of university. Especially after a deadline cos you might have gone a few weeks without much drink"*

He says he feels that as he hasn't spent a lot on it in the previous weeks he is justified spending it in the pub"

> **"it is interesting what you said about it being dark"**
>
> *"yeah"* (he is does not pick up on my cue to elaborate)
>
> **"I am interested in the use of the word dark"**
>
> *"yeah I think because it sounds when you say it like that that it seems like it's a drinking problem but I don't think it is"*

He is worried about how this might appear so justifies it by saying he does not think this is a problem.

"no?....because it is a one off?"

"I feel like it is a one off and a big release of stress"

Again he seems to feel the need to justify it.

 "so there is a kind of trigger… is that what you are saying. There is almost this feeling of wanting to do it, abandon?"

"Err, yes. "

Mike: Further analysis

I consider it to be irrelevant to this research whether Mike's drinking is a problem,

either to him personally, or more widely. What is of relevance here is his need to

justify and defend what he does and emphasise there is nothing wrong with it, that

there is not a problem. Doing so is acknowledgement that particular behaviour attracts

moral judgement. It is also interesting that he chose to bring this up at the end. He

said he been considering talking about it but was not sure if it was relevant. I think he

held back because of the potential moral judgment. Before sharing this he wanted to

make sure that it would not be considered "bad" by re-iterating he did not consider he

had a problem. This is significant on a wider level because it reflects a "dishonesty"

(not that I am suggesting Mike intends to be dishonest here or any of the participants

for that matter) about the way we discuss alcohol consumption.

Lisa: Analysis and reflection

"right so you say there was a lot of drinking during the first week and did that continue for little bit?"

"yeah it definitely continued a little while on but it's slowed down a lot now"

"Ok, because when I was chatting to you the other day (this was when I was talking to the group to ask if they wanted to take part) you said it was much more about drinking in the week because it was cheaper. Although you say it

has tailed off do you feel you go out because of pressure, do you think you go out more than you should"

I am really conscious of using the word "should" because it implies judgement about appropriate behaviour.

> *"Yeah I probably do go out more than I should but it's not like, well obviously there's a part of me that does want to go but there 's a part of me that "oooh if I go out today I am not going to like do my assignment tomorrow" (speech marks as voice goes up again here, as in voice to self) but I usually end up going out (laughs)"*

I notice that she has repeated my use of the word should, and am conscious again of the fact that she may feel I am judging her. She chooses to ignore it and tells me she goes out anyway but she laughs as if she knows she is doing something "wrong".

> ***"so …so um… how much …how much would how much would you say you would drink***

I am hesitant here, conscious that I am steering the conversation to quantity. Prior to doing the interviews, I had thought a lot about whether to ask about quantities. I am conscious then too that by asking her this again, I am judging.

> *"Um maybe like I don't need much maybe like a quarter of a bottle of vodka, like I don't know how much that is in units"*

> ***"well no that's it, there's lots of information out there about units and from talking to young people I don't think they really think in terms of units when they are drinking, there are lots of guidelines but probably not many people count them (I jumped in here and should have left this and perhaps let her carry on). Well on a night out your probably don't want to be thinking about that, do you forget about that"***

I feel I back track here. I am trying to justify why I asked the question and try to make her feel that I am not judging.

Lisa (laughs quietly, maybe nervously, but agrees)

that you don't think about whether you should or shouldn't be drinking, you just go out?

(I am very conscious here that I veer in to judgments about amounts drunk, using the words should etc. so I suddenly change the subject) I change the subject as I feel like I am veering in to judgment. It is really interesting that I do not feel I can directly discuss this. It feels like I am probing, taking on the role of doctor, therapist, parent and I am conscious I do not want to do this.

"What are your feelings about that? Are you comfortable with that or do you wish it could be different. I am intrigued you used the words should shouldn't"

"I am comfortable with it because I know my limits now but it's kind of a shame that I feel like I have to but I would drink anyway but it's kind of a shame that I feel like I have to in order to socialise (laughs)."

"do you think that's quite normal and that other people are doing exactly the same thing."

"I mean there probably are people doing the same. I think like I didn't even think about doing it until I have just spoke about it like now there's "oh that is what I've been doing" (raised voice) ….that's it, when someone starts asking you questions, it does make you think. "

"But I am not, you know, as I say, I have been there, I drink and I think people drink for all sorts of reasons so and it's well know that it relaxes you and makes you feel more comfortable talking to people and it's part of …part of.. it's what we do and we use that term…."I need a drink"

8.3. Discussion and analysis

8.3.1. Introduction

The findings presented in this chapter outline the way in which participants frame their drinking and is evidence of wider social-cultural influences on the way individuals frame their drinking. Here I provide discussion and analysis as to why they frame the drinking in the way they do.

The participants appear conflicted about their drinking. They enjoy it and see it as a source of pleasure, fun and something that helps them to socialise. However, they also express guilt or say they feel bad about drinking excessively and some express concerns about the potential impact on their health. These are indicative of wider conflicting attitudes towards alcohol and the binary oppositions of "good" and "bad" drinking and reflect wider political, moral and cultural attitudes towards drinking both in the UK and beyond. All of the participants made a point of specifying that their drinking is not problematic and defend against it appearing so. Despite these findings deviating from the original research aims they are relevant, alongside the other findings, in terms of their potential to inform university policy on student drinking and perhaps even wider policy.

8.3.2. My drinking is not problematic.

As mentioned, each of the participants said that they did not consider their drinking to be a problem. Whether or not their drinking is problematic is not relevant here. What is of significance is their need to defend against their drinking being viewed as such. I

now provide further discussion relating to this and then go on to outline, in the two subsequent sections, some of the reasons why I believe they feel the need to defend in this way. This need to justify or defend against drinking being considered problematic is not only evident in my study but also in some of the published research discussed in chapter 4. For example, Guise and Gill et al (2007) show how students justify what they were drinking by saying "that was not a typical week" or "I was on holiday". McNeela and Bredin (2010) suggest students were unsure about talking about problematic drinking and were dismissive of those who might seek help. "I think it's an awful thing to say, but if one of your friends turned around to you and said, 'Oh, I'm just going down to the counsellor now, I've got a drink problem', do you know … we'd all think of it as a joke, and we all—it's terrible, but I really do think we'd all be laughing" (MacNeela and Bredin, 2010:290).

This need to justify or defend against drinking being viewed as problematic is something I also found when conducting a pilot study at the start of my research. The study (for which I obtained ethical approval, appendix 5) involved the use of drinking diaries to assess drinking motivations and peoples' feelings about their drinking. The way in which the participants defended against their drinking was coincidently a reason for not going ahead with the study and in part why I decided to use the FANI method. Mindful of the cliché that GPs and health professionals double the amount people say they drink, and some evidence that the more people drink the more likely they are to underestimate the amount drunk (Northcote, 2011) I considered that using diaries would be a way of getting round this. I felt that the anonymity offered by the diaries would result in more honesty about amounts drunk and allow people to share

their thoughts and feelings about their drinking.   However, when the diaries were

returned, entries were short, and people had not been as open as I thought they

would be. In addition, I found respondents were prone to justify what they had drunk.

For example, entries would say, "this was not a typical day" or, "this was not a typical

week as I was at a wedding at the weekend" or, "it was a match day".   In other words,

like the students in my study and as is evident in the published research, they were

giving excuses for the amount drunk or rather defending against the amount drunk in

order for it not be judged as excessive or problematic. I found this of particular

interest because the diaries were anonymous and I had thought participants would be

honest due to a lack of judgement. They were perhaps attempting to justify to

themselves how much they were drinking. I do not suggest they were deliberately

attempting to delude themselves or that their drinking was particularly problematic

and they were in denial but just that it is interesting they feel the need to do this.

Whilst in my study I did not ask students about how much they drank, I have shown

that they too respond in a similar way. They do not necessarily give an excuse in the

same way, but overtly tell me that they do not consider their drinking is a problem. I

wondered that they were not only to trying to convince or reassure me but were also

trying to convince or reassure themselves that their drinking is not that bad. For

example, Lucy says, "I can stop, I mean I do not drink all the time" and Sam "(B)ut now

I enjoy it, I do it for the enjoyment rather than to just get drunk". Anna uses the term

problem a number of times. She first uses it in the third person suggesting it would be

difficult for people to admit they have a problem. She then goes on to stress that she

has given this a lot of thought and does not think she has a problem. However that

she is even giving it consideration is indicative that at some level, conscious or

subconscious, that she is contemplating the possibility that it might be. Given that I

did not use the world problem to her and she raised this herself indicates it is on her

mind. I felt she was perhaps weighing it up, unsure and maybe exploring possibilities

and even perhaps somehow wanting confirmation that it was not.

The students talk about enjoying drinking and the 'fun' aspect, using words or phrases

such as "it is nice", "I enjoy" "buzz" but they also express guilt about drinking too. Not

only are their drinking motivations mutli-layered they also seem to have conflicting

feelings towards their drinking too.   In the next section, I discuss these conflicting

feelings and in final section I go on to discuss why I think they experience some of

these.   I have suggested that the participants were defending against their drinking

appearing problematic but, the FANI method also explores the way in which the

researcher comes from a defended position too. I have noted in my analysis on a few

occasions where I wondered whether I should share my experiences of drinking and

whether or not this may have facilitated a more in depth discussion. However, I was

conscious of boundaries and my position as older adult and lecturer. In the first

interview particularly, having not used the method before I initially struggled with not

wanting to be intrusive, overfamiliar or overstepping boundaries I was conscious too

that I viewed the participants as both adults and "children", or young adults.   They are

adults who have consented to take part in the research and therefore, in theory, we

are on equal footing. Nevertheless, I was still aware and perhaps overly so of the

potential "power" dynamics that Hollway and Jefferson (2013) refer to and therefore

was mindful of not being too probing, not judging and not making the participants feel uncomfortable.

I did provide the participants with some background details about my experiences of drinking as a student but did not go in to any great depth on this. Whilst in hindsight I consider sharing my experiences may have encouraged them to be more open at the time I was unsure how appropriate it was to go in to depth on this was. Sharing my experiences may not necessarily have resulted in them being more open but could have potentially changed the dynamics and made the participants feel uncomfortable, perhaps even having the opposite effect. I am aware of research methods which present participants with a case or "story" or a vignette which then prompts a response. I consider my experience could have been used in this way. Reflecting on the process it confirms that the interview is a two way process and that what emerges is a co-construction (Trahar, 2009). I acknowledge that I too was defending and was overly concerned about sharing too much and overstepping boundaries.

8.3.3. Conflicting feelings: "Good drinking", "bad drinking", pleasure and guilt.

Although each of the participants indicated that they did drink for fun, pleasure or enjoyment it was not something any of them talked about at length. At the start of my research I had expected this to emerge as a strong theme but was surprised at how little the participants talked about this aspect of their drinking. When they did talk about it and when they mixed up with other motivations such as to trying to make what they thought may be a boring night in to a fun night or in contradictory terms for

example Anna's use of the "actually horrible" and "good fun" to describe her drinking

experiences in the first few weeks. Rianna, for example says she drinks "mostly to have

fun" but then quantifies this by saying it about helping her to get on with people.

