'Have you seen the people who just stand outside of MacDonalds? I am one of those people'. 'Socially' excluded girls and their experiences of exclusion.

Anna Conolly

Presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology
School of Human Sciences
University of Surrey

98,980 words excluding references

2008
Abstract

This thesis provides an account of a qualitative exploration into the lives of a group of young women who the Government defined as socially excluded – those excluded from school. Osler et al (2002, 2003) are the foremost researchers to focus on girls excluded from school. Their work can be described as innovative, however it lacked insight into social and familial factors, in order to understand the girls' experiences in biographical contexts. In response this research sought to explore the girls' social, home and school careers (Humphrey, 1993) and the roles and / or identities they constructed and performed in their everyday lives. More specifically exploration was made of how a group of socially excluded young women negotiated heteronormative femininities (and their use of agency and resistance in these negotiations).

Task-based interviews were conducted with thirty-one excluded young women aged between twelve and sixteen at varying locations in England, some of which experienced high to very high levels of social deprivation (ONS, 2005). Photo elicitation exercises and further interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of 15 of these young women. Access was sought through Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), educational establishments for young people who have been excluded from school. Analysis of the data revealed the significance of the deployment of differing femininities by the young women. It is the cumulative evidence within the analysis chapters which leads to the proposal that sociological understandings of girls excluded from school and young women in general needs to be somewhat broader and more inclusive and take into account the value that individuals' place on differing femininities which may resist heteronormative femininities.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my mum and my partner Matt for all the endless help and encouragement they have given me. I would also like to thank my friends (particularly the St George’s group).

Special thanks are owed to all the young women who took part in the research and to Jo Moran-Ellis and Paul Hodkinson. This research was funded by a PhD studentship provided by the Sociology Department, University of Surrey from 2003 to 2006.

I dedicate this thesis to Josh who has brought so much happiness and to Poppy and Suki who kept me company during the writing of this thesis.
PART I
Chapter 1: Introduction 1
1.1 School exclusion 1
1.2 Gender and school exclusion 4
1.3 Social exclusion 8
1.4 Aims 10
1.5 Theoretical and methodological implications 11
1.6 Outline of the thesis 13

Chapter 2: Conceptualising social exclusion, resistance & agency 16
2.1 The underclass 16
2.2 Social exclusion 18
2.3 School exclusion 22
2.4 After exclusion 27
2.5 Resistance, structure and agency 29
2.6 Bridging structure and agency 40
2.7 Summary 47

Chapter 3: Femininity and young women 50
3.1 The performativity of femininity 51
3.2 Dichotomous relationship of femininity & adolescence 53
3.3 ‘Girl’ culture 56
3.4 Class and femininity 60
3.5 Resisting femininity 75
3.6 Summary 82

PART II
Chapter 4: Methodology 84
4.1 The research setting and the young women 84
4.2 Gaining access but losing control of the research? 87
4.3 Gaining access again 88
4.4 Participatory research methods: a suitable method for excluded girls? 90
4.5 The reflexive co-construction of biographies 95
4.6 Status of the data generated and analytic approach 100
4.7 Interpretative repertoires 106
4.8 Summary 111

Chapter 5: Sample Characteristics 113
5.1 The PRUs visited in this study 113
5.2 Profile of interviewees 116

PART III 125

Chapter 6: School 127
6.1 Academic ability 128
6.2 Messing about and resistance 134
6.3 Rules, teachers and resistance 140
6.4 The final straw: Exclusion from school 148
6.5 Consequences of going to PRU 156
6.6 Summary 159

Chapter 7: Family and Transience 162
7.1 Families 163
7.2 Nicola: complex families 164
7.3 Kandice: boundaries and closeness 173
7.4 Jenni: hostile relations 177
7.5 Transience 184
7.6 Community 194
7.7 Summary 198
Appendix 5: An example of a family tree

Appendix 6: An example of a sentence completion
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Characteristics of Pupil Referral Units in this study</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Characteristics of interviewees</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

My initial idea for this research was to study a group of young people who had been excluded from school. It developed into a holistic examination of the biographical accounts of a group of young women who had been excluded from school and whom the government term 'socially excluded' (SEU, 1998). Therefore this is not a study of school exclusion but rather it concentrates on the lived experiences of a group of young women at the margins of society. This qualitative study sought to explore the biographies of the girls including their social, home and school, careers (Humphrey, 1993). It progressed to explore the identities they constructed within their labelled fields of excluded from school and living social exclusion. I begin this chapter in the same way that I began my research journey by looking at the issues and concerns surrounding school exclusion and particularly female exclusion from school.

1.1 School Exclusion

One of the concerns New Labour had when they came to power was the rising number of young people excluded from school. They asserted that:

Truancy and exclusions have reached a crisis point. The thousands of children who are not in school on most schooldays have become a significant cause of crime. Many of today's non-attenders are in danger of becoming tomorrow's criminals and unemployed (SEU, 1998: 4).

New Labour portrayed the high exclusion rates as a crisis within the education system, a hangover from years of Conservative government, which had the ability to bring society as a whole toppling down. The SEU issued a report in 1998 which warned of the likely consequences of high exclusion rates from schools. The report asserts that 'both truancy and exclusion are associated with a significantly higher likelihood of becoming a teenage parent, being unemployed or homeless later in life, or ending up in prison' (SEU, 1998). Also the report's authors contend that 'the wider community suffers because of the high levels of crime into which many truants and excluded pupils get drawn' (SEU, 1998).
Definitions of exclusion from school can be variable and some critics assert that this is in order to keep exclusions from appearing in official documents. There are three categories of exclusion which are widely recognised: permanent exclusion, where a pupil is removed from the register of a school; fixed term exclusion, where a pupil is excluded for a specific period of time; and informal exclusion which may last for a few days, or for much longer, and is not officially recorded or may be recorded as an authorised absence. There is no legal requirement for schools to inform LEAs about the incidence of fixed term exclusions (Gordon, 2001). The third type of exclusion, informal exclusion, can consist of the pupil being removed from a class but not being removed from the school premises, for example instead being made to sit in the corridor. Self exclusions also occur, where the child removes herself or himself from school. Officially exclusion is a disciplinary sanction that can only be exercised by a headteacher (or by a deputy where she / he is acting in the head’s absence). It should only be resorted to in response to serious breaches of a school’s policy on behaviour or of the criminal law (Gordon, 2001). Once the school’s governors and the LEA have confirmed the decision to exclude a child from a particular school, it then becomes the responsibility of the LEA to secure alternative education for the excluded student. A school with spare capacity cannot reject a student on the grounds that she/he has been excluded elsewhere (Gordon, 2001). It is common for excluded pupils to be placed in Pupil Referral Units (PRU), although places at these units tend to be limited, and consequently often serve as a stop-gap between schools for pupils, rather than providing long term schooling. Indeed, Pupil Referral Units became the location for the fieldwork on which this thesis is based. I found that for many of the young people I spoke to the education provided at these units was not full time.

The 1990s witnessed a large increase in the rate at which schools permanently excluded pupils. According to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) exclusions reached a peak of 12,700 in 1996/7, which represented a threefold increase between the early and mid-1990s (DfES, 2003). Various causes have been put forward to explain the increase in numbers of pupils excluded from school and these will be discussed more fully in chapter 2.
In 1998, the Social Exclusion Report, *Truancy and Social Exclusion* explicitly referred to the link between exclusion from school and longer term social exclusion. The report set targets for the reduction of truancy and exclusion. The overarching targets of the strategy were that by 2002: ‘there will be a reduction of one third in the number of both permanent and fixed terms exclusions from the current level; and all pupils excluded from school for more than three weeks will receive alternative full-time and appropriate education’ (SEU, 1998: 105). This implied returning to a permanent exclusion rate of about 8000 within a relatively short period of time (Gordon, 2001). The report issued guidance on exclusions which has statutory force, including the creation of new grounds of appeal and the ending of exclusions for ‘minor’ offences. The main thrust of the report was that schools should not use exclusion or condone truancy as a routine means of coping with disaffected or failing students. In 1999 guidance from the DfEE *Social Inclusion: pupil support* advised schools and LEAs to monitor the use of sanctions against black and ethnic minority pupils, highlighting the problems of racial harassment such pupils might face, and the importance of schools recording and acting on incidents of harassment. The report also warned against teacher stereotyping of pupils and drew attention to strategies which have been effective in enabling minorities to succeed.

Since August 2000 the government has relaxed exclusion regulations several times making it easier for headteachers to exclude pupils who were violent, persistently disruptive or who were engaged in bullying or drug dealing (Osler and Vincent, 2003). Schools do not have to establish high standards of proof. Therefore a student who has been excluded for drug dealing, for example, will be criminalised without necessarily having to go through any legal process and perhaps without the opportunity to challenge the exclusion (Osler and Vincent, 2003). There are known problems with the appeals process, for example appeals are normally lodged by parents or guardians. Therefore children who are looked after by local authorities may be without anyone to launch an appeal on their behalf. It seems that parents only have limited rights which come into operation only when a child has been officially excluded (Osler and Vincent, 2003).
1.2 Gender and school exclusion

A notable feature of research into school exclusion is the lack of research dealing specifically with female exclusion. In 2001 / 2002, 1,721 girls were excluded from schools in England (DfES, 2003: 7). Osler and Vincent (2003: 38) criticise the Social Exclusion Unit's key 1998 report for failing to specifically address the needs of girls at risk of exclusion or truancy, although the report does 'make a passing reference to pregnancy'.