Anna's narrative is so multi-layered it is impossible to pick out her main motivation but

it is clear getting on with people, developing bonds and a sense of belonging is very

important. It is almost as if the quest to find friends, bond and fit in overshadow the

enjoyment. For example, Lucy says "It was sort of fun but I kept thinking how I didn't

really feel like I fitted". My interview with Lucy was one of the later interviews and

therefore I had already found that the students did not talk at great length about the

"fun" aspect of their drinking. I had however picked up the contradictory way in which

Lucy talked about her drinking and in the second interview asked her about the use of

"sort of fun". She said;

> "I think it is partly because it is nice, I am bored and it passes the time. Yes it is
> for fun but sometimes I don't really know and it is just because it makes things
> easier and like I said to fit in. I think though overall…..you asked my reasons for
> drinking um overall I think it is mostly when I go out. To have fun and things.

She says her overall reason is to "have fun". It is clear this is only one element of some

complex motivations and I although Lucy indicates with her use of the word "overall"

that this is her main reason I would question this. This perhaps illustrates how difficult

it is to try to pinpoint particular motivations or perhaps even that there is little point in

trying to do so. Whilst not disputing that Lucy does sometimes drink for fun and

pleasure, it is clearly just part of a complex set of motivations.   There seemed to be

little evidence of the "unbounded hedonism", Measham (2008) refers to.   "Fun" as a

motivation is evident in some of the published research presented in chapter 4.

However, there are points at which is presented alongside other motivations. For

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example, Niland et al (2013) talk about "friendship with fun" and "friends with buzz" and Leigh and Lee (2008) show the way in which motivations are multi-layered and that fun is just one element and is part of a complex set of motivations.

The different motivations reflect the conflicting feelings the participants appear to have towards their drinking. They enjoy drinking but they also, either directly or indirectly, indicated that sometimes they felt guilty about their drinking, particularly if they got drunk. The word "bad" was also used to describe particular types of drinking, again indicating a feeling of either guilt or that they felt they were engaging in something wrong or unacceptable. Several of the students used the word guilt. Guilt is closely associated with shame and Shen (2018) suggests that, "Shame drives people to hide or deny their wrong doings while guilt drives people to amend their mistakes". Both shame and guilt are complex emotions and although a number of theories exist about why we experience them Shen argues that how these emotions have evolved in humans is still obscure. I am not suggesting that are experiencing high levels of guilt about their drinking but merely that in expressing it they are demonstrating conflicting feelings about wider moral attitudes towards drinking.

Lisa also talks about it being a "shame" that she uses alcohol in order to socialise as if there is something wrong in doing this and that there is some failing in not being able to do it without alcohol. She also expresses guilt about going out and not doing her assignment. Lisa talks about "feeling bad" about getting drunk, although, when I ask her if this is enough to make her not want to drink she laughs and says "no, I wish it did". Although she says this in a jokey way, I feel there is perhaps an element of truth

in this. Lucy talks about liking how drinking makes her feel and she enjoys the feeling

of being drunk but then she talks about how this makes her feel guilty the following

day. However, even though it makes her feel like this, she clearly does not intend to

"not drink".

Rianna talks about guilt but this is, in part, is connected to her feelings about her sister.

Her narrative shows that having fun through drinking is somewhat of a "guilty"

pleasure. She says, "I partly felt guilty that I had had a good time and that really I

should be at university to learn". It is as if she considers she has a duty not to waste

her time drinking and to focus on learning.   Sam distances himself from getting drunk

for the sake of it and says he does not particularly enjoy getting drunk. I considered

that Sam was trying to distance himself from what he considered "bad" or "distasteful"

drinking and, in particular, he wanted to distance himself from his former drinking days

as a teenager when with peers, he would get drunk on vodka. He is keen to stress that

he has matured out of that type of drinking.   With regard to such drinking he says, "It's

just a waste and you have nothing to show for it".

Mike does not express guilt and seems not to feel particularly guilty about his drinking.

He is quite upfront about sometimes drinking over recommended limits and implies he

has made a conscious decision to ignore such guidelines because his social life is more

important. However, there is some indication of "acceptable" and "not acceptable"

types of drinking in with his use of the word "dark". He implied that sometimes he just

wanted to get drunk for the sake of it, that every few weeks or so there was a need to

get drunk and with his use of the word "dark", he is implying some moral judgment

about this. He said that it sounded like he was saying it was a problem but he does not think it is. It considered it was an interesting word to use, particularly for Mike who as I have mentioned a number of times classes himself as a "lightweight".   On the one hand, he considers he does not drink a lot compared with everyone else but clearly occasionally, he feels the need to get drunk. There are conflicting messages in Mike's narrative. He is a "lightweight" but in his narrative, he talks about the health implications of drinking too much and says his social life is important and therefore even though he considers he might be putting his health at risk it is not going to make him stop.

There a number of explanations as to why the participants frame their drinking in the way they do and consideration this could be useful for policy makers wishing to address concerns about student drinking. In the next section, I discuss these.

8.3.4. Health messages, health implications and the public health agenda

The emergence of the themes discussed in chapter 8 was unexpected.   I chose the FANI method, in part to avoid a focus on problematic use but this emerged regardless and I now discuss why I consider the participants raised issues relating to the health implications of excessive drinking and talked about problematic use. In chapter 2, I mentioned the emergence of the public health model of alcohol consumption and the shift from concerns about individual consumption population consumption. This shift has resulted in an increased awareness of the health implications of alcohol consumption, which ultimately influences the discourse around alcohol use and how we frame our drinking.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is a key driver of the public health model and

published the European Alcohol Action Plan 1993 (Butler et al, 2017). This plan

recommended that countries develop alcohol strategies to tackle problematic alcohol

consumption. In England, the "Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England" was

published in 2004 (Unit, P.M.S.S., 2004). Since then here have been a range of policy

developments, updates and reports in the UK, such as "Drinking Responsibly", in 2005,

which recommended the implementation of "Alcohol Disorder Zones". In 2007 Safe,

Sensible and Sociable, was published and as, a consequence, Drinkaware was

developed, a charity to provide information relating to "sensible drinking". In 2008,

Scotland published "Changing Scotland's Relationship with Alcohol (Alcohol Research

UK, 2014).   In 2012 The Governments Alcohol Strategy (HM Government, 2012) was

published.

Whilst the participants in this study would have only been about six or seven when

these campaigns were first around the legacy of these continues and is very much

apparent in the way they frame their drinking. When I was a similar age there seemed

to be very little advice about safe drinking limits and it was not until my mid-twenties

or perhaps even later that I became aware of any campaigns about alcohol

consumption. However, these young people have grown up in an environment in

which such advice is the norm and are continuously exposed to campaigns about safe

drinking through school health initiatives, television adverts, posters, GPs and parents.

More initiatives have since followed such as "dry January", "Safe Sensible and Sober

(Drinkaware, no date) and advice about having alcohol free days. These messages are

hard to avoid, even appearing on labels with messages to drink responsibly and containing information of how many units are in each bottle or can.

Mike seems very aware of guidelines on safe drinking and makes several references to alcohol units. He acknowledged that whilst knowing about these guidelines he and his friends were not "taking much notice of them". Although Mike stresses that he does not drink much in comparison with others, he indicates that he is drinking above the recommended amounts. He says, "well it's bad, and the guidelines, we are completely not respecting them and just like we are just putting our drinking culture ahead of our health it is all about our social life".   Mike suggests that he is at university not just to learn but have a good time, which involves drinking. He says, "(E)specially while I am at uni as you are paying all this money to get there and just sort of if you are just using it for the education side it is so much wasted because it is so much more…you are growing up as a person."   Although, interestingly this contrasts with what Lisa says about feeling guilty about not getting her assignment done. However as I have already said Mikes narrative is full of contradictions. He appears on the one hand be quite flippant about drinking and putting his social life ahead of his health but also it does seem to be something that bothers him a little. Sam talks about how his drinking has changed and he compares "childish" getting drunk with his now more adult style of drinking and suggests that with this comes and awareness of the responsibility not to abuse it.

Anna also shows awareness of the health implications of excessive consumption and talks about health campaigns. She tells me that advice about problematic drinking is available at GP practises and I asked her whether she feels this makes a difference to

peoples' drinking. She says she considers young people would have difficulty

admitting they have a problem and suggests it is "hard to acknowledge, at this age if

you have a problem". She goes on to say "where do you draw the line between what is

ok and healthy".   Although Anna shows awareness of public health messages and this

last comment implies that she does not quite believe they are true.

What seems clear is that whilst the narratives reflect the public health agenda and,

whilst students show awareness of guidelines and possible health implications most

appear to ignore this or to not necessarily believe them, or perhaps more accurately

are playing them down.   Mike indicates that although he thinks drinking might affect

his health he puts his social life first. Lisa indicates she sometimes drinks "too much"

but although she her feels guilty however her response to my suggestion that this

might make her stop drinking was "I wish I did". She said this flippantly as if she only

half meant it. This indicates to me that whilst the messages are being heard they seem

to have little impact, except to make the students feel "bad" or "guilty".

The guilt expressed by the students and the way in which they defend against their

drinking is in part I suggest a result of public health messages. It could also perhaps be

the consequence of a wider discourse about alcohol consumption (of which the public

health agenda is part) shaped by historical moral and political attitudes towards

drinking which have resulted in the binary oppositions of good and bad drinking.

Measham (2008) suggests that historically alcohol is viewed in terms of good drinking

and bad drinking depending on who is doing the drinking. She suggests that good

drinking relates "high" culture" and bad drinking "low culture".   Veenhoven (2013)

suggests drinking purely for hedonistic reasons deemed as morally wrong. The reasons

for this are complex but no doubt has roots in pious notions about the link with

pleasure and sin. This perhaps extends too, not just to who is drinking but also what is

being drunk, evident in the two contrasting paintings by William Hogarth (1751) Gin

Lane and Beer Street. One shows the evils of gin, depicting consumption as leading to

poverty, depravity and moral decline. The other shows beer as something wholesome

and acceptable.   It is perhaps no coincidence that the period saw a rise in the

popularity of the Temperance movement (Kneale and French, 2008). As a slight but

relevant aside, it is interesting that gin is currently fashionable a doubling of gin

distilleries in the last five years. We now have "(G)in parties, gin menus, ginvent

calendars and even a Ginstitute hotel" (Butler, 2018). A good example of a how one

commodity can attract such different responses depending on who is drinking it and

how it is represented.

Another concept that shapes discourse and attitudes towards alcohol consumption is

the concept of addiction. Although the concept of addiction goes as far back as the

late 16th Century (Levin, 1979) it was not until the early 20th Century that it began to be

studied formally (Reinarman and Granfieldm, 2015). Although the concept of

addiction is not one that is accepted by everyone and is considered a contested term

(May, 2001;Levine, 1979) it is nevertheless an enduring idea and one which I consider

seeps in to the narratives. I consider that it is this, and the stigma attached to

addiction, alongside public health messages are what influences perceptions about

acceptable types of drinking.   It is possibly this that leads to a need to defend against

drinking being deemed problematic, and to feelings of guilt.   Although neither I, nor

the participants used the term addiction during the interviews, I consider that, consciously or unconsciously, they are keen to distance themselves from the label and stigma attached to it.

8.3.5. Social and cultural norms

At various times the students compared their drinking with others and, in doing so, believed their own drinking, in comparison, to be unproblematic. However, they also justified their drinking because they believe everyone else is drinking in the same way. Social Norms theory, developed by Berkowitz and Perkins (1986) suggests "most students tend to think that their peers are, on average, more permissive in personal drinking attitudes than is the case, and likewise that peers consume more frequently and more heavily on average than is really the norm" (Perkins 2002:167). However apart from Mike, who made direct reference to those who drank more than him, because he wanted to avoid the heavy drinking, the participants tended to assume everyone's was drinking similar amounts to the. This enabled them to feel their drinking was "normal" and therefore that it could not be problematic because it is what everyone else is doing. Rianna, for example suggests it what everyone is doing particularly in *freshers* week and Anna says "it's not like direct peer pressure like people saying, "you should drink" it's just kind of like everyone thinks it's the norm".

8.3.6. Reflection and conclusion.

I was initially concerned that themes explored in this chapter deviated from the research aim in that it does not relate specifically to the transition and drinking motivations. However, as I began my analysis, I realised that it relates to some of my broader research questions. There appears to be a conflict between what the

students classify as problematic drinking compared with the advice and guidelines about safe drinking limits. In chapter 2, I pointed out that there is no consensus on the nature of alcohol problems and referred to the idea of the social construction of alcohol problems (Reinarman, 1988). This raises a number of questions, which relate to the overarching questions I outlined in chapter 2. If the students do not consider their drinking to be problematic, but guidelines would suggest that it could be, whose perspective or opinion is the right one? Should there be concern about student drinking if they are not concerned about it themselves? Finally, is there a duty to address it because even though they are adults, they are still potentially "at risk" and are clearly ignoring health advice? These questions will be addressed in the final chapter and when I discuss the implications of the research.

The themes explored in this chapter also emerged somewhat unexpectedly for me. The purpose of adopting the FANI method was an attempt to move away from a focus on problematic use and alcohol problems that was so prevalent in the published research. That it emerged regardless was intriguing and noteworthy for several reasons. The first is that it shows the value using the FANI method. One of my reasons for using the method was to allow an alternative narrative to emerge and the findings in chapters six and seven are evidence of this alternative narrative. The purpose of the method is to allow what is important and relevant to the participants to emerge and, in this respect, they lead the interview. Given that I wanted to move the focus away from "problem drinking", I consider that had I used a more structured approach, asking specific questions, avoiding questions about problematic use and therefore me setting the agenda, it is quite possible that this would not have emerged as a theme and I think this gives validity to the research.

Lambotte and Meunier (2013) discuss the messiness of research narratives suggesting that research is not always a simple linear process. The emergence of this theme created a dilemma because it had deviated from my research aim and I did find it became "messy" and I was not sure how it fitted. However, choosing not to include and write about this simply because it was too "messy" and did not fit was not an option. I also began to realise its significance as the research progressed.

Given the extent to which each of the students focussed on health and problematic drinking I wondered if they had raised it because they expectations about this being a focus of the interview. I do think there may have been an element of this. However, Mike, Anna and Sam in particular, when the conversation had moved on to a different subject, came back to this theme a few times and therefore I suggest that it is something they have previously given thought to.

Chapter 9: Final Discussion

9.1. Introduction

This chapter summarises, and brings together my main findings and shows how they relate to the original research aim, objectives and questions and, it extends discussions from chapters 6, 7 and 8. I discuss how the research findings relate to the wider policy context and then go on to discuss implications and limitations of the research. There are some similarities between my findings and the published research on drinking motivations, and in the published research relating to the transition to university. However, because the study, conducted as part of this thesis, addressed a gap in research it presents new knowledge about how students experience the transition to university and how it relates to their drinking motivations.

My research aim was to explore how students experience the transition to university in the UK and how it relates to their drinking. I also had a number of objectives and some wider research questions that I hoped the thesis would address. One objective was to obtain an alternative perspective about student drinking in the UK, particularly in relation to the transition to university, one that moves away from the focus on problem drinking, binge drinking or excessive drinking. In the UK, there is a somewhat stereotypical, or clichéd representation of the *fresher* experience. Published research relating to drinking amongst young people and students tends to perpetuate this stereotype by focussing on particular types of drinking associated with problematic use, such as binge drinking, pre-loading, drinking games or extreme drunkenness. Whilst not refuting that there is truth in the stereotype, and that there is a fun and hedonistic nature to student drinking, I considered there to be a different narrative or

narratives about how students experience the transition to university and about student drinking. A glimpse of this is apparent in the research relating to the transition to university explored in chapter 3. This shows that many students leaving home for the first time struggle to adjust and experience a range of emotions. This demonstrates that the experience is not necessarily fun and enjoyable for all students, or at least not all of the time. It was also in part because of my own experience of going to university. Whilst I sometimes drank excessively, my experience both of the transition to university and the reasons I drank, did not necessarily fit with the stereotype. Given there was very little existing research relating to drinking and the transition to university this perspective is missing in the published research. I use the term alternative perspective but this is perhaps misleading as I do not intend to suggest it is either one or the other, rather that the experience is multi-dimensional. Indeed another objective was to explore the complexities of drinking motivations and the way in which they are multi-layered. I considered this was also missing in the published research in which attempts to categorise motivations result in little or no context and do not provide an in depth perspective on how it is experienced. I discuss how using unstructured interviews allowed these complexities to emerge and to show how students made sense of their drinking in relation to the transition to university.

Another objective was to examine how the experience relates to wider policy debates about young people's drinking. The terms problematic drinking, problem drinking or excessive drinking are used recurrently within the literature and within policy relating to alcohol consumption as if there is a shared understanding about what these mean. However, there are conflicting views about what constitutes problematic use and the nature of alcohol problems (Reinarman, 1988). This leads to questions about the

nature of student drinking. One perspective is that it poses a risk and that students are vulnerable and more should be done to protect them. The other perspectives is that they are adults and are able to make choices about their drinking, risky or otherwise. This chapter provides further discussion relating to these arguments and perspectives, in particular relating them to the public health agenda and notions of risk, responsibility, freedom and choice. Given that the students showed awareness of advice about safe drinking, expressed guilt about their drinking and were keen to show their drinking was not problematic, but they tended to ignore health messages, I discuss the efficacy of current public health messages.

Conducting a small study, which draws on interviews from only six students means that the study is not generalizable but neither is it intended to be. Instead such a method allows a more a more in depth exploration of how students experience the transition to university and how this relates to their drinking motivations. The use of unstructured interviews allowed the students to talk about what was important and relevant to them. This allowed different narrative to emerge and provided evidence of the way in which drinking motivations are complex and multi-layered. The narratives also reflected some of the wider discourse and debates relating to student drinking and alcohol consumption in general. I start with a summary of my key findings. I then go on to discuss the diary I kept during my first year at university, which I mentioned in chapter 1, as this presents an interesting perspective on the transition to university and drinking motivations. Finally, I go on to explain how I met my research aim and objectives, how the research relates to my wider research questions, the implications of my research, reflections and conclusion.

9.2. Key findings

- There is very little published research relating to the transition and university and drinking, and none relating specifically to drinking motivations and the transition to university.
- The need to develop a sense of belonging, for those leaving home for the first time, appears to be heightened during the transition to university. Some students use alcohol, during the transition to university to facilitate social interactions, assist in developing bonds and to speed up the process of making friends and developing a sense of belonging.
- There is a perceived "window of opportunity" in the first few weeks of university during which there is a sense of urgency to establish friendships.
- The Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in relation to drinking is under-researched. The study, conducted as part of the thesis, provides evidence that during the transition period students feel pressure go out drinking because they do not want to miss out on opportunities to bond. Missing out on bonding opportunities is perceived as having the potential to jeopardise ones place in a group.
- There is a dissonance between expectations about what university will be like and what it is really like, particularly in relation to finding "like-minded" friends and a group to which one identifies with and belongs. Alcohol plays a temporary role in bridging the gap.
- Student drinking motivations are complex and multi-layered. The research provides an alternative narrative to the one-dimensional, stereotypical view of student drinking, particularly during the transition to university, which focus on the fun and hedonistic and problematic nature of student drinking and problematic drinking
- The students taking part in the study express guilt about getting drunk and some concern about the health implications of excessive drinking. However, although showing awareness of public health messages about alcohol consumption they largely ignore them.

9.3. My diary

It was not until I began looking at the research relating to the transition to university that I began thinking about the diary I had kept at university. I had not looked at it for many years and wondered if it would prove insightful or relevant to my research. As I

mentioned at the start of the thesis, I remember drinking a lot a university and so I expected there to be numerous references to this. I was surprised to find there were only two entries about drinking. It was definitely not an accurate representation of the experience. The entries are not daily, often there are several days or even weeks between them, alongside only two references to there is also little reference to any "fun". I know I did have some fun times and it seems the diary was what I can only describe as a repository for my "teen angst". I use quotation marks because at almost 19, though still in my teens I was also an adult.   The diary outlines worries about friendships, fitting in, boyfriends, unrequited love, and rejection, whether people liked me or I liked them, and generally paints a depressing picture.

Whilst the diary is not an accurate account of my experience, it demonstrates that I experienced some difficult times. I think in an interview setting, even for someone who is open about their feelings, it would be difficult to convey some of the things I wrote about partly because they are written in the moment but also because they are personal and I think would be difficult to share. I remember thinking, whilst at university, that I was the only one experiencing such feelings. Even years later when I heard others recount their stories about their fun filled student days this further confirmed that my experience was not typical. However, after reading some of the research about the transition to university and after conducting my study I reconsidered this perspective and further concluded that it was probably more common than I realised. It also made me wonder whether the stories others recount about their student days are edited versions, somewhat like the edited versions of social media pages that present the highlights of one's life rather than the reality. Lucy also referred to this and suggested that it seems like everyone else is having a good

time but then she wonders if they are pretending because she thinks, "you can't be that up all the time can you?"

The research explored in chapter 3 shows that students have expectations about what university will be like. There appears to be an idealised idea of what the experience should entail. As well as university not always meeting expectations there is perhaps an assumption that everyone else is having that "ideal" experience which adds to a feeling of dissatisfaction but also, those feelings explored in chapters 6 and 7 about not quite fitting in and also about worrying about missing out.