Discourses surrounding girls and education tend to focus on girls as something of academic success stories. Girls now out-perform boys at GCSEs and A-levels. However, rather than being a cause for celebration girls' academic achievements have been presented in the media as a widespread problem of failure amongst boys. Lloyd (2000) argues that schools may have gendered models of deviance and they may employ different strategies with boys and girls. She also argues that teachers may respond differently in classrooms to girls and boys, the ethos and culture of the school is likely to be gendered and a school's commitment to equal opportunities may affect responses to deviance (Lloyd, 2000). Therefore while girls are less vulnerable to permanent official exclusion than their male peers, their patterns of behaviour, and responses to difficulties in learning, or in relationships with their peers or with teachers, 'may cause them to adopt other strategies than those which lead to formal exclusion as a disciplinary measure' (Osler et al, 2002: 22). It seems that girls may be treated more leniently than their male peers for certain offences but where they display behaviour which is not considered feminine, such as physical violence, their treatment may be more severe resulting in exclusion which may have long term consequences (Lloyd, 2000).

In order to run smoothly institutions such as schools rely on teachers being able to counteract any possible challenges to their authority by showing that it is not

---

1 These statistics, and similar statistics throughout the thesis, were pertinent at the time of conducting fieldwork. Fieldwork was conducted in 2004 - 2005. More recently the government asserts that 31% of pupils attending sources of alternate educational provision for excluded pupils are girls (Dcsf, 2008).
acceptable for pupils to behave in unruly ways. Pupils are meant to look neat and tidy, which involves wearing their uniform in an appropriate manner, and to either sit or stand in a quiet, orderly manner (Neill and Caswell, 1993). As Hudson (1984) highlights this is even more the case for girls. Girls are expected to behave femininely which involves a lack of aggression and passivity-conformity. These are constituted as universal feminine traits. As is discussed in chapter 3, such a traditional view of femininity can be termed ‘heternormative femininity’ and it fits neatly into Butler’s (1990) notion of the heterosexual matrix (this will be expanded upon in chapter 3).

Hudson (1984) highlights classroom observation studies which have indicated that teachers respond positively to ‘feminine’ girls. However, she asserts that schools strive to manage femininity; teachers encourage a modest and traditional feminine development whilst at the same time discouraging inappropriate degrees of femininity, especially a markedly sexualised femininity. She asserts that girls themselves are faced with the problem of knowing how much to display femininity and assessing in what social situations it is appropriate to be feminine. Lloyd (2000) argues that it is likely that if girls contravene normative performances of femininity in schools, particularly in respect of verbal and physical aggression, they will experience harsher treatment and perhaps exclusion from school. This raises questions regarding how young women negotiate the performance of femininity not only within the context of the school, but also outside in the home and social settings and how this relates to issues of exclusion.

In recent years representations of women in the media have veered away from the traditional notion of the feminine woman. Two incongruous accounts of young women are often portrayed in media discourses; on the one hand girls are seen as an academic success story and on the other hand there are increasing numbers of media accounts of girls’ unruly behaviour. Over the past few years a media obsession has existed with women who are considered to be out of control, for example, Amy Winehouse and Britney Spears. Last year it was reported by The Guardian that visits to the internet video site youtube.com reached a peak when it
featured clips relating to the death of the former Playboy model Anna Nicole Smith, who died of an overdose. It has been argued that at one point there was also a massive interest in Pete Doherty's behaviour, but it's notable that this was when he was going out with Kate Moss, and his transgressions therefore reflected on her (Cochrane, 2008). Once they had broken up, that interest quickly waned.

Away from the cult of the celebrity, the media have had a lot to say about 'normal' girls' unruly behaviour:

Teenage girls are becoming more violent, with rising crime figures shattering the image of females as the gentler sex. Experts say it is the ugly side of the greater freedom and equality enjoyed by girls and young women today. Boys and girls are becoming similar.

**Sunday Mail, 27th July 1997**

**Teenage girls are 'out of control'**

Teenage girls are now more likely than boys to drink, smoke, steal and take drugs, a survey has shown. In a disturbing confirmation of the spread of the 'ladette' culture, it found violence, aggression and self-destructive behaviour has spread alarmingly among girls over the past 20 years.

While boys appear less likely to be drawn towards crime or drugs than they were, psychological and social problems are stacking up among teenage girls, who are now expected to compete on equal terms with boys for educational opportunity and jobs.

The study of 14 and 15-year-olds was conducted by questionnaire, in schools under exam conditions, and the results compared with a similar one from 1985.

Professor Colin Pritchard, who led the research, said: 'Girls now significantly smoke and binge-drink more than boys. They truant, steal and fight at similar rates, and start under-age sex earlier than boys.'

He said binge-drinking, which was admitted by nearly a third of girls in their early teenage years, drove other anti-social behaviour such as stealing, fighting, taking drugs and engaging in risky sex.
'There is an element of following role models set by the media,' he said 'We can look back to the Spice Girls where girls were set an example in which aggressive behaviour was considered praiseworthy.

Daily Mail, Steve Doughty, 19th May 2006

Traditionally the media’s concern in relation to young people has focused on the behaviour of young men which is perhaps best exemplified by the moral panics which accompanied youth cultures such as the mods, rockers and skinheads. The British media has suggested that an increase since the early 1990s, whether perceived or real, in girls’ ‘unruly’ behaviours is the result of the rise of masculine attitudes amongst young women which in turn have been encouraged by new and aggressive cultural images of women in films and on television. Girls acting in ‘laddish’ ways are believed to have adopted the attitudes of working-class antisocial males and the rise of female violence is attributed to their emulation of the hard-drinking, swearing, confrontational style of male counterparts (Muncer et al, 2001). Indeed, it has been implied by several sections of the media that the worst behaved young people come from the ‘lower social classes’, or to use one of the government’s favourite buzz words - the socially excluded.

When embarking upon this research to look at young people excluded from school I was particularly interested in the phenomenon of girls who are ‘bad’, girls who are perhaps acting against society’s preconceived notions of how girls should behave. Also, I was interested in the government’s use of the term ‘social exclusion’ and how certain groups of people were thought to fit into this concept. The Labour government, under Tony Blair (1997-2007), viewed young people who were excluded from school as manifestly socially excluded and asserted that they were likely to remain so for the rest of their lives, thus these concepts form a particular focus of analytical attention in this thesis. Therefore, girls who had been excluded from school, and whom the government has labelled socially excluded, seemed an obvious group to concentrate upon. However, there has been little research which explores in detail the lives and experiences of girls who have been termed socially
excluded. Therefore, this thesis focuses on the biographies of a particular group of young women, whom the government would term socially excluded.

1.3 Social Exclusion

The government has inextricably linked school exclusion with social exclusion in its policy rhetoric. Therefore for me, it would be nonsensical to focus on school exclusion without also concentrating on how it interconnects with social exclusion in individuals' lives and policy rhetoric. Social exclusion has been a key rhetorical focus of the current British government with the establishment in 1997 of the Social Exclusion Unit (Goodley and Clough 2004). Social exclusion was a term I frequently encountered when I was researching young people's political engagement for my Msc degree. The concept stood out to me and I wondered whether labelling people in this way could really be helpful to them. The origins of the term social exclusion have been traced back to France in the 1970s. The concept was variously understood in terms of a Republican rhetorical tradition that emphasised the importance of establishing solidarity and social cohesion between individual groups and wider society. The term was soon adopted by the European community and, from 1997 onwards, by the British New labour government who took up the concept with gusto. The government blamed the causes of social exclusion on the dislocation caused by industrial retrenchment in the 1980s; the catastrophic indifference of the Thatcher and Major governments to the social effects of retrenchment; and the consequent failure of the welfare system to address effectively the social and economic ills of those displaced by the decimation of the coal, steel, fishing and motor industries (Giddens, 1991). The launch of the government's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was described by the Prime Minister as an experiment in policy-making that is vital to the country's future (Blair, 1998). As will be discussed in chapter 2 the definition of social exclusion is a contested one. Social exclusion has been conceptualised by the SEU as:

A shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown (SEU 2001: 10).
In 2004 the SEU added this sentence to its definition: 'These problems are linked and are mutually reinforcing so that they create a vicious cycle' (SEU, 2004: 3). The SEU has no spending budget, but its aim is to co-ordinate the attempt to address social exclusion, developing joined-up policies for joined-up problems (SEU, 1998). Social exclusion became a prime focus of the government's domestic policy through a range of area-based programmes and labour-market initiatives. Socially excluded young people were the first to be targeted through the 'flagship' New Deal programme for the young unemployed. As well as providing the rationale for their initial prioritisation of educational policy, the guise of tackling social exclusion lead New Labour to a series of area based programmes targeted at places (typically focused on poor neighbourhoods) and training initiatives focused on groups such as single parents and the long term unemployed (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). During the final stages of compiling this thesis the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, attempted to re-focus political attention towards the SEU and the minister for social exclusion by launching Reaching out: An action plan on social exclusion (2006).

As already stated the Labour government views young people who are excluded from school as socially excluded and asserts that they are likely to remain so for the rest of their lives (unless interventions such as those mentioned above can be successfully implemented). It can be argued that those excluded from school are unusual in so far as they are labelled 'socially excluded' at a young age by the government. There has been little attention given to what social exclusion might consist of for young women specifically.