Whilst I did not know what would emerge from the interviews with the students I did have some concerns that there would be a heavy focus on the fun, partying, stereotypical aspect and therefore the themes relating to belonging were unexpected. I found myself identifying with what some of the students talked about and I had not expected this to happen. Whilst what they talked about did not match my very personal diary entries, some of what they said resonated with me. Recounting their feelings about needing to make friends, about not fitting in and feeling different was evidence that they experienced some of what I went through. However reflecting on this again made me consider whether sharing some of what I experienced (not the contents of my diary, which would have been far too personal) may have encouraged a more open dialogue but this too may have been too personal, and as I have already said, make them feel uncomfortable.

I have drawn on my diary as a further example of the complexities of drinking motivations.   Going to university was both exciting and scary but I was ready to leave home and be independent. However, once there it was not as easy as I thought it

would be. I made friends quickly but, as was the case with some of the participants, I did not feel like I always fitted in. Alcohol played a role that I did not give much thought to at the time, but it was as complex and multi-layered for me as it seems to be for the students I interviewed. I used it to help me fit in, to have fun, to give me confidence, because I was sometimes bored, because I wanted to buzz and sometimes to cope.

However, what I think is the most interesting thing about the diary is that alcohol is hardly mentioned alcohol. It is as I have said, mentioned twice, a passing reference to going to the pub for birthday drinks and another about being ill after drinking someone's homemade wine. No mention of getting horrendously drunk, or the horrible hangovers, or the parties or the clubs or concerns about doing or saying something stupid. I had expected it to full of references to drinking. It seems that what was most pressing at that point was the feeling of not fitting in, not belonging, not being sure who I was, feeling lost and lonely and drinking was something I did, rather than give very much thought to.

Whilst I know I drank what would be considered excessive amounts at university and, my memory is that it was a central part of the experience, it seems that it was not of great significance to me at the time. I think there are two reasons for this. The first is that as I what was most important to me, as I have already said, was fitting in and gaining that sense of belonging that is so apparent from both my study and the published research. The second is that I think the discourse that exists now about alcohol with regard to problematic use and harm did not exist then. Although I was aware that I sometimes drank excessively and that it was not a particularly good thing I

did not consider it problematic. This is because I equated problematic use with

addiction and I did not feel my drinking fitted in to this category. The disccourse has

since changed. Whilst the concept of addiction still permeates the discourse there has

been a fundamental shift in the way we frame and talk about alcohol consumption and

this is because there is more information and advice about what is considered harmful

and I will return to this later in the chapter. However, now I provide further discussion

relating to the findings of my research.

9.4. A window of opportunity

In chapter five, I provided discussion relating to the theme of belonging and linked this

to literature explored in chapter three. I now extend this discussion further to show

how this provides a new perspective on how students experience the transition to

university and how this relates to their drinking.

The notion that alcohol facilitates social interaction is not new. It is purported that

alcohol has been used as a social lubricant for centuries (Anderson and Baumberg

(2006). More recently, Sayette et al (2012), conducted a study which observed social

interactions between 700 hundred people, who were unknown to each other, after

drinking a moderate amount of alcohol. They found, perhaps unsurprisingly that

alcohol facilitates social bonding in a group setting, that participants smiled more and

spent longer talking to each other. My findings outlined in chapter 6 show how the

students I interviewed use alcohol to assist in developing friendships and, whilst these

findings, mirror some of the published research outlined in chapter 4 my study

provides a new understanding of how this relates to the transition to university.

In chapter 6, I suggested the transition to university, particularly for those who leave

home, is a unique period. Students find themselves in unfamiliar surroundings with

people they have never met before. The published research explored in chapter 3

showed that some students struggle with this transition, experiencing amongst other

things loneliness, loss of identity, homesickness and anxiety (Chow and Healey, 2008;

Scanlon et al, 2007; Bloom 1987;Larose and Boivin, 1998). Some suggest this

experience can trigger the attachment system (Bernier 2005; Kenny and Donaldson,

1991) which results in increased anxiety and insecurity. Alcohol, which as Seaman and

Ikegwuonu (2010) argue is already default choice for peer sociability amongst young

people, appears to be helpful in facilitating social processes, assisting in bonding and

helping developing a sense of belonging. During this potentially tumultuous time,

students are keen for this to happen as quickly as possible. Findings from my study

show how students use alcohol to speed up the process enabling them to develop a

sense of security and belonging quickly. One of the students used the term "window of

opportunity" to describe this sense of urgency. Indeed this corresponds with the study

conducted by Palmer et al (2009) with the suggestion that the transition is a relatively

short period of time of six to eight weeks, during which students either feel they have

adjusted or settled in to university life, or in other words a "window" of six to eight

weeks. I felt this sense of urgency when discussing the experience with the

participants. They spoke as if missing this opportunity might have serious

consequences. The term "serious consequences" was not one used by any of the

students and may seem overly dramatic but this is how it came across and, during the

transition, not belonging or feeling like one does not fit in is potentially serious.

Sayette (2012) argues that only a moderate amount of alcohol is necessary to increase

sociability. Although the focus of my study was not about amounts drunk it is clear that

both moderate and, what excessive drinking, was used in this way. To this end, it its

use as a means of developing friendships and bonding that is of relevance, not the

quantities drunk.

Alcohol used in this way may not create meaningful friendships. Lisa pointed out that

it was "bad" that she used alcohol to help her make friends. Lucy suggested it made

her feel like she fitted in, implying perhaps that it was only whilst drinking that she felt

she belonged. Anna discussed how alcohol becomes something that they have in

common, suggesting in effect that the friendships are not necessarily based on

something solid.   However, I do not think this is what matters at this point. What

matters is that even if the friendships are temporary the alcohol provides a tool to help

them negotiate this transitional period.

9.5. Responsible adult or vulnerable "emerging adult".

I argued in chapter 3 that, in addition to leaving home, these young people are still

going through the transition to adulthood. With regards to this, it could be argued that

although adult they are also potentially vulnerable too. Although legally adult,

according to some research (Arnett, 2000; Wallis, 2013), the transition to adulthood is

not fixed and it can take up to the age of 25 for some to become fully adult. This adds

an additional complexity to this period during which these students are not only

negotiating a new environment and meeting new people they are also still developing

as an adult. Alongside what Palmer et al (2009) describe as liminality or being

"betwixt" places, both discussed in chapter 3, they are also adjusting to a new adult

identity. Arnett (2000) suggests that, whilst no longer seeing themselves as teenagers,

they do not necessarily identify as adult either.   I commented earlier, in relation to my

diary, that at the age of almost 19, I was ready to leave home and felt equipped to

cope on my own and whilst I did cope, the diary showed there were periods when I

struggled.

The published research about how some experience the transition and what the

students in my study talked about did resonate with me. I think I was less mature than

I thought I was. Some of the published research shows that students use alcohol as a

coping mechanism during university (Armeli et al 2008; Park and Levenson, 2002;

Sadava and Park,1993) and suggest, as a result of my study, that students use alcohol

to help ease the transition to university. None of the students in the study said directly

that they used alcohol to help them cope but I suggest that the findings are an

indication that they do. The term "cope" may not necessarily be a useful one. It is a

term that is ambiguous and could relate, either to one off emotional experiences or,

drinking to cope with life in general. Given discussion in chapter 8 about the way in

which students defend against their drinking being deemed problematic, "cope" is

word I think they would be unlikely to use to describe their drinking motivations

anyway, given the possible stigma attached, however I do think that alcohol was in

part used in this way.   I am sure I used alcohol to "cope" in my first year at university

but this is only something I am aware of in hindsight and I am sure if asked at the time

this is not how I would have described it.   Given this is a period of such immense

change for these young people it would perhaps be more surprising if alcohol was not

used at various points to help cope with, or to ease the situation. Indeed, I would argue that using it as a mechanism to help in making friends in this situation is, in a way, using it to cope. In chapter 3, I argued that one of the problems with trying to categorise drinking motives is the range of different meanings that can be attributed to one word and this is an example of this.

As mentioned earlier, the debate in relation to alcohol consumption, about whether students are "children" at risk or whether they are adults, who should be able to make their own decisions about risk, is unhelpful. It is more useful to take the view that people, whether child or adult, have different reactions to particular situations and develop coping mechanisms to assist them in dealing with difficult situations. What has been reported by the students in my study, and in the published research, appears to be an understandable reaction to a new situation. Clearly some cope better than others, some adjust more quickly than others do and some may develop problematic drinking because of it. However rather than being concerned that it *might* lead to problem drinking and issuing health messages which tell students to drink responsibly and reduce their consumption, which I have already argued are ineffective, a more holistic approach may be more effective. In other words, giving consideration to how the experience can be improved and how students can be better supported.

9.6. Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and the window of opportunity

The findings relating to the relationship between FoMO and student drinking during the transition are significant because this is an under researched area. There is little

research about FoMO and drinking in general but there is no research about FoMO, drinking motivations and the transition to university. The fear, or concern that students refer to, as I outlined in chapter 7, is not just about missing out on going out and drinking. It is concern about missing out on the opportunity the following day to be involved in "banter", or to be part of the stories about getting drunk and doing embarrassing things. The missing out in a sense is twofold. In part, it is about not wanting to miss going out, and thus opportunities to bond, but also about the shared experience of the "banter" and stories the following day, which provides a further opportunity to strengthen bonds. This however is even more significant given the idea of there being a "window of opportunity", mentioned in the previous section, during which the urgency to develop friendships and/or become part of a friendship group serves to exacerbate the worry, or "fear" of missing out on opportunities to bond. The link between FoMO and drinking is not just relevant to students going through the transition to university. It is likely that students throughout their time at university, or young people in general, will, at various points worry about missing out on drinking opportunities. However, I suggest that during this period it is somewhat different. The combination of starting at university, moving away from home, becoming "adult" and the heightened sense of urgency, and perceived limited time to make friends means the fear of missing out is significant.

FoMO, to a degree also relates to the argument that expectations about what university will be like do not always live up to reality (Maunder et al, 2013; Brinkworth et al 2008; Crisp 2009 ; Scanlon et al 2007). It is a possibility that the stereotypes and myths around university being a place where you have a fantastic time and meet and make close and lasting friendships means that students feel their experience has to live

up to this. To this end ensuring one is not missing out is crucial. Perhaps not missing

out on opportunities is a way of convincing themselves that they are having that "ideal

experience".

9.7. Rite of passage, snowflake generation and the massification of universities

I am aware there is a view that students are becoming infantalised (Furedi, 2017) and,

that my findings potentially present students as "snowflakes" (Fox, 2016), unable to

cope with the demands placed on them when they first arrive at university. They also

potentially present students, as vulnerable or at risk. In suggesting that alcohol is used

as a way of coping with the transition I could be accused of attempting to pathologise

something considered a "normal" part of becoming independent, or a "rite of

passage".   However, I have not attempted to present student drinking during this

period as something that is of grave concern, needing urgent attention or indeed that

students are in dire risk. Nevertheless, I suggest that there is a middle ground

between respecting the rights of students as individual adults to take informed risks

and safeguarding their well-being. What I have presented is a different perspective. I

am suggesting it is worth paying attention to this as a unique time in their lives during

which they may need additional support. Acknowledgement of this and the

implementation of measures to assist in making the transition easier not only has the

potential to improve the experience but also indirectly have an impact on alcohol

consumption.

The idea that suddenly at age eighteen young people should be fully equipped, on an

emotional level to deal with being "cut loose" and that pandering to their insecurities

is somehow infantalising is misguided. Baumeister and Leary (1995), concluded that

"human beings are fundamentally and pervasively motivated by a need to belong" (Baumeister and Leary, 1995:522). They suggest that the importance of this need has been underappreciated arguing that the "desire for interpersonal attachment may well be one of the most far-reaching and integrative constructs currently available to understand human nature" (Baumeister and Leary, 1995:522). Furthermore, they argue this is a fundamental interpersonal motive and that it is the origin of much of human behaviour, emotion and thought. Moving away does not mean the attachments to family and friends are instantly broken. However no longer being in close physical proximity on a day-to-day basis with those one has strong bonds results in the need to seek out, make new attachments, and create a new sense of belonging.

It is not just that moving away from home and breaking old ties is difficult. The university environment may present further challenges. Universities have changed rapidly over the last twenty or thirty years and, alongside this are numerous other pressures that students face, which I will discuss shortly. Whilst the notion of coming to university and drinking copious amounts of alcohol as a "rite of passage" is endearing one, it is perhaps outdated and maybe a different narrative is required. This does not mean advocating the curbing of student's freedom or, at an extreme level, trying to place controls on their drinking (which is highly likely to be ineffectual anyway) but perhaps just reframing it to reflect that the university experience has changed. This change relates not just to the increase in student numbers and the way universities operate, but also in the way young people consume alcohol, discussed in chapter 4, and the different pressures students face.

In chapter 2, I discussed how, Tony Blair's pledge to double the number of students going to university, has resulted in a huge increase in the student population over the last twenty years (Adams, 2017). This pledge, alongside the Widening Participation agenda (Vignoles, 2016) has seen the student population rise, and now, almost 30% of 18 year old will attend university (Guardian, 2107).   There have been immense changes in higher education with an increase in class sizes resulting in staff having less time to support students individually (Giannakis and Bullivant, 2016). Additionally, there has been an increase in reported mental health problems amongst students (IPPR, 2017), which I will discuss in the next section. Whilst a connection between what I have just outlined and student drinking is speculative it is worthy of consideration for two reasons.   The first is simply a matter of numbers. An increase in student numbers is likely to result in an increase in the number of students drinking and an increase in the number leaving home for the first time. This does not necessarily equate to an increase in numbers drinking excessively or problematically. However, it seems likely given the evidence provided in chapter 1 that students drink more than same aged non-student peers do.   The second is that universities have changed. Alongside the increase in student numbers, young people and students face many different pressures to those who went to university twenty or thirty years ago when there were grants, no students loans, fewer students to compete against for jobs, less pressure to juggle work and studies. Whilst not wishing to romanticise and present this as a "rosy" time when students did not experience any pressure, suffer anxiety about their studies or worry about getting a job, a report by the IPPR (2017) suggests that students are experiencing more pressure, which affects their mental health and wellbeing.

Scanlon et al (2007) suggests that modern universities are unlike the old elitist institution and suggest the "contemporary university in which students construct their identities has been created within an economically driven political agenda" (Scanlon et al, 2007:224). There is perhaps a focus on student numbers at the detriment of student support and wellbeing with less support for students, either in their studies or pastorally, leading to the feeling presented by one student in the study conducted by Scanlon et al, as "You don't have like an identity… you are just lost in a crowd" (Scanlon et, 2007).

9.8. Mental health

The link between drinking and mental health is complex one. I am not arguing that these students, in drinking to belong or to bond, or to cope with the transition have mental health problems or that they are likely to develop them. There is a tendency to equate the term mental health with mental illness and mental health problems leading to accusations that "normal" behaviour is being patholgised. Mental health simply means "A person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being (OED, online no date) and this can relate to either negative or positive emotions.

Given the recent attention on student mental health and the reported increase in those experiencing and reporting mental health problems, it would be amiss not to provide some discussion relating to this. Particularly as I consider that during the transition to university, additional attention should be paid to the wellbeing of students. Indeed mental health and wellbeing is actually quite central to the study, both in relation to drinking motivations and to the transition to university, and of course, how these relate to each other. Addressing the overall wellbeing of students

has the potential to not only improve how students experience the transition to university but may also have an indirect impact on alcohol consumption during this period.

A report by the Education Policy Institute (EPI, 2018) showed that there has been an increase in first year students in Higher Education disclosing mental health conditions. Those reporting mental health conditions represented 2% of population and was five times the number reporting in 2006/7. The report also showed that there was an increased demand for counselling services across 95% of Higher Education Institutes. A report by the IPPR (2017) suggests that reasons for this increase relate to increased student numbers, lack of pastoral care, financial worries, juggling part-time work and competition for jobs. It has been suggested that this rise is in part because of changing attitudes towards mental health. This perspective suggests that the pathologisation of behaviours that would previously have been considered "normal" reactions to particular situations rather than actual mental illness results in more people presenting with and being recorded as having mental health problems. Furedi (2013) points to the development of what he refers to the therapy culture which invites people to talk about their problems and to make sense of these through therapy and ultimately to define themselves as ill. He suggests we live in an era that celebrates emotionalism arguing that the;

> "stiff upper lip had become disparaged by a sensibility that celebrated the display of fragility. The twenty-first-century university would be an institution wedded to the new ethos of helplines, support groups, counselling services, mentors, facilitators and emotional conformism" (Furedi, 2017:17).

Whilst some of the students in my study talked about difficulties adjusting there was little evidence of the "display of fragility" that Furedi mentions. Anna, for example suggested it would difficult for students to ask for help. McNeela and Bredin (2010) also found that there was a reluctance amongst students to get help and support, and that there is still a stigma attached to seeking support. Rather than an overt display of fragility, I would argue there is perhaps a more hidden fragility during the transition to university. Contrary to the in-your-face emotionalism that Furedi talks about and it being easy to be open and be emotional with peers alcohol is a used a tool to initiate conversations, making it easier to open up or "see each other's hearts". Kantannis (2000) found there is a reluctance to seek support from professional services. She argues that developing a network of friends is critical to their level of adjustment. However, many are reluctant to discuss their concerns, with only just over half saying they would do so and that it would be most likely to be friends with whom they felt comfortable. When students first come to university, they may not necessarily know anyone well enough to feel comfortable about talking about problems, worries or fears. However, the published literature, as well as my study, show that alcohol is used to bridge this gap, enabling people to talk more openly with those they do not know very well or "to see each other's hearts" (Measham and Brain, 2008). In my study some of the students indicate that alcohol makes it makes it easier to share feelings. In this respect, it could be argued that alcohol plays a positive role in enabling students to feel more comfortable about being open about their feelings. Kantannis (2000) suggests that,

> "What students needed was the opportunity to express concerns and vent frustrations rather than seeking expert counselling; the issues that concerned them were not seen as being of such significance as to warrant professional

attention. In most cases it was moral support that was being sought, a case of the old adage: 'a trouble shared is a trouble halved'. Thus, reinforcing the significance of social transition as a great need that students require to have fulfilled, especially in the initial experience of first-year at university."
(Kantannis, 2000:3)

Although the study conducted by Kantannis is almost 20 years old, the findings are still relevant, particularly in light of the reported increase in mental health problems and suicides in universities (BBC, April 2018). A recent transnational study, conducted on behalf of the World Health Organisation, regarding mental health and the transition to college or university, showed that 1 in 3 students making the transition to university report experiencing mental health problems (Auerbach et al, 2018). Indeed the report points to the transition occurring at a sensitive part of the life cycle when young people are more likely to experience emotional problems and mental disorders. It suggests that approximately 75% of those with a mental disorder have their onset prior to the age of 24 and goes on to argue that despite treatments being available only a minority of students obtain treatment.

Whilst consideration should be given to avoid labelling and stigmatising particular behaviours there is perhaps a middle ground between this and giving consideration to the emotional wellbeing of students.

9.9. Health messages, guilt, responsibility and risk

An understanding about what students experience during the transition to university, how it relates to their drinking motivations, and how it relates to wider pressures and influences regarding alcohol, could be useful for policy makers wishing to work towards reducing consumption in the student population, particularly during the transition to university. It is clear that current measures, particularly the wider public

health messages that focus on advice about healthy drinking levels and risk, have minimal impact on the students I interviewed and evidence, discussed shortly, suggests that this is the case for most young people. I now go on to provide discussion relating to findings outlined in chapter 8, which provides some insight in to why public health messages may have minimal impact. I then go on to discuss whether an alternative approach or perspective may prove to be more effective.

The findings presented in chapter 8 show how students defended against their drinking being perceived as problematic and how they expressed guilt about excessive consumption. I argued that this was in part, because of public health messages about excessive consumption, placing emphasis on "responsible" drinking and because of historical moral attitudes. However, I argued that the students I interviewed, despite expressing guilt and showing concern about the health implications of excessive drinking were choosing to ignore the advice given about risky drinking. Some of them talked about the potential risks and showed some concern but were keen to stress their drinking did not fall in to this category. They compared themselves with others and felt that as everyone was doing the same it was "normal" and therefore not a problem which I suggested this corresponds with Social Norms theory (Berkowitz and Perkins, 1986).

There seemed to be an element of weighing up risks against the benefits of drinking. However, although they choose to ignore these messages and stress that they do not consider their drinking problematic, they also expressed an uneasiness about their drinking. This uneasiness manifested itself through expressions of guilt about drinking excessively but also in the way they raised the subject of quantities drunk, problematic

drinking, responsibility and healthy limits. They appeared to have mixed feelings, as if they were trying to weigh up whether what they were doing was risky or not. Mike in particular referred to "ignoring advice" and commented on how he considered that he was putting his social life before his health because he felt it was more important. Anna, although indicating that she does not feel her drinking is problematic, shows awareness and an understanding of the guidelines, but then asks, "where do you draw the line between what is ok and healthy?" (which I understood to mean the difference between healthy and unhealthy). She is questioning the guidelines and therefore trying to ascertain whether it is a problem or not. Anna did not talk about the amounts she drank, although from what she said it was clear she frequently drank above the recommended weekly limits. However, what she seems to be saying here is that she knows she drinks above the recommended limits and she says she does not think this is a problem, she then seems to want clarification about what would constitute it being a problem. She perhaps wants some reassurance that what she is doing is not a problem because, in reality, she is not quite sure herself.