Whilst reflecting on research dealing with school exclusion it became clear that it is perceived to be a problem affecting mainly boys. Indeed, this was confirmed by Osler et al (2002) who assert that the phenomenon of school exclusion has tended to be presented as a male phenomenon; a symptom of more widespread problem of disaffection amongst teenage boys. I reflect at length on Osler et al's (2002, 2003) work in chapter 2. Although their research is innovative and wide-ranging, it could be argued that research into female exclusion could and should go further in order to investigate every aspect of the girls' lives. Osler et al's research notably concentrates on the girls' experiences of school life and can be seen to have
somewhat neglected what occurred in the girls' lives out of school hours. Friendships were taken into account, particularly in the 2003 publication, however the emphasis was placed within the school context with the main focus on how friendship networks can help girls who are being bullied. Both Lloyd and O'Regan (1999) and Osler et al (2002; 2003), highlight that problems experienced by girls in school often have roots in their out of school lives. I argue that in order to fully understand female exclusion from school and its connection with social exclusion, research needs to consider girls' situations beyond school, looking at as many aspects of the girls' lives as possible. This study aims to address this gap in the research.

1.4 Aims
After exploring the interconnectivity of school exclusion, gender and social exclusion the research proposal began to shape itself resulting in the following aims:
* To explore the key interconnecting areas of a group of socially excluded young women's lives (such as their social networks - familial, community and friends).
* To explore the making and unmaking of a group of socially excluded young women's femininities in order to develop a broader understanding of female school exclusion and social exclusion.
* To engage the young women fully in the research process to ensure that the research identified and covered aspects of the young women's lives which were important to them.

This thesis sought to explore the biographies of excluded girls. The study explored the girls' social, home and school careers (Humphrey, 1993) and the identities they constructed and performed in their everyday lives. Data generated with twenty-five young women aged between twelve and sixteen are included in this research. The data were generated at varying locations in England, some of which experience high to very high levels of social deprivation (see chapter 5). The study further aimed to investigate how the process of exclusion and the subsequent treatment of excluded girls influenced their performance of their identities.
1.5 Theoretical and methodological considerations

As I have outlined, this thesis centres on the biographies of excluded young women. A central issue which has arisen throughout this thesis was the role of agency and resistance in both the performance of femininity and ultimately, I would argue, social exclusion. As is explored in chapter 3 the concept of resistance in school has been employed by sociologists to mainly describe boys' behaviour (for example Willis, 1977). Researchers who use the concept in relation to girls' behaviour have tended to view girls' resistance as a quieter more subtle event than boys. For example Anyon (1983) asserts that girls in her study resisted by giggling and whispering and Simpson (2000) contends that girls in her study of school behaviour pushed at the boundaries of the school dress code. I felt that further attention needed to be drawn to the concept of resistance and perhaps more importantly to identify what exactly is being resisted when the concept is applied in sociological contexts. Traditionally the concept was used by Marxist sociologists who identify young people's resistance as a form of class based rebellion against the dominant structures of society. It is however possible to conceive of resistance in terms of gender based resistance.

The question of agency versus structure is inextricably bound up with the concept of resistance. Some argue that by resisting dominant structures such as school, young people are asserting their own agency, whereas others argue that resistance only serves to reinforce young people's position in the social order which is predetermined by the structure. In the case of young women excluded from school it could be argued that by employing the resisting behaviours which served to get them excluded from school, they may be acting agentically to escape a powerless position - that of pupil attending school. However I would argue that their very act of resistance and rejection of the norms of heteronormative femininity may simply serve to reinforce their powerless situation and further add to their social exclusion. This raises again the importance of asking the question of the extent to which the term social exclusion has relevance to the lives of those excluded from school.

There is a notable lack of research in regard to young women, social exclusion and the performance of femininities. Research which has focused on young people and
social exclusion has tended to focus mainly on boys. For example MacDonald and Marsh (2005) give cursory consideration to young women in their account of 'disconnected youth' and the attention they did give to young women focused on young mothers. Osler et al (2002, 2003) are the foremost researchers to focus on girls excluded from school. Their research concentrated on service providers' and the girls' own perceptions of school life and of the use of exclusion in its various forms, both official and unofficial. Their work can be described as innovative, however I argue that research into female exclusion could and should go further, focusing on social and familial factors, in order to understand their experiences in biographical contexts. This thesis addresses this concern.

An area of methodological concern relates to the problem of gaining accounts of people's lives, as accounts can reflect the reality of an event, but also the way in which the individual wishes to present themselves to others. Stories about particular events may be told and retold and may alter at each retelling depending on the audience to whom the individual is recounting the story. This highlights the significance of the context of the data generation and the importance of the 'overall narrative', that is how the individual wishes to present themselves on a day-to-day basis, rather than just within the context of, what could be, a one off interaction (the interview). There is a complex interaction between events and the attitudes and experiences of the individual providing the account. Individuals' biographical accounts are likely to be mitigated by a variety of factors pertaining to their social position and circumstances, personal attitudes and values and accumulated experiences. I would argue that the interviewees' narratives need to be placed within the context of presentation and performance in interviewees' accounts and the co-authorship of a shared narrative between researcher and researched. In order to make sense of the contextual nature of the research, I employed the concept of interpretative repertoires to analyse the presentations which I felt the young women frequently made. This concept, and my use of it, is reflected on at length in the introduction to part III of the thesis.

Another area of methodological concern is related to my third research aim and my desire for the research to reflect areas which were important for the young women
themselves. Recent perspectives in childhood research have tended to emphasise the use of participatory techniques as a method of reducing the unequal power balance between researcher and researched. Increasingly researchers have been concerned with developing inclusive and participatory young people centred methodologies which place their voices at the centre of the research process. But is the ideal of young people's active involvement in the research process truly achievable or desirable with socially excluded young people in practice? Chapter 5 reflects on a range of ethical, methodological and practical issues which arose during the fieldwork conducted for this thesis. Although difficulties were encountered I reflect that it is necessary to overcome such problems in order to produce in-depth data on some of the most vulnerable, socially excluded young people.

1.6 Outline of the thesis
The thesis is in three parts and comprises ten chapters.

PART I
Chapter 2 - Conceptualising social exclusion, resistance and agency. This chapter explores the evolution of the concept of social exclusion, how it has been used in government rhetoric and how critics of the concept have equated it to underclass theory. The connections made between social exclusion and school exclusion are considered before I examine explanations for the rise in the number of those excluded from school. I identify the lack of research into excluded girls, particularly in regard to their everyday lives. The concern with unruly behaviour which is often cited as a major cause of school exclusion is critically examined through the conceptual framework of resistance, structure and agency embracing the work of Willis (1977), Beck (1991) and Bourdieu (1986). Finally I review the work of Raffo and Reeves (2000) who aim to emphasise the interaction between structure and agency rather than their opposition. I highlight that even though resistance theory has been criticised it is a useful tool in the examination of those excluded from school.

Chapter 3 - Femininity and young women. In this chapter I reflect on how femininity and 'girlhood' have been traditionally theorised by researchers. I
examine earlier research by McRobbie (1978) which identified a particularly girl culture, bedroom culture. This is then brought up to date with a study by Lincoln (2003) who examined subtle changes in girls’ use of bedrooms. I examine Skeggs (1997) use of the term respectability in her exploration of working-class girls in order to demonstrate the policing of femininity. The notion of girls’ friendships and how they can act as a site where identities are practised, appropriated, resisted and negotiated (Hey, 1997) is then explored. More recent work (for example Green and Singleton, 2006 and McRobbie, 2006) is then examined to highlight the manner in which theorising on girl culture and femininity has evolved. The concept of resistance is returned to in the work of theorists such as Renold (2005) and Archer et al (2007a; 2007b) who employ the concept to explore how girls resist heteronormative femininity and male hegemony.

PART II
Chapter 4 provides an account of the methods used in the generation of data, its management and analysis. The chapter opens with an explanation of the reasons for choosing a qualitative approach and a description of the processes involved in generating the data is given. The chapter then goes on to critique advocates of (full) participatory methods. Ethical considerations are discussed in detail and the status of the data generated is considered. The chapter finishes with an overview of the processes involved in analysing the data.

Chapter 5 is a somewhat descriptive chapter which details the sample characteristics of the PRUs, the areas the girls lived in and the girls themselves. Brief ‘case study’ style histories of all the young peoples’ biographies and major life events are given. These are based on the timelines which were constructed with the young people and is supplemented by the information obtained from the questionnaires given to the young people and their interview narratives.

PART III
Chapter 6 – School. This chapter explores the factors which impinge on the excluded girls’ ability to accept and comply with the demands and constraints of the present education system. The chapter is split into five sections: Academic ability,
messing about and resistance, rules, teachers and resistance, exclusion from school: the final straw and consequences of going to PRUs.

Chapter 7 – Family, transience and community. This chapter uses three case studies to explore the common nature of the home backgrounds of many of the girls. The issues of transience and community are also explored.

Chapter 8 – 'I am one of those people': Friends and leisure. The role music played in many of the girls' lives is explored. The importance and longevity of the girls' friendships is explored along with what occupies the majority of the girls' leisure time – 'hanging out'. Girls friendships' are found to be an important site in which femininity is performed and constructed and can be seen to operate around closely enforced rules. The girls' romanticisation of babies is then discussed.