What I have outlined raises the question about the purpose, effectiveness and even fairness about the guidelines and information available. They are loose, perhaps a bit woolly, not definitive and perhaps even open to interpretation and guesswork. There is conflicting advice and differing guidelines globally, for example in the UK, 14 units a week is considered the "safe" drinking levels for women, and more recently, for men although subsequent studies have suggested this should be lowered to 12.5 (NHS, 2018). Another study suggests that all alcohol consumption is unsafe (Lancet, 2018). Internationally, guidelines differ ranging from as low as 10.5 in Denmark and as high as

35 in Spain (Arnett, 2016). What these guidelines do is provide guidelines on what is considered to be lowest level of risk, but do not inform the public about a sliding scale of risk which I suggest is perhaps what Anna may have been seeking. Information relating to sliding scales is available and recently an extensive piece of collaborative research was conducted trans-nationally, involving 120 researchers, examining risk thresholds for consumption (Wood et al, 2018). One of the problems is how, or even if at all, to convey these risks to the general public.

> "The issue for many in the alcohol field though remains how best to communicate drinking guidelines and associated risks. Whilst most ultimately support the goal of informed decision making, the real world complexity of alcohol harms and how drinkers take note of - or indeed dismiss - alcohol-related messages leaves many ongoing questions over how to make use of such evidence". (Alcohol Policy UK, 2018)

Individuals are in effect being "informed" and asked to take responsibility for their drinking but the question is whether existing guidelines constitute being "fully informed".

Of course, just because the participants in the study were clearly "not respecting" the guidelines, as Mike put it, does not mean that they are necessarily ignored by all students or the rest of the population. However, there is evidence to suggest such campaigns are generally only effective when used in conjunction with other strategies and interventions. (Gill and Boylan, 2010; Wakefield et al, 2010). There is also a lack of evidence of the effectiveness, in particular the long-term effectiveness, of such messages (Mahoney, 2015). There is also a question about the ethics of such measures in that, if they are not particularly effective at changing behaviour, and engender feelings of guilt and worry unnecessarily, what purpose do they serve?

Guttman and Salmon (2004) suggest that ethical consideration should be given to informing the public about particular risks and dangers because doing so, whilst raising awareness also may have unintended adverse effects in that they may "label and stigmatise, expand social gaps, and promote health as a value" (Guttman and Salmon, 2004:531). One may argue that governments have a duty to inform the public about potential risks but there perhaps needs to be a balance between informing and causing unnecessary anxiety. Whilst not suggesting that the impact of such health messages was damaging to the students I interviewed I would argue they play a part in creating the feelings of guilt that the student talked about and also perhaps a certain amount of worry. It was as, I have already stated, clear that the messages had been heard but not necessarily acted upon. I wonder too if the lack of clarity and conflicting information leads to a feeling that they are not particularly trustworthy which results in a higher chance of them being ignored.

Both Mike and Sam in particular referred to a responsibility that comes with being an adult and drinking, with Mike suggesting that there is a "responsibility not to abuse it". These narratives reflect messages about individual responsibility to safeguard their own health and to minimise risk.   Hache (2007) suggests this notion of responsibility is a tool of neo-liberal governments to hold individuals accountable for their behaviour and abdicates governments of their responsibility for individual welfare. This concept is evident in a number of spheres relating to food, exercise and even youth justice. Calculations are made about the risks of particular behaviours and citizens are made responsible for managing these risks. It has been argued, that as a result we now have a "risk society" (Beck, 1992;Giddens, 1999). Furedi (2017) argues a range of issues are

now considered in terms of the risk they pose ranging from "sex and stress to drugs and alcohol" (Furedi, 2017:7). Rose (2003) suggests that this had led to a move towards trying to calculate possible undesired events in the decision-making processes in order to try and prevent them.

Although preventing undesired events may appear to be attractive, there are a number of issues with the calculation of risk. Lindsay (2010) argues "risk discourse" is taken for granted and we talk about risk as if it is a real danger when it actually about probability, giving people the likelihood that something will happen as a result of a particular behaviour. "(T)he deployment of risk discourse in the guidelines emphasises only the negative outcomes of consumption" (Lindsay, 2010:477) and does not mention the possible pleasure derived from consuming. She suggests that people not following guidelines has more to do with cultural and social pressures rather than a lack of interest. She goes on to suggest that,

> "We should support communities and social groups to make change, reduce social inequality and make it easier to practice self-control. Instead, our current social landscape is dominated on the one hand by market-driven incitement to excessive consumption and on the other hand increasingly shrill advice and warnings by public health experts who (unintentionally) operate to raise anxiety and blame individuals for the social circumstances they find themselves in and the choices available to them" (Lindsay, 2010:485)

Haydock (2015) argues there is a hypocrisy in alcohol policy. He argues on the one hand "British people have been invited to binge" (Haydock, 2015:143) because of changes in the way alcohol is produced and marketed but then told they need to be "sensible" and behave responsibly. Pyysiäinen et al (2017) refers to this as the 'governmentality' approach that "transfers responsibility to individual agents through an 'appeal of freedom' mechanism" (Pyysiäinen et al, 2017:215). They argue this

mode of government, by giving people responsibility, is designed to make people feel empowered and that they are making choices rather than being controlled. However, this shifts responsibility to the individual and is, in effect, a reverse form of control. It works by creating feelings of insecurity and fear. Whilst not suggesting that the participants were feeling fearful, I have suggested it seems to engender feelings of uncertainty about their drinking. Certainly, it is worth considering the conflicts they express, within the framework offered by Haydock. On the one hand they are part of a culture in which alcohol is central and drinking is encouraged, or as Haydock (2015) suggests they are "invited to binge" on the other they are berated for doing so and made to feel guilty because they are not being responsible.

Earlier I suggested that whilst the students showed awareness of safe drinking guidelines they were "disregarding them". Lindsay (2010) argues there a "substantial gap between the guidelines and the ways in which most people live their lives" (Lindsay, 2010:475) and asks how we can make sense of the disconnect. Lindsay suggests we inhabit contextualised social worlds and that alcohol, as well as food, are relevant to our social identities and central to social practices and that failing to comply with healthy living guidelines has implications for well-being. I have already argued that guidelines on safe levels of consumption vary internationally and Lindsay suggests such guidelines are complex and political. Their purpose is to enable rationale choices about consumption based on scientific knowledge but this is difficult. She argues that there tends to be less adherence to guidelines in those aged 18-24. Finally, drawing on the research of Measham (2006) she suggests that perhaps young people are choosing to ignore the experts and coming to their own conclusions about

acceptable levels of drinking, deciding what is risky and what constitutes health and moral self-management for themselves.

I argue then that, rather than focussing on problematic use and trying to cajole people in to changing their behaviour through scare tactics, that clearly do not work, there is more value in exploring how the experience can be improved and looking at things more holistically.   It is interesting that some interventions used to address the problematic drinking of individuals do just that. These look at the wider reasons why individuals are drinking rather than focussing specifically on the drinking itself. An example of this is (Motivational interviewing (Miller and Rollnick, 2011) which works on the basis that the client makes the decision for change themselves. The technique depends on the skill of the trained practitioner who uses reflection rather than making suggestions or guiding a client in any way. The idea that if the client has come to their own conclusion about what needs to change and how to go about this change they are more likely to stick to it. It addresses the psychosocial reasons for drinking and acknowledges they are the result of a complex interplay between the psyche of the individual, their experiences and the wider environmental and social influences. Whilst ultimately it is the responsibility of the individual to make decisions about changing their behaviour the process is not about forcing people to make change or making them feel guilty about their drinking. The idea of responsibility in this setting differs from the notion of responsibility apparent in public health discourse. Korp (2010) suggests that health promotion models do not necessarily look at social context and power within society and place emphasis on individual responsibility. I am suggesting that taking a holistic approach is the key to success in individual interventions. Whole

population measures to reduce drinking, advocated by the public health agenda, do not use this approach and it is for this reasons they have minimal impact.

I have provided discussion about how students experience the transition to university and how it relates to their drinking motivations, which was the main aim of my research. I have also shown how I have met my research objectives, showing how drinking motivations are multi-layered, by obtaining an alternative perspective on student drinking, and to examine how student drinking during the transition relates to wider policy. I have also addressed the overarching questions I had which related to risk and responsibility and whether student drinking, particularly during the transition to university is of concern. I now go on to discuss the implications of my research.

9.10. Implications

This section outlines the implications of the study showing how the information gained from the study may useful for universities seeking to improve the transition to university, and those who are interested in exploring alternative ways of addressing excessive alcohol consumption amongst students, or both. They provide an alternative perspective of student drinking and may therefore have implications for wider policy relating to drinking amongst students and young people also. The study also adds weight to the argument that context is important.   In addition, the study uses a relatively recently developed research method which, to date, has not been used in this field. This adds weight to current debates about the use of methods of research that draw on narratives or "stories" and focus on experiences. Given a recent interest on the concept of the "student voice", this has potential implications for exploring how we consider students perspectives on their university experience.

- The findings presented in chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate that fitting in and developing a sense of belonging is paramount for students who have left home to come to university. Alcohol plays a clear role, for some students, in this process, providing a reason to get together and making social interaction easier. It is apparent that alcohol provides common ground and a way of identifying with others, which appears to be crucial in the early days of university. Drinking seems to be the easiest and quickest route to making friends and developing a sense of belonging for many students. Although this does not necessarily equate with excessive or problematic drinking the evidence suggests that students regularly binge drink and drink above the recommended weekly units. For those wishing to change this culture this poses a challenge. Given the lack of research relating to the transition to university and drinking there is scope for further research in this area which could be used to further inform measures to improve how students experience the first few months of university.

- The Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is a key finding from the study, which shows the potential for further research. The research on FoMO and drinking is scant. This study makes a significant addition to the existing research on student drinking and the research on the subject of FoMO. To date, focus has been predominantly on the use of social media and FoMO and therefore there is scope to extend this and explore how it relates to drinking or other behaviours. Further research exploring this relationship with alcohol could prove useful for those interested in reducing consumption amongst student, or those seeking to better understand how students experience the transition to university.

- Students who leave home to come to university find themselves in shared houses, flats or halls of residence with others who are not necessarily on their course and with whom they may have little in common. However, in the early stages, getting on with these people is perhaps crucial in terms of how they adjust. Whilst there may be other opportunities to develop friendships such as clubs or, through the degree programme this is likely to be a slower process. As the study shows there is a sense of urgency to make friends and in the early days of university and this is far more likely to happen with those they live with. No doubt being in student accommodation is part of the attraction of coming to university. This presents "on tap" opportunities to socialise, which, for the students I interviewed, involves drinking. Whilst this in itself is not a negative thing it does appear that there is pressure to constantly socialise even if as Lisa said "a night off would have been nice". The theme of FoMO showed the difficulties students have in turning down opportunities to socialise. Being in student accommodation creates a situation where students, who, even though on the whole, are enjoying the experience, are constantly "invited" to drink. Of

course this is part of what many would suggest is a "rite of passage" but equally it could be argued that it is this that sets drinking patterns that continue throughout university and beyond. There is potential for more research that explores how students could socialise in others ways. For example, students could be introduced to each other prior to coming to university, either virtually, in person, or both. This would remove some of the apprehension they feel about not knowing anyone and could possibly have some impact on the sense of urgency and anxiety about getting to know people and making friends quickly in the first few weeks. In the literature on the transition to university, students pointed out that there were fewer opportunities to socialise with people on their course and therefore they tended to socialise with people in student accommodation. Further research could explore whether there is potential for developing better social interaction in course, particularly in the first few weeks and months of university. Much attention is paid to providing an induction "schedule" during the day for students but less consideration is given to what students do when they are not in classes or lectures. Whilst during the first few weeks there are numerous fresher activities it is not necessarily something all students want to take part in or feel comfortable or confident in doing especially if they have not made friends to accompany them. As I have already pointed out, many of these events involve alcohol consumption, which will not suit those who do not drink or who drink moderately.   There is perhaps value in exploring whether more support outside the curriculum, particularly in the first few months and particularly for those who have left home, and maybe for those who do not drink, would be beneficial. Whilst this may be considered as "nannying" it is clear from my study, and the wider research about the transition to university, that there is a proportion of students who might benefit from this.

- For those who drink moderately, or even those like Lisa who just want a break from it from time to time, the pressures and temptation to go along with what everyone is doing is evidently difficult to resist. Recently we have seen the introduction of alcohol free student accommodation in some universities (BBC, 2018) for those who do not drink or do not want to be in noisy student accommodation. A recent report (Busby, 2018) showed that than one in five students say they are teetotal – and the demand for alcohol-free accommodation halls. Whilst not advocating that all student accommodation should be alcohol free, which would no doubt be immensely unpopular, this indicates that some students do want an alternative and therefore an exploration of options might be of benefit. Particularly given that many students' main route to a social life is through student accommodation.

- A key concern for all universities is student retention. Given the evidence that students are more likely to drop out in the first year attention to how students experience the transition to university is paramount. However, this is a challenge for universities with large student numbers, lower staff to student ratios and high demand for student support services. However, the findings from this study show that students do need additional support to help ease the transition. Even if it is some consider this is pandering to a "snowflake" generation, which I do not think is the case, not ensuring that students are well supported during this period can have an impact on retention rates and potentially their wellbeing. It makes sense to implement robust systems to ensure that students do not feel "lost in the crowd". Some universities may already offer longer induction periods but it is clear the transition process is lengthy and even longer induction periods may not be the answer. Indeed, it was clear from my study and from the published research, that lack of structure during induction week was problematic. This was particularly difficult for those in accommodation where other residents did not arrive at the same time, leaving them alone for two days. Such experiences can have a huge impact on how students feel in the early days.   Therefore extending the induction period is not necessarily about having a lengthy induction programmes but more about giving consideration to the fact that students take longer than a week or two to adjust. This means that universities perhaps need to give greater consideration to the pastoral care they offer students during this period. Most universities will provide an element of pastoral care for students, providing them with personal tutors during this period but contact is often limited. Not all students are likely to need such extended support but for those who are struggling, finding the transition difficult and having problems fitting in or adjusting, mechanisms to address this could make the difference. This however is not just about offering support which services which student are often reluctant to access but finding a way of embedding them within programmes. This also potentially addresses some of the issues, outlined in the thesis, relating to student wellbeing and mental health.

- The study has implication for wider policy. The findings provide insight in to the psychosocial nature of drinking and show that drinking motivations are complex. Health messages about safe drinking limits, which tell people how to behave, have minimal impact because they do not acknowledge these complexities. If governments are serious about reducing consumption greater consideration needs to be given to the wider context and to why people consume alcohol in the way they do. A more holistic approach is needed to address structural issues. With regard to students in general this is giving consideration to the university environment as a whole, and with regard to the transition giving consideration to how this is experienced and how it can be improved. In other words, it is about adopting a more holistic approach rather

than focussing on problematic use and placing responsibility on individuals to change their behaviour. It is in effect about considering context, which I have explored in chapter 4. I also discuss this in more detail further down when discussing implications in relation to "student voice".

- Although the students all talked about their relationship with their parents this was not explored in depth and I felt it would have been worth exploring this further. LaBrie and Sessoms (2012) suggest there is evidence that parents still have some influence over their children's drinking once at university, suggesting that regular contact results in less problematic drinking.   Further research in this area may be useful, not just in relation to drinking but also with regards to how well students adjust. Whilst some may consider that once young people leave home they are adults and that parental support should be minimal it is apparent that for some for some the process of becoming independent takes longer.

- The findings from my study and the published research show there is a discrepancy between what students expect university to be like and what it is like. It is perhaps worth investigating how new students could be better informed about what it will be like. Whilst it is not possible to completely prepare students for what they will experience, implementing schemes to address this may go some way towards helping them adjust.

- Finally, a key implication of this study is the use of the FANI method itself. To date, there is no evidence that this has been used to conduct research in to alcohol consumption or to explore student experiences of university. It has potential for application in either of these areas and possibly alcohol consumption on a wider level too. The study demonstrates the usefulness of methods of research that draw on experience and use narratives or "stories" to understand phenomena. These generate rich, in depth material about experience, that is located within a wider context. They embrace the idea that knowledge is produced by humans, rather than treating knowledge as something that is discovered. They also recognise that the knowledge produced is co-constructed through human interaction and discourse. This moves away from the idea that knowledge is separate from the person who constructed it, and that the political is separate from the personal (Ryan, 2006). It also addresses some of the limitations of methods that try to attempt to turn human experiences in to "data".

This method could be applicable to student engagement and to the recent emergence of the concept of the "student voice", the aim of which is ensure

students have a say in how courses and university services are delivered. In reality, this "voice" is garnered through surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and in tick box in course feedback from students about curriculum delivery and content. Williams (2015) suggests that this is arguably more about league tables than a real acknowledgement of what students want and, Brooman et al (2015) argue that it is maybe more about quality assurance than active student involvement. There is however evidence of more meaningful student involvement. For example, Bourke (2016) on student involvement curriculum development and design; O'Neill and McMahon (2013) on student centred learning; Carey (2005) and Athakkakath et al (2015) on students as co-producers. The FANI method has something to offer here and presents a way of addressing student agency (Charteris and Smardon, 2019). Bourek (2016) argues that "(H)istorically student voice has remained largely unheard, subordinated to the more powerful voices of teachers, school leaders, curricula developers and policy-makers" (Bourke, 2016:95). Whilst the FANI method has been developed as a research tool, it does not mean it cannot be developed to be used in this way and, engaging students in this way is a form of ongoing research in itself. Of course, there are time and cost implications in using such methods but this should not deter attempts to implement such initiatives. Bishop (2018) suggests such approaches will

> "require buy-in from both the staff and students across the institution at all levels, a complex task that will involve the questioning of values and a change in culture and perceptions from all involved",

Bishop goes on to argue that this is not something that will "ever be complete or achieved through isolated projects and will be a continual and ever-changing process that has no fixed end point or eureka moment."(Bishop, 2018:11).

This has implications then for policy makers either on a national level regarding higher education or within universities about how they engage with students. The focus being that students at the centre of policy, whether it be university policy or wider government policy making, rather than "experts" deciding what the issues are and how they should be tackled.

9.11. Limitations

One limitation of the study is that it is not generalizable. The sample size is small and whilst not claiming that such a small sample size is in any way representative of the entire student population it provides valuable insight in to how some students may experience the transition. What is of particular interest is that five of the participants provided similar narratives relating to the need to develop bonds, to find "like-minded" friends, and to quickly develop a sense of belonging. However one participant did not appear to have this sense of urgency.   Sam did not express the same urgency or concern for developing friendship or concerns about missing out and this was because he was still living at home and was only on his course for one year. In other words, he was not going through a period of liminality in the way the others were. I also pointed out that Mike's narrative at first appeared to be different and he did not seem to share the same sense of urgency.   However having explored the narrative in more depth I realised Mike had a bit of a safety net in finding that one of his friends from home happened to be in the same flat. This allowed him to be little less concerned about having to go along with the crowd.   It could be that a different set of students might present a different set of findings I concede this could be a possibility but even with such a small group such similarities are noteworthy. However, ultimately the purpose of such a small sample size is not to provide data that is generalizable, but to provide in depth insight that is not possible with larger samples.

Another limitation was that I was unable to obtain second interviews with three of the participants. In the case of two students, this was for practical reasons but one

participant did not want to do a second interview. This meant that I did not have the opportunity to ask follow up questions and check interpretations. This was something that I had not anticipated, and is something that those using the method might wish to give consideration to. I do not feel it jeopardised the study particularly as I felt that each interview provided rich and valuable data from which to work from. This did leave me with a number of questions about these three participants that I would have liked to have follow up and but I was able to discuss a number of my emerging themes with the participants that I did have a second interview with.

9.12. Conclusion

My research started with an interest in alcohol but as it progressed, I became increasingly interested in exploring how students experience the transition to university. The findings from my study, combined with evidence from the published research shows that alcohol has a particular and significant role during the transition to university. The findings suggest that socialising rather than the fun, or the purely hedonistic aspect of drinking, is of equal if not more importance. This gives weight to my argument that current discourses relating to student drinking and the transition to university, rest on stereotypical, clichéd and perhaps even outdated assumptions. Alcohol is clearly used as a way of facilitating the social process rather than, or as well as, getting drunk for purely hedonistic reasons. Whilst not denying that students drink for hedonistic reasons, or that the representations are entirely wrong, the study offers an alternative perspective or narrative and gives weight to the argument that drinking motivations are multi-layered and complex. Not only are terms such as "culture of intoxication" or "determined drunkenness" or "binge drinking" value laden they

present a one-dimensional perspective and perpetuate an obsession with amounts drunk, with problematic drinking or particular styles of drinking which takes focus away from the reasons why students and or/young people might be drinking in this way.

It is perhaps only recently that there has been an acknowledgement that some students have difficulty in adjusting to university.   Indeed as I discussed, I found starting at university difficult at times and it took me some time to adjust. However, it is not something I ever talked to anyone about, believing my experience to be different from everyone else's.   I think I would have benefited from knowing that other people were having similar experiences. However, it is clear from the published research, and from my study, that some students find adjusting to university difficulty.   Whilst most do manage to adjust there is evidence that some do not, this can lead to them struggling with their studies and possibly dropping out of university. This thesis has explored how the students experience the transition to university and how it relates to their drinking motivations and it has shown that alcohol is used to help ease this transition. Whilst acknowledging that alcohol is embedded in student culture, and that changing that culture may be difficult, I have suggested that having a better understanding of how students experience this may be useful for implementing measures to improve the experience. It may also consequently have some impact on alcohol consumption.