Chapter 9 – Aggression and violence. This chapter reflects on the aggression and violence which have proved to be a central tenet in the lives of the girls who have been formally excluded. The young women's 'toughness' is contextualised within the heterosexual matrix and I argue that their aggressive conduct enabled the girls to agentically construct their presentations of self in opposition to heteronormative femininity.

Chapter 10 – Conclusions. The discussion is structured around three themes. The first theme is the interconnectivity of agency, resistance and the performances of different forms of femininities. The second theme is how the preceding elements inter-relate, contribute towards and maintain social exclusion. The third theme is the theoretical and methodological implications of the research findings for the concept of femininities. This chapter then considers the methodological strengths and limitations of the study. The chapter then reflects upon the potentially significant contributions and implications of the findings.
In this chapter I set out some of the main theoretical questions which this thesis is interested in with regard to social exclusion. I begin by briefly reviewing debates concerning the cultural and structural origins of the underclass and its relationship to more recent thinking about social exclusion. As the Labour government made a connection between social exclusion and those excluded from school I go on to explore the reasons for the increasing numbers of pupils who are excluded from school, highlighting in particular research conducted with young women. As will be seen, one of the reasons cited for the rise in school exclusions is the increase in unruly behaviour of pupils. During the 1970s resistance theory was used by sociologists to explain the unruly behaviour of working-class youth and how they appeared to resist the structural hegemony. However, advocates of the notion of late modernity (such as Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; and Furlong and Cartmel, 1997) argue for a more complex and agentic analysis of young people's behaviour as not dictated to by social structure. Theorists such as Bourdieu (1986) and Raffo and Reeves (2000) have tried to marry the influences of structure and agency in their analyses. I examine these theoretical positions in order to assess their relevance to the current topic of investigation: excluded young women.

2.1 The underclass
In the late 1980s and 1990s a number of writers implied that young people in poor neighbourhoods were prime candidates for membership of a punitive underclass. The American sociologist Murray first popularised the term 'underclass' in 1984. He argues that a new anti-social, welfare dependent, dangerous class had emerged. Writing about the British 'underclass' in 1990 he argues that it had been bought into being by the incentives to failure set by an over-generous, postwar welfare state (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). Murray asserts that there were three signs of the underclass, rising rates of illegitimacy, rising crime rates and rising rates of unemployment as evidence of an alleged unwillingness among many of Britain's youth to take jobs. He argues that in certain neighbourhoods traditional values such as beliefs in hard work and honesty have been seriously undermined. The female children in underclass theory learn to see single motherhood as normal,
possible and 'not so bad' and, in time, replicate their mothers' decision to have children outside of marriage. The absence of fathers as disciplinarians, moral guardians and positive role models produces a failed generation of disorderly, disrespectful and delinquent young men doomed to reproduce down the generations. As a consequence increasing numbers of children are raised in a situation where they are likely to take on the underclass values of their parents. Therefore crime, unemployment, illegitimacy and single motherhood bind together in the cultural reproduction of the underclass.

There are many criticism of Murray's underclass theory. By using a cultural definition of the underclass he neglects any economic divisions that contribute to the creation of any such class. The most obvious failing of the underclass theory is the lack of empirical substantiation (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). MacDonald and Marsh (2005) highlight the ease with which they could cite numerous studies which disagree with the central argument that current patterns of crime, parenting and unemployment in Britain are the outcome of separate, subterranean cultures and value systems.

There are other proponents of the underclass theory who have emphasised structure over culture in reasoning why and how the underclass had arisen. For example Westergaard (1992) views the poor as the victims of changing economic circumstance and political policy. Deindustrialisation is seen as the reason why a group of impoverished welfare dependent class of people situated structurally below the traditional working-class has been formed. However, MacDonald and Marsh (2005) highlight the similarity between the cultural and the structural underclass theories, although they originate from very different political poles. They assert that 'their writings sometimes contain surprisingly similar cultural depictions - and implicit moral condemnation - of underclass life' (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005: 8). In critique of the structural underclass theory it has been highlighted that it is impossible to ascertain the degree to which Britain's new poor really are wholly and permanently detached from the world of work. MacDonald and Marsh (2005) contend that the structural theory of the underclass has merged into a new and broader set of concerns under the banner of 'social exclusion'.

17
2.2 Social Exclusion

The origins of the term social exclusion, and the government’s definition, were touched upon in chapter 1. Here I would like to explore how this term has been used in a little more detail. MacDonald and Marsh (2005) identified six common characteristics detailing how the concept has been used by policy makers and academics. Firstly, the difference between social exclusion and its conceptual predecessors is that it necessitates a broad view that takes account of different spheres of life such as the economic, political and cultural. Therefore social exclusion is a broader concept than income poverty (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005).

Secondly, a strong emphasis is placed on how the different aspects of the concept are interrelated. Thirdly, the concept of social exclusion often has a spatial focus and therefore communities and neighbourhoods are brought to the fore. Fourthly, MacDonald and Marsh identify a concern with who, or what, is doing the excluding. The concern here is that groups within society may be acting in an exclusionary manner in order to create a more privileged position for themselves. Fifthly, it may be more pertinent to treat social exclusion as a process, therefore researchers should focus on the changing degree to which individuals are able to participate in society rather than hard and fast divisions between the excluded and the included. Finally, MacDonald and Marsh note that there is an emphasis on the extent to which social exclusion is passed on from one generation to the next. They assert that this aspect of the social exclusion concept has clear parallels with the underclass theory, with its emphasis on the ‘cultural inheritance of values and behaviours that further entrench the poverty of children born into the underclass and doom them to replicate the same problem families’ (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005: 18). Clearly such a potentially wide interpretation of the concept of social exclusion has implications for its application by government agencies to disparate groups of people.

Levitas (1998) argues that New Labour thinking on social exclusion fuses together competing and contradictory political philosophies. Her underlying thesis is that the term social exclusion is intrinsically problematic, as indeed are any dichotomous views of society. It serves to obscure the issue of inequalities among the majority,
and allows poverty to be seen to co-exist with a view of the attrition of class division in society as a whole. Levitas (1998) investigates the ways in which social exclusion is deployed in three separate discourses. In the redistributionist discourse (RED) the main emphases are on poverty and lack of full citizenship rights as the main causes of exclusion. In the moral underclass discourse (MUD) the main concern is with the morality and behaviour of the excluded themselves. In the social integrationist discourse (SID) the emphasis is on the significance of paid work and employment for social inclusion. Levitas (1998: 14) asserts that RED ‘implies a radical reduction of inequalities, and a redistribution of resources and of power’ whereas MUD effectively reveals the suspicion that the socially excluded (like Murray’s (1990) underclass) are morally or culturally responsible for their predicament (MacDonald and Marsh, 2001). Levitas’ analysis shows how the rhetoric and policies of New Labour negotiates between the different competing discourses, again emphasising that the term itself facilitates easy slippage between competing discourses, and that this very flexibility is part of the reason for its growth in usage. She highlights how the fundamental rhetorical moves have involved a shift away from understanding social exclusion in terms of RED towards those of MUD and SID, that is from an understanding based around the issues of structural inequality and poverty towards one based around a concern with moral regulation and increasing participation in the labour market. Therefore, rather than insecurity being understood ‘as a structural feature of the economy and the labour market, job security becomes something individuals achieve’ (Levitas, 2000: 362). From this perspective poverty is more to do with personal, rather than structural failings.

In order to exemplify Levitas’ assertions Watt and Jacobs (2000) carried out an analysis of The SEU document Bringing Britain Together: a national strategy for neighbourhood renewal. In their first reading of the document they found, as Levitas suggests, invocations of the notion that there are structural, as opposed to individual, causes of phenomena such as poverty and urban decline. However on a closer reading of the document they found that these discourses slid into the social integrationist and moral underclass discourses. They highlight the prevailing
concern in the document with poor places not poor people. Poor places are
discursively contrasted with the rest of the country which has rising living
standards. Consequently, ‘social and spatial inequalities in this “rest of the
country” disappear from view’ (Watt and Jacobs, 2000: 18). The notion that poverty
and deprivation are widespread throughout society is glossed over, since there are
only ‘pockets of intense deprivation’. Watt and Jacobs assert that through the
juxtaposition of jobless neighbourhoods to ‘prosperous city centres’ where
employers are desperate to fill vacancies, insinuations are made that the people
living in those areas must be behaving in different ways from the mainstream. The
poor areas are characterised as having high crime rates and levels of drug use,
truancy and teenage pregnancies which Watt and Jacobs argue again emphasises
the moral underclass discourse.

Silver (1994: 536) argues that the concept of social exclusion is ‘so evocative,
ambiguous, multidimensional and elastic that it can be defined in many different
ways’. Therefore, it can ‘serve a variety of political purposes’ (1994). Burchardt, Le
Grand and Piachaud (1999: 229) define individuals as socially excluded if ‘(a) he or
she is geographically resident in a society but (b) for reasons beyond his or her
control he or she cannot participate in the normal activities of citizens in that
society, and (c) he or she would like to so participate’. They assert that conditions
(b) and (c) address questions of agency. They suggest that:

If a group faced with continuous hostility from the wider society withdraws into itself
developing its own independent or counter-culture, then the context still makes it a
case of social exclusion where people are being made to do things against their will.
The same might be true at the level of the individual; if a young person is brought up
with a narrow view of the opportunities that society offers (say, on an isolated
council estate) and decides his/ her best option is to join a local gang that terrorises
the neighbourhood, then it would still seem reasonable to describe that person as
socially excluded; for the narrowing or opportunity set that has led to their apparently
“voluntary” exclusion arose from factors beyond their control (Burchardt at al, 1999:
229).
They go on to clarify that people may not be unhappy with their situation however, ‘if we believe that it is simply bad for the wider society for any individuals to be excluded, whether they personally mind about it or not - then all such people would be categorised as socially excluded’ (Burchardt at al, 1999: 230 emphasis added). Therefore, Burchardt et al’s (1999) conceptualisation of social exclusion encompasses not only those who would like to participate but also those who, because of structural constraints, have made certain decisions which have resulted in individuals or groups withdrawing from mainstream society.

In a similar manner to Silver (1994), Davies (2005) highlights the problem of knowing how wide to cast the net in defining exclusion. The former Prime Minister Tony Blair applied the label to 3 million people, however, others have characterised the fundamental socioeconomic cleavages in society differently. Davies (2004: 7) comments that the Breadline Britain survey carried out in 1990 found that ‘21 million adults felt they lacked at least one of the necessities which make life worth living - hobbies, a holiday, the occasional celebration - on account of expense’. MacDonald and Marsh (2001: 387) agree with Byrne that ‘unemployment, job insecurity and poor work have become common working-class experiences, rather than the preserve of an underclass positioned beneath them’. Therefore socioeconomic problems identified in the term social exclusion are in fact mainstream and not confined to a minority (Davies, 2005). Byrne (1999) furthers this perspective by arguing that far from being an underclass the excluded are a reserve army of labour, continually moving in and out of employment at the bottom end of the labour market, mobilised or demobilised depending on fluctuations in the economy. From this perspective, exclusion from the mainstream is rarely permanent and long-term unemployment varies from generation to generation, sometimes shrinking to nothing as in the 1950s and 1960s. It has no sustainable remedy within a mode of production that cannot help but reproduce it.

Clearly there are implications which arise from the manner in which the term social exclusion has been used. From its current usage by government departments does social exclusion have any real creditability as an instrument to identify peoples’ situations and concerns? As stated in the introduction the Labour government
views young people who are excluded from school as socially excluded and asserts that they are likely to remain so for the rest of their lives. Can the government justify the label it attaches to those excluded from school as socially excluded? Burchardt et al's (1999) conceptualisation of social exclusion raises the role and significance of agency in the lives of the excluded young women in this study. Burchardt et al (1999) talk of social exclusion in terms of a mindset of people not wanting to participate. This thesis explores whether this is applicable to the young women who form the focus of this research. I will return to debates of social exclusion in the final chapter, but for now I will turn my attention to the notion of exclusion from school.

2.3 School Exclusion

Various causes have been put forward to explain the increase in the number of pupils excluded from school. Exclusions have risen since the abolition of corporal punishment but this alone cannot be seen as the only explanation for the recent rise in school excludees. The 1988 Education Act has in part been held accountable for the rise in school exclusions. This Act introduced a market structure of state schooling, whereby school budgets were overwhelmingly determined by pupil numbers. Open enrolment relied upon parental choice and parents were provided with league table to assist in their choice of schools for their children. The subsequent competition between schools has been viewed as an important stimulus to the raising of standards (Vulliamy, 2000). As a result of the marketisation of education, schools now have to reconcile the tension of trying to organise their enterprise so that they are effective and efficient which may mean removing various obstacles to achieving those goals, including difficult and disruptive pupils, with maintaining a service to the majority of pupils. It seems that government reports and surveys have found that teachers perceive the main reasons for exclusion to be a constellation of negative, disruptive, and insolent and uncooperative behaviours (Blyth and Milner, 1994). A study by Imich (1994) who examined exclusions in one large local education authority found that the majority of exclusions (30.1%) were due to 'bullying, fighting, or assaults on peers'. 17% of the exclusions were due to
disruption, misconduct, unacceptable behaviour, 14.9% were attributed to verbal abuse to peers and 12% were due to verbal abuse to staff (Imich, 1994: 76).

Explanations for the increase in exclusion rates tend to focus on either psychological or structural factors. Those who focus on psychological factors have emphasised the changing characteristics of pupils and their families. Basing his conclusions on Smith and Rutter’s (1995) assertion that there has been a real increase in the incidence of child psychiatric disorders in the post-war period, Parsons (1996) advocates the view that there are more behaviourally difficult children and young people today than ever before. Smith and Rutter (1995) argue that social factors such as unemployment, poverty and family breakdown are having a more marked, detrimental effect on children now than in the recent past. In 1997 it was estimated that about one third of all children in the UK lived in households with no full time earner (Vulliamy, 2000).

Widespread disaffection has been viewed as a further contributing factor to the increasing numbers of those excluded from school. Gibson (1998) asserts that with regard to young people disaffection includes, or combines with, involvement in drugs, crime, school non-attendance, low education achievement (especially literacy), relationships, attitudes, hopes and aspirations. He divided disaffection into three groups:

- Isolated young people ... through domestic circumstances, fear of crime and special needs.
- Disappointed young people, those who are fed up, cynical and apathetic.
- Alienated young people, involved in anti-social subculture, e.g. crime and drugs etc. (Gibson, 1998: 144).

Gibson (1998) argues that young people often move in and out of disaffection, but more are staying there for longer, often for indefinite periods of time. He continues that belonging to one of these groups may not necessarily lead to antisocial activities but they provide a 'pool' from which young people can sometimes be

---

2 As mentioned previously these statistics, and similar statistics throughout the thesis, were pertinent at the time of conducting fieldwork. Fieldwork was conducted in 2004 – 2005.
drawn. Such an analysis clearly has implications for school discipline and school exclusions.

Those who emphasise structure in their explanations highlight the increased pressure to thrive in the market orientated, state education field, and how schools are clearly under more strain today to maintain good standards of discipline and to obtain good examination results. All pupils who transgress their schools' codes of conduct are at risk of exclusion, however, Booth (1996) argues that the groups of young people most 'vulnerable' to school exclusion are: boys, African-Caribbean boys, school-age mothers, students with low attainment, disabled students, travellers and children and young people in care.

As mentioned in the introduction, discourses surrounding school exclusion have tended to focus on male school excludees. However a steady number of girls are excluded from school each year. In 2001-02 1,721 girls were excluded from schools in England (DfES, 2003:7). More recently it was been reported that girls represent around 20 per cent of the total number of permanent exclusions each year and the ratio of permanent exclusion between boys and girls has remained stable over the last five years (DfES, 2006). Girls from African-Caribbean communities are almost four times more likely to be excluded from school than white girls (Osler & Hill, 1999). There has been a notable dearth of research conducted specifically with excluded girls, but two studies which are relevant here are Lloyd & O'Regan (1999) and Osler et al (2002) (later added to and published as Osler and Vincent (2003)).

Lloyd and O'Regan (1999) conducted research with young women with 'social, emotional or behavioural difficulties' into their experiences of mainstream school and special education provision. They argue that excluded girls constitute a 'significant minority of girls in the system whose experiences are not discussed' because teachers and service providers believe that 'girls do not get into trouble ...because they are not boys' (Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999: 38). Their research focuses on the outcomes and effectiveness of mainstream and special education provision within a policy context of inclusion. For many of the twenty girls that Lloyd and O'Regan (1999) interviewed their difficulties with school were seen to be connected
with the failure of schools to recognise and accommodate changes and problems in their out of school lives, such as abuse and moving between different family members' homes. The girls' social, emotional and behavioural difficulties were found to be rooted in complex interactions between family, peer group, school, social context and the choices made by the individual young women.

Research conducted for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which was published in 2002 (Osler et al) and then expanded into a larger book published in 2003 (Osler and Vincent), was the first study to focus on girls in relation to their disaffection with education. One of the authors' main reasons for undertaking the research was their concern that the particular emotional and developmental needs of girls are not recognised in current prevention and support strategies. Osler et al (2002; 2003) maintain that girls' needs, experiences in school and their aspirations are likely to differ from boys' and therefore may result in different behavioural problems. Osler et al's (2002) qualitative study focuses on six different areas in England and consisted of interviews with excluded girls, girls at risk of exclusion and girls with no experience of exclusion. The research team also interviewed service providers, teachers and parents. The researchers found that exclusion could be the result of disciplinary procedures, but it could also occur through feelings of isolation, unresolved personal, family or emotional problems, bullying, emotional withdrawal or truancy.

From the interview data, Osler et al (2002) identify friendships as one of the most valued outcomes of education for the girls; however it is also apparent that relationships between girls could be sources of great tension and conflict. Osler et al (2002) argue that girls tend to have long drawn out verbal and emotional conflicts with each other while boys tend to resolve differences with each other more quickly with physical fights. Osler et al (2002) note that bullying may well be an important factor in informal and formal exclusions for girls. The girls in their study reported that any perceived differences such as physical attributes, mannerisms or racial differences could make them the targets of bullies. Rather than physical bullying, the girls more typically reported incidents of verbal bullying such as 'name calling and slagging off' or psychological bullying involving 'starting false rumours,
whispering behind your back, blanking or giving nasty looks' (Osier et al, 2003: 39). The issue of girls' friendships and the role they may play in the exclusion process will be examined in more detail in chapter 3.

Another theme to come out of their interviews with the girls was that of trust and relationships between pupils and teachers. Osler et al (2002) found a considerable number of the girls 'showed a marked lack of trust towards teachers in general, to the extent that no matter how serious their difficulties, they would not approach a teacher with their problems' (2002: 42). Some girls reported difficulties in their relationships with teachers which often resulted in them shouting, making threats and even resorting to personally insulting their teachers. Other girls felt that they or their families had been given a bad reputation, to the extent that they were always being blamed and picked out from their peers if the class was misbehaving. Reputation also emerged as an important factor in exclusion as, according to the girls interviewed, a poor reputation could increase the likelihood of a young person being excluded. The participants thought that pupils who were verbally or physically loud or exhibited aggressive behaviour or ongoing non-compliance with school rules or teacher instructions were more likely to be excluded.

The main conclusion Osier et al (2002; 2003) draw is that girls are generally not a priority in schools' thinking about behaviour management and school exclusion. Even when concerns were recognised, they were often over-shadowed by the difficulties of managing the much greater numbers of boys. This led them to propose that the invisibility of girls’ difficulties had serious consequences for their ability to get help. Since the problem is seen as so small compared with boys, resources are targeted at the latter. Many girls were unwilling to take up current forms of support and many providers do not refer girls because they believe provision is inappropriate for girls.

Although Osler et al’s (2002, 2003) work is innovative and wide-ranging, it could be argued that research into female exclusion could and should go further in order to investigate every aspect of the girls' lives. Osler et al’s research notably concentrates on the girls’ experiences of school life and can be seen to have
somewhat neglected what occurred in the girls' lives out of school hours. Friendships were taken into account, particularly in the 2003 publication, however the emphasis was placed within the school context with the main focus on how friendship networks can help girls who are being bullied. Both Lloyd and O'Regan (1999) and Osler et al (2002; 2003), highlight that problems experienced by girls in school often have roots in their out of school lives. I argue that in order to fully understand female exclusion from school and its connection with social exclusion, research needs to consider girls' situations beyond school, looking at as many aspects of the girls' lives as possible. This study aims to address this gap in research.

2.4 After exclusion

In 1998 The Social Exclusion Unit's report, *Truancy and School Exclusions* (1998) emphasises the link between exclusion from school and general social exclusion. In their book which focused on 'race', class and gender in exclusion from school, Wright et al (2000) emphasise the effects of school exclusion which extended well beyond the sphere of schooling to include aspirations, unemployment and vulnerability to criminal behaviour. Correlations between exclusions from school and offending have been established in a number of surveys. For example, The Audit Commission's (1996) survey of young offenders found that 42% had been excluded from school and a Home Office survey of self-reported offending found that almost all boys and nearly two-thirds of girls excluded from school admitted some type of offence (Vulliamy, 2001). These links are also made by Cullingford (1999) who studied 25 young offenders, aged 16-21, and the relationship between school exclusion, home circumstances and subsequent involvement in criminal activities. The central theme to arise from Cullingford's (1999) research is that of an absence of relationships and its consequences. A widespread feeling among the interviewees was that their parents were not bothered with them. A breakdown of relationships with parents, and the consequent lack of dialogue with them, resulted in subsequent difficulties in making normal relationships with others (Vulliamy, 2001). It seems that a culture of violence often accompanied such a breakdown of relationships, leading to an inability to control a violent temper. Their accounts of
school were peppered with the frequent unleashing of pent-up anger in violent outbursts.

The DfES paper *Study of Young People Permanently Excluded from School* (2003) tracked the post exclusion careers of 193 young people and discovered that 2 years after the young peoples' exclusion contact had been lost with 27% of the sample, including a 'disproportionately high percentage of black young people and girls' (Daniels et al, 2003: 94). 'There was a trend, nearly of statistical significance, for girls to be disengaged rather than boys' (DfES, 2003: 92). The DfES report relies heavily on the concepts of engagement and disengagement. The study attempts to record the educational and vocational status of the young people in their first substantial placement after permanent exclusion and approximately two years after their exclusions. The researchers then classified the young people either engaged, refusers or disengaged. They labelled young people engaged if they were attending some sort of educational, work experience or vocational provision. Refusers were young people who failed to take up the varied offers of their LEA and other local agencies. Young people were termed disengaged if they had poor attendance (absences exceeding 50 per cent) of LEA or local agency offers of provision prior to attaining compulsory school leaving age. Of the 141 young people who could be tracked for the full two year period (notably a disproportionately large percentage of girls and young black people could not be tracked) approximately 50 per cent were engaged in education, training or employment two years after their permanent exclusion. Notably, of those who could be traced 2 years after exclusion, those who offended prior to exclusion usually continued to offend post-exclusion, others started to offend and many of the young people had very limited ambitions for the future (Daniels et al, 2003: 94). Of the 141 young people, 24.1% were in further education; 21.1 % in employment; 10.6% in PRUs; 10.6% in mainstream schools and 27.7% had no involvement with education, training or employment (Daniels et al, 2003). The data is interesting and perhaps shows a trend to social exclusion for some, but not all, after compulsory school leaving age.
2.5 Resistance, structure and agency

After examining the reasons for young people being excluded from school it is clear that unruly behaviour by pupils is often cited by teachers as a contributory factor. As previously mentioned theorists have suggested that such behaviour may stem from factors outside of the school setting. For example Smith and Rutter (1995) refer to family breakdown and Gibson (1998) cites disaffection as contributing towards unruly behaviour in school. In the case of girls excluded from school both Lloyd and O'Regan (1999) and Osler et al (2002, 2003) highlight unruly behaviour as having roots in social and emotional problems. However, another major area of research which has been suggested as manifesting itself in unruly behaviour in schools is resistance. It is perhaps pertinent here to highlight research which has focused on resistance and to assess how applicable this concept is to the lives of the young women who form the focus of this study.

The relationship of youth researchers and theorists to the concept of social class has been somewhat turbulent, and perhaps to some extent dictated to by contemporary theoretical fashions. During the 1970s the concept of resistance was prevalent in research on youth as young people were conceptualised as resisting the dominant hegemony. These approaches were heavily criticised and during the 1990s research into young people tended to negate the role of social structure in favour of conceptualising the experiences and behaviour of the young as dominated by social fragmentation and individualisation. However, more recently theorists such as MacDonald and Marsh (2005) have tried to reassert the importance of social structure in research relating to young people, while other researchers argue for the importance of using resistance as a concept (Wright et al, 2000). But is the concept of resistance really still valid in today's 'risk society' and how pertinent is it to a study of 'socially' excluded young women?

To address the questions raised above, I will firstly examine the work of Willis (1977) and his use of the concept of resistance. Willis was a member of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) which emphasised the way in which
sub-cultures emerged amongst working-class youth as a shared response in order to resist the dominant structural hegemony. Willis's study into the resistance a group of boys displayed towards school, and later the work place, crossed the two 'disciplines' of educational and youth culture research. In his seminal study Willis uses the concept of resistance to explain the unruly behaviour of a group of working-class boys in school. Willis argues that by employing resisting tactics the boys formed part of a subculture which emerged amongst working-class youth as a shared response in order to resist the dominant structural hegemony. The main focus of Willis's study was a group of 12 working-class boys whom he followed over their last 18 months at school, and their first few months at work. The boys formed a friendship grouping with a distinctive attitude to school. Willis asserts that 'the lads' had their own counter-school culture, which was opposed to the values espoused by the school. Willis argued that 'the lads' openly opposed authority and rejected the conformists, known to 'the lads' as the 'ear 'oles'. Willis asserts that 'the lads':

Opposition to the school is principally manifested in the struggle to win physical and symbolic space from the institution and its rules and to defeat its main perceived purpose: to make you work (Willis, 1977: 26).

During their time at school their main objective was to avoid going to lessons, or, when attendance was unavoidable, to do as little work as possible. 'The lads' would boast about the weeks and months they could go without putting pen to paper. Willis asserts that their opposition was characterised by 'dossing, blagging and wagging' and 'having a laff'. 'Having a laff' was particularly high priority, as this example Willis cites illustrates:

During films in the hall they tie the projector leads into impossible knots, make animal figures or obscene shapes on the screen with their fingers, and gratuitously dig and jab the backs of the 'ear'oles' in front of them (Willis, 1977: 31).

'The lads' felt superior to the 'ear 'oles' and the teachers. It seemed that to 'the lads' winning symbolic and physical space from the school and its rules required skill, of which they could be proud. Willis notes that most of the conflict between the
teachers and ‘the lads’ took place over dress; it was one of ‘the lads’ ‘elected grounds for the struggle over authority’ and questions ‘the legitimacy of school as an institution’ (Willis, 1977: 18). Wearing smart and modern clothes gave ‘the lads’ the chance, at the same time as “putting their finger up” to the school, to make themselves more attractive to the opposite sex (Willis, 1977: 18).

Willis asserts that throughout school ‘the lads’ had ‘an aimless air of insubordination ready with spurious justification and impossible to nail down’ (Willis, 1977: 13). Indeed, Willis describes the counter-school culture as the:

Zone of the informal. It is where the incursive demands of the formal are denied – even if the price is the expression of opposition in style, micro-interactions and non-public discourses. In working-class culture generally opposition is frequently marked by a withdrawal into the informal and expressed in its characteristic modes just beyond the reach of the school (Willis, 1977: 23).

‘The lads’ were asked to keep diaries but Willis found that school hardly featured in them at all. It was often just referred to as ‘went to school’ (Willis, 1977: 38), whilst half a side or more recorded the events which occurred after school. To ‘the lads’ the school equalled boredom, whilst the outside adult world offered more possibilities for excitement. Smoking, drinking and avoiding wearing school uniform were all ways in which they tried to identify with the adult world. Many of the lads had part-time jobs which, Willis asserts, they viewed as more than just a means of getting money; they were a means of gaining a sense of involvement in the male, adult world. He concludes that:

The rejection of school work by the lads and the omnipresent feeling that they know better is also paralleled by a massive feeling on the shopfloor, and in the working-class generally, that practice is more important than theory (Willis, 1977: 56).

Willis’s observations about the role played by agency in the lads’ lives is perhaps more complex than often reported. In his book he argues that education does reproduce the sort of labour force required by capitalism, but not directly or intentionally. The lads’ behaviour in school is not forced on them by their schools,
rather they learnt the culture of the shop floor from their fathers, brothers and others in their local community which encouraged them to create their own subculture and voluntarily choose to look for manual work. In this way Willis perceives that the lads' had agency in choosing the direction that they took. However, the capitalist system placed the lads in a specific position from the beginning of their lives over which they obviously had no control. It could therefore be argued that structural constraints were fundamental to the directions that the lads took. Willis (1977) tries to reveal that the rejection of school showed how 'working-class lads got working-class jobs'. Willis argues that the reproduction of labour power through education works in an indirect and unintentional way. In part he argues that the lads understood their own alienation and exploitation yet their own choices helped to trap them into remaining in their working-class positions.

McFadden (1995) views Willis's seminal work as illustrative of the theoretical toing and froing between structure and agency. Willis (1977) suggests that the resistance of working-class males in his study acted to reinforce their social class positions; he argues that this was a choice that his participants actively made. Willis links the cultural meaning of work to the educational experiences of working-class resisters in order to argue that the counter-school practices of the lads conditioned them into acceptance of the dehumanising side of manual labouring while at the same time preparing them to survive the demands of the workplace. However, the notion that school resistance was somehow functional to the post-school lives of working-class children and that it also contained the potential for progressive change was heavily criticised by other school ethnographers (Watson, 1993). Willis has also been criticised for his attempt to avoid a deterministic analysis by giving the lads agency.

Criticism was received from many quarters, with particular regard to Willis's exclusive focus on male youth and the notion of resistance which appeared to be based on the premise that all the participators in the subcultures were working-class. Gewirtz (1991) argues that there are no clear criteria to distinguish between behaviour which is resistant and that which is merely "messing about" (Brittan and Maynard, 1984). Also she questions what exactly is being resisted. She complains
that researchers seem to make rather large jumps from observing behaviour to attributing it to resistance against a particular thing. McFadden (1995: 296) likens the debates surrounding resistance theory to searching for the 'epistemological and ontological holy grail'. He believes the ongoing problem for sociology as a discipline is the notion that questions have been posed over a divide with answers given in dualistic ways which reduce either structure to agency or agency to structure. It seems that the ethnographic work which has been conducted in relation to youth subcultures, resistance and social change finds itself bedevilled by criticisms of either structure or agency (McFadden, 1995). McFadden argues that resistance theory developed largely as a reaction against the pessimism and determinism of reproductive accounts of schooling (forwarded by Bowles and Gintis, 1976) which imply that schools could not make a difference to the production of the oppressive, social class relations of capitalism. He believes resistance theory concentrates on schools as relatively autonomous institutions which bring into relief their intersection with the cultural and the labour markets. McFadden asserts that the concept of resistance purported to offer the possibility of education producing creative agents capable of changing social structures. Therefore McFadden (1995: 296) argues:

Therein lies the tension between questions of structure and agency: given the existence of social structures which impinge on individual and group consciousness and action, how is free action possible? How can oppressive structures be changed?

However, the lads' resistance if anything enhanced the reproduction of their social position.

Willis's work was also attacked by feminists such as McRobbie (1978) for its over-romanticized view of working-class masculinity and lack of concern with girls. However 'feminist's own work on 'female resistance' has also been criticised for 'acting to cement the lives of their own respondents in working-class culture' (Wright et al, 2000: 38). Anyon (1983) borrows the term 'resistance within accommodation' to suggest that girls and women appropriate certain features of the
dominant ideology relating to femininity and female sexuality and use them to their
own advantage. For example, in schools she asserts that girls will use blushing,
giggling, whispering and laughter as a way of avoiding work. In a similar way
Davies (1983) argues that girls derive power from the notion that girls are sensitive,
which leads teachers to adopt the strategy of avoiding confrontation. Öhrn (1993)
uses the term ‘currying favour’ to describe the way she believes girls in her study of
Swedish schools ‘use’ their attractiveness. Interestingly Öhrn notes that:

Currying favour is probably possible even for girls not conforming to stereotypical
beauty, but less so for the attractive but deviant girls who do not conform to
expectations of appropriate feminine behaviour (Öhrn 1993:151).

It could be that in this way young women affect forms of resistance within the
context of classroom and the teacher-pupil relationship. However, some theorists
(for example Gewirtz, 1991) dispute the issue of what is specifically being resisted
by pupils by arguing that the exaggeration of femininity described above can be
seen as a rejection of the norms of femininity, and this is a point which will be
returned to in chapter 3.

Other authors argue that the concept of resistance should be expanded to consider
pupils who are not simply working-class and white. These differentiations have led
authors such as McFadden (1995) to argue that resistance theory needs to account
for the variety in pupil responses to schooling which may be mediated through
class, gender, and ‘race’ and the importance of the intersection between pupil and
teacher perceptions. He contends that:

Students from certain kinds of backgrounds have experiences of schooling which
restrict their opportunity to extend their knowledge. The response to this form of
schooling for many students is to resist it. What students are constantly rejecting, or
sometimes at best, merely compelling with regards to class, gender, race and
ethnicity is schooling which depowers them. As Furlong (1991) notes, “pupils do not
reject abstract social structures, they reject real teachers going about the day to day
business of schooling” (McFadden, 1995: 297).
However, McFadden goes on to argue that the rejection of the offers and advantages of schooling has differential class consequences. He cites Aggleton (1987) who found that middle-class students who resist schooling are advantaged in the labour market in general terms. Six years after his study, at a time of high youth unemployment, all of Aggleton's middle-class resisters were in employment, either in service industries or in industries related to symbolic production and the arts. McFadden concludes that the available evidence suggested that resistance has differential racial, ethnic and gender consequences as well.

Wright et al propose that much research on educational inequality and 'race' has suggested that Black pupils exhibit particular forms of speech (Mac an Gill, 1988), ways of walking (Gillborn, 1990), and more recently types of dress (Sewell, 1997). However, these explanations of pupil behaviour have been criticised for being culturally essentialist as reducing forms of behaviour to 'race' ignoring the effect of class and gender on behaviour. In their study which attempts to 'racialize the concept of resistance within the context of school exclusion' Wright et al (2000: 13) found that resistances were often located in pupils' wider racialised and gendered positions. They theorise that forms of speech, dress and ways of walking are often indicative of displaced contestations or resistances and these expressions hold greater cultural currency when used in an area such as school where Black pupils are in a numerical and power related minority.

Inherent to the notion of pupil resistance is the idea that relationships between teachers and pupils are structured on a basis of power and powerlessness. Mac an Ghaill (1994) criticises resistant theories for assuming that power relationships are unidirectional through placing students and teachers in predictable power positions. Wright et al (2000) assert that the findings from their study demonstrate that pupils use forms of resistance / contestation to negotiate the form that the pupils' relationships with teachers will take. Much resistance was used to subvert the traditional teacher as powerful, student as powerless relationship. Wright et al assert that contrary to teachers' perceptions, these pupils did not exhibit anti-education sentiments. They argue that instead the pupils' resisting behaviours were situated in their wider racial and gendered positions and were a response to the
domination, alienation and infantilism they experienced. They suggest this may be a result of the threat of school sanctions and permanent exclusion which, under present education policy conditions, is continuously reinforced in schools.

More recently, some theorists have proclaimed that teenagers are growing up in a different world to that inhabited by previous generations and the resulting new order has led to the emergence of new patterns of identities and transitions. Theorists such as Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) give precedence to the role that agency can play in a world characterised by risk and fragmentation. Individuals are believed to have a greater scope beyond traditional markers of class, race and gender to create complex subjectivities and lifestyles (Cieslik and Pollock, 2002). How useful is this theoretical approach in exploring the lives of girls who are excluded from school? Theories of fragmentation and risk emphasise the decreasing importance of social structures over the lives of young people in the ‘late modern’ period. However, is it really valid to emphasise individual agency over social structure in the lives of socially excluded young people? I will now turn my attention to debates concerning fragmentation and risk and the relevance these have for examining the lives of young women who have been excluded from school.

Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) argue that we live in a modern age characterised by risk. They assert that the current generation of young people is a generation that has been set apart by their vulnerable position and life experiences in a complex and hostile society, a society which is very different to the world inhabited by previous generations. Theorists of the late modernist tradition propose that young people today face new risks which they are increasingly expected to negotiate as individuals rather than as members of a collectivity. Indeed Beck (1992: 130) argues that in a risk society in which social structures and solidarities have broken down, ‘the individual himself or herself becomes the reproduction unit for the social in the lifeworld’. These theories have clear implications for the educational sphere which as the place where children and teenagers spend, or are meant to spend, the majority of their time, can be viewed as one of the most important locations where the construction, negotiation and display of identities occurs. Furlong and Cartmel (1997:11) argue that:
The demand for advanced educational credentials and flexible specialisations associated with post-Fordist economies means that individuals are constantly held accountable for their performance and face increased risks should they fail. Collective identities once manifest in class-based resistance to the school have weakened and underlying class relationships have become obscure.

The dramatic decline in the demand for unskilled labour in late modern Britain has resulted in increased competition for jobs. In this context it has been argued that young peoples' relationships to their schools have become individualised and that the class based divisions which were once the key to understanding educational experiences have become diluted. It has been proposed that caught in a situation where rejection of educational values or hostility towards school-based figures of authority almost guarantees long-term unemployment, class-based resistance has become covert and young people are pitted against each other in a bid to maximise their educational attainments so as to survive in an increasingly hostile world (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Transitions into adulthood have been extended, partly reflecting the increased difficulties young people experience in entering the labour market, which in itself makes education an increasingly attractive prospect. However this leaves those who cannot 'work' the educational system to their advantage in some difficulty and 'socially' excluded young women may fall into this category.

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) have identified further weakening of old class based inequalities. The visual styles adopted by young people through the consumption of clothing in late modernity are regarded as having become increasingly central to the establishment of identity and to peer relations. Furlong and Cartmel (1997) assert that whilst:

Traditional sources of social differentiation based on social class and communities are thought to have weakened, young people are seen as attempting to find self fulfilment and ways of identifying with other young people through their consumption of goods, especially fashion (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997: 61).

37
Furlong and Cartmel suggest that although consumption and style have not succeeded class as the main determinant of young people’s lives, consumer lifestyles are actually very stressful in nature and the sense of risk experienced by young people is very much a product of the consumer society (Miles, 2000). They are aware that the pressure on young people to participate in the consumer culture in order to construct their identities has led to some young people being marginalized. Furlong and Cartmel highlight the plight of those without jobs who they see as denied access to the rich leisure lifestyles enjoyed by the majority of today’s youth. Exclusion from consumer cultures can reduce young people’s confidence and prevent their acceptance within a youth culture which cross-cuts class divisions. Furlong and Cartmel assert that the changes in young people’s leisure and lifestyles highlight the implications of the processes of individualisation as argued by Beck (1992). Young people can be seen as able to chose between a wide range of activities and construct their identities in an arena where the impact of traditional social divisions appears weak. They conclude that:

The obscurity of class in these crucial life contexts has powerful implications for social life in general. Indeed, the lived and mediated experiences of young people in the fields of leisure and consumption is an important mechanism via which the epistemological fallacy of late modernity is maintained and reproduced (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997: 64).

By epistemological fallacy Furlong and Cartmel refer to the notion that processes of diversification may obscure underlying class relationships and may provide the impression of greater equality and individualisation without actually providing anything of substance.

Many youth researchers, particularly throughout the 1990s, ran with the notion of the diminishing importance of macro-structures such as social class and consequently emphasise young people’s agency over their own lives. This body of work, sometimes called post-subcultural theory, finds contemporary cultures of youth to be more fleeting and organised around individual lifestyle and consumption choices. Young people are said to be more likely to move through a succession of styles or have a ‘pic n’ mix’ attitude to style. For example Bennett
(1999) uses the Maffesolian notion of neo-tribes to illustrate the increasingly fluid and unstable nature of social relations in contemporary society. Other terms such as ‘lifestyles’ (Miles, 2000) and ‘post-subculturalist’ (Muggleton, 2000) have been employed to ‘try to account for the ways in which youth cultural identities are (allegedly) no longer so affected by social divisions (such as class location)’ (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006: 127). Shildrick and MacDonald (2006: 128) argue that these post-subcultural theorists are preoccupied with music, dance and the stylistic exploits of minority music ‘at the expense of the cultural lives and leisure activities of the “ordinary” minority’. Therefore it seems that the ‘youth cultural identities and practices of working-class youth - especially the most marginalised and disadvantaged sections thereof – rarely feature in contemporary youth or leisure studies’ and are apparently ‘wholly absent from post-subcultural studies’ whilst at the same time media discussion of hoodies and street corner gangs has risen (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006: 128).

Theorists who have embraced Beck and Gidden’s ideas have received criticisms from Savage (2000) for emphasising the significance of agency over structure and he suggests that the rise in individualisation should be understood within social class analysis as a shift from working-class to middle-class modes of individualisation. Therefore it seems that working-class young people are now expected to function according to middle-class norms of extended support despite their relative lack of resources. Shildrick and MacDonald (2006: 130), in their review of studies which have taken into account the ‘complex relationship between young people’s cultural identities and their broader lives’ (such as Bose, 2003 and Pilkington, 2004) argue that many of the young people who appear in them are actually materially, and hence geographically, excluded from the sorts of leisure activities open to their more successful peers. They argue that the overriding conclusion of ‘these studies of less flamboyant, less stylistically spectacular youth is that the sorts of free cultural choice described by more postmodern, post-subcultural perspectives tend to be reserved for the more privileged sections of dominant cultural groups [and] there is enough evidence in the studies noted ... to demonstrate how social and economic constraint reverberates though the youth cultural and leisure experiences of less-advantaged young people’ (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006: 133).
these studies examine of intra-class cultural differentiation reflect 'not the liberation of individuals from traditional, long-standing structural constraints in a postmodern world of consumer choice, but the complicated story of how these shape up and are met and responded to by classed, 'raced' and gendered young people in particular places at particular times' (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006: 136). MacDonald et al (2001) note that some of the potential of older criminological and sociological theories of subculture, with their emphasis on the ways that youth cultures emerge as localised class-based solutions to material inequalities, may have been too quickly forgotten in the rush to critique resistance theories. As will be evidenced later in this thesis, I believe that resistance is a useful tool to work with when conceptualising young people's behaviour which does not adhere to 'normative' models.

Young people's constructions of identity can be viewed as an active expression of not only the relationship between the individual and society and structure and agency, but also people's relationships to social change (Miles, 2000). The structure / agency debate is valuable when considering young peoples constructions of identity as it highlights the role of everyday social interactions and encounters in the construction of social worlds, while simultaneously acknowledging the way in which wider social contexts influence such interactions. A theorist whose ideas are purported to have successfully bridged the gap between structure and agency shall now be examined.

2.6 Bridging structure and agency
Over the course of a career which spanned many years, Bourdieu wrote prolifically on the debates surrounding structure and agency. Bourdieu was emphatic that social life cannot be understood as simply the aggregate of individual behaviour, nor could it be understood solely in terms of individual decision making on the one hand or as determined by a supra-structure on the other (Jenkins, 1992). He argues that through his use of the concept of habitus he mediated between structure and agency. Habitus can be defined as 'an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constructed' (Bourdieu, 1977: 95 in Grenfell and James, 1998: 14). Habitus is social inheritance

40
but it implies habit, or unthinking-ness in actions, and ‘disposition’. Therefore, habitus can be viewed as the everyday knowledge that reflects the routine experience of appropriate behaviour in particular cultures and subcultures (Miles, 2000). Bourdieu argues that human experience is governed by habitus which is the outcome of collective history. History culminates in an ongoing and seamless series of moments, and is continuously carried forward in a process of production and reproduction in everyday life. As Jenkins (1992: 80) describes, Bourdieu envisages ‘a process of production, a process of adjustment, and a dialectical relationship between collective history inscribed in objective conditions and the habitus inscribed in individuals’. History is the foundation of habitus, and as a consequence of habitus history tends to repeat itself and the status quo is perpetuated. Jenkins asserts that this process of ‘cultural and social reproduction is responsible for the apparent continuity and regularity of social structure’ (Jenkins, 1992: 80).

For Bourdieu, if individual aspects of habitus lay in individual consciousness and unconsciousness, the constituent effect of these in and through human practice is actualised in an objectively defined ‘field’ (Grenfell and James, 1998). Field can be viewed as a structured system of social relations at both micro and macro levels. Therefore institutions and groupings, both large and small, all exist in structural relation to each other in some way; the relations determine and reproduce social activity in its various forms. Due to the structural nature of positions (of individuals, between individuals, between individuals and institutions, and between institutions and institutions) they can be mapped or located, and the generating principals behind their relations ascertained (Grenfell and James, 1998).

Bourdieu uses the term cultural capital to describe a system of distinction in which cultural hierarchies correspond to social ones and peoples’ tastes are predominately a marker of social class. In fact, Bourdieu conceptualises three different forms of capital, of which cultural capital is just one:

*Economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is
convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations ("connections"), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of nobility (Bourdieu, 1986: 243).

Therefore, the word capital describes the social products of a field or system of relations through which individuals carry out social thoughts, actions, objects, any product of human activity. Social capital will be discussed later. Bourdieu theorises cultural capital as the product of education and argues that it exists in three distinct forms; firstly, it can be viewed as connected to individuals in their general educated character - accent, dispositions, learning etc.; secondly, connected to objects, books