Care should be given to ensure particular behaviours are not labelled as mental health problems when they are not. However, this does not mean that a fear of doing so should result in a disregard for people's emotional well-being. There has to be a

balance between encouraging independence, and ensuring students are supported, and more so during the transition to university.   There are ever increasing pressures on young people, in a rapidly changing world. Universities have also changed with the student population having almost doubled and this has an impact on the student experience. There has also been an increase in mental health problems amongst young people and this is indicative of some of these pressures. Whilst not wishing to suggest that struggling with the transition to university equates to having mental health problems, I suggest that there is a connection with emotional wellbeing. I have argued that the transition to university represents a unique time in young people's lives during which they are experiencing a number of changes and therefore giving consideration to their wellbeing during this time should be paramount.

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Exploring student drinking motivations during transition to and in the first term of university.

Are you a first year student and do you have an hour spare to take part in research? The research is about your expectations of, and motivations for, drinking before coming to university and your experiences and reasons for drinking in your first term.

Background

I am a Part-time PhD Student and a lecturer in the Social Care and Social Work Department. I am conducting interviews as part of my PhD on drinking motivations. I want to find out more about students' drinking experiences and motivations for drinking in the transition from school or college to university and in their first term at university.

Participants

I would like to interview male and female students from Manchester Metropolitan University. I will speak informally with people who are interested in taking part before the research interview.

Participants will meet me for an interview that will last approximately one hour. Although the term interview is used, it is not a formal process and participants will be encouraged to relax and be as open and honest as possible with their answers. The interview will begin with a number of pre-set questions but there will be an opportunity for wider discussion about the subject where appropriate. The interviews will be conducted on MMU premises during the normal working day, or an alternative venue if preferred.

Confidentiality

With permission, interviews will be recorded on a dictaphone. Recordings from the interview will be transcribed and your name will not be used in the transcript or in any writing, papers or articles resulting from the interview. Where necessary, a pseudonym or number will be used in place of a name. Any names that could disclose your identity, such as names of people and places mentioned in the interview, will be changed.

Recordings will be kept in a secure locked unit and will be deleted on successful completion of the PhD

Support

Whilst unlikely, the interview may illicit emotional responses resulting in the need for support. In line with advice from the ethics committee, all participants will be given an information sheet with contact details of support services. If necessary, the interviewer will refer the participant to appropriate support services within MMU. If you disclose any information during the interview that raises serious concerns about your welfare or that of another person, it may be necessary to breach confidentiality and seek advice from my supervisor.

Consent

You will be required to complete a consent form in order to take part in the research. This means you are consenting to take part in the interview and that you understand the purpose of the interview and the way in which the material obtained from the interview is to be used. You may withdraw from the process at any point and, on request, ask that recordings be destroyed.

Contact

If you wish to discuss any aspect of the research, or have any concerns, you can contact me at any stage of the process and my contact details are below. You can also contact my dissertation supervisor, Professor Sarah Galvani, s.galvani@mmu.ac.uk, 0161 247 2579

I'd love to hear from you and am really looking forward to listening to what you have to say.

If you are interested, please email me at h.ogilvie@mmu.ac.uk.

Helen

Helen Ogilvie, Senior Lecturer, Department of Social Care and Social Work, Manchester Metropolitan University, Brooks Building, 53 Bonsall St Manchester, M15 6GX: +44(0)161 247 2138

Appendix 2

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HEALTH, PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL CARE

M E M O R A N D U M

FACULTY ACADEMIC ETHICS COMMITTEE

To: Helen Ogilvie

From: Prof Carol Haigh

Date: 20/01/2016

Subject: Ethics Application 1320

Title: Exploring Student Drinking Motivations.

Thank you for your application for ethical approval.

The Faculty Academic Ethics Committee review process has recommended approval of your ethics application. This approval is granted for 42 months for full-time students or staff and 60 months for part-time students. Extensions to the approval period can be requested.

If your research changes you might need to seek ethical approval for the amendments. Please request an amendment form.

We wish you every success with your project.

Prof Carol Haigh and Prof Jois Stansfield
Chair and Deputy Chair
Faculty Academic Ethics Committee

Rianna – Pen Portrait

Rianna is one of two children. Her sister had a car accident a few years prior her coming to university and understandably this has had a huge bearing on how she has felt about coming to university. There is a real mixture of emotions. Her sister would have been at university the year before her if the accident hadn't happened so she feels guilty that she has come to university and her sister has not. She also feels guilty that she has left her family behind to cope as her sister still needs a considerable amount of care. So, for Rianna coming to university has been fraught with mixed feelings.   It was clear that she felt enormous pressure not to mess up the opportunity that her sister did not have and therefore although she wants to take part in the drinking and social part she is also conscious that this could seem selfish. There appears to be an enormous sense of guilt about going out and enjoying herself and drinking when her sister and the family are back at home. This however does not stop her from doing but it is something she feels she needs to hide from the family both in terms of not wanting them to think she is being frivolous but also that she does not want them to worry about her going out drunk.

Rianna did not drink very much before coming to university. This seemed to be more to do with opportunity than not wanting to drink. She did not mix with other young people who were drinking and did not get invited to the parties where drinking occurred. I asked if she thinks she didn't drink much before she came to university because of her sister's accident. She said she felt it was partly that but also just because of her friendship group. She was aware that others were drinking but was not part of that scene. Coming to university then has provided her with a new opportunity to experience this. In the first week at university, she felt isolated as she struggled to make contact with people. However, a discussion with a girl in the flat and an offer to go out for a drink with a group meant that the isolation was short lived.

Whilst she was clearly nervous about coming to university there is a sense too that she does not want to share that with her family and add to the burden they already have.

Although Rianna seemed to have been nervous about drinking at first it is something she likes doing and says she likes getting drunk. Although she does not talk about how much she drinks or how often she makes it clear that she does not consider her drinking to be a problem. She says she drinks because it makes it easier to be sociable and also to help her forget.

My impression of Rianna is that she and her family have been through a difficult time prior to coming to university. Her sister's accident seems to dominate and unlike some of the other participants she did not talk about her upbringing, what her family life was like, or her relationship with her parents. Her drinking motivations are mixed, whilst she says she drinks for fun and to be sociable she admits that she sometimes drinks to help her "forget" and by this, she seems to mean things relating to what happened to her family although there may be other reasons and things going on her life that she does not mention.

From little she tells me about her family it is hard to get an idea about her relationship with her parents but I sense they are close. She feels a sense of responsibility towards them and wants to protect them.

Appendix 4

Rianna – Second interview

1. Your sister's accident has clearly had a big impact on you and your family. You talked about feeling guilty about drinking and having fun at university and I wondered to what extent this was about feeling bad that your sister could not go to university and to what extent it was just about feeling guilty about drinking

2. You said "when I am drunk" I don't have to think about anything else. I wondered if this was connected with worrying about your sister or whether there are other things you do not want to think about.

3. You indicated that you did not want to worry your family by phoning them and telling them that you were struggling. I felt that they made things more difficult for you. Can you tell me a bit more about that please.

4. When you first arrived at university you found it difficult to get to know people in your flat but this eventually happened. You mentioned that you got to know a few people on the course but they did not become friends. Please can you tell me a bit more about that.

5. I know you said that did not drink very much before you came to university and that now you drink more. I wonder what you think about that and whether, if you had not come to university whether you think this would be different.

Appendix 5

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HEALTH, PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL CARE

M E M O R A N D U M

FACULTY ACADEMIC ETHICS COMMITTEE

To: Helen Ogilvie

From: Prof Carol Haigh

Date: 17/12/2013

Subject: Ethics Application 1203

Title: Drinking Diaries

Thank you for your application for ethical approval.

The Faculty Academic Ethics Committee review process has recommended approval of your ethics application. This approval is granted for 42 months for full-time students or staff and 60 months for part-time students. Extensions to the approval period can be requested.

If your research changes you might need to seek ethical approval for the amendments. Please request an amendment form.

We wish you every success with your project.

Prof Carol Haigh and Prof Jois Stansfield
Chair and Deputy Chair
Faculty Academic Ethics Committee

Appendix 6

Manchester Metropolitan University

Exploring drinking motivations during the transition to university – Further information about the study

Thank you for showing an interest in the project. The following provides you with more details about the method used for the study.

The method I am using for the study is the Free Association Narrative Interview Method (FANI). Interviews are unstructured and allow participants to talk freely (to free associate) about what is importance and relevance to them in relation to the subject of the study. Although Free Association is something that is used in psychoanalysis that is not how is used in this setting and the interviews are not designed in any way to be therapeutic.

Once the interviews have taken place I spend time analysing what has been said and transcribe the interview so I have a written version of the interview. This will be completely anonymised. I will be conducting other interviews too and I will be looking at how what you have said is similar or different from what others have said. I will then draw up a set of questions to ask you in a second interview. Asking you these questions in the second interview allows me to check my interpretations with you and to ask you further questions about what you talked about.

When I start writing up my findings I will use excerpts from what you said in the interview. This may involve short sentences or whole paragraphs. Whilst it would be possible for you to recognise what you have said I ensure that it is presented so that anyone reading it will not be able to identify you. You will be given a pseudonym and any other names of people or places changed.

The interview will be conducted at Manchester Metropolitan University during the working day in a classroom.

Helen Ogilvie
Senior Lecturer
Manchester Metropolitan University

Contact addresses and phone numbers of support services/agencies.

1. **MMU Counselling, Health & Wellbeing Service**
   Manchester Metropolitan University
   Room 1.13
   New Business School and Student Hub
   All Saints Campus
   Oxford Rd
   Manchester
   M15 6BH

Telephone 0161 247 3493

Email counselling@mmu.ac.uk

We are open 8.45am-12noon and 12.45pm-4.30pm Monday to Friday.
Open Door is Monday to Friday 1pm-2pm

2. **Alcohol Concern**

If you are worried about your own or someone else's drinking contact Drinkline for a confidential conversation. Call free on 0300 123 1110 (weekdays 9am-8pm, weekends 11am – 4pm)

3. **Manchester drug and alcohol services**

Drug and alcohol services

The Brian Hore Unit (BHU)

The unit offers abstinence-based treatment for people with alcohol problems, including those with dual diagnosis (people with both substance abuse and mental health issues), who live in Manchester. Services available at the BHU include a drop in centre, daily support groups, individual counselling, daily detoxification and psychiatric treatment.

Dual Diagnosis

Dual diagnosis is the term for combined substance misuse and mental illness.

Community Alcohol Team

The team provides city wide support for anyone over the age of 16 who is worried about their own or someone else's drinking. Appointments take place on a one-to-one basis and advice is also given to family members or unpaid carers who may have a right to a carer's assessment. The service is available in GP surgeries and many local health centres. To book an appointment for yourself, or to refer someone on their behalf, telephone 0161 234 5055 Monday to Friday 9am - 4.30pm.

Further information about each service, including contact details, are available by clicking on the links under 'Drug and alcohol services'.

4. You can also obtain advice about getting help and support from your own GP (General Practitioner/Doctor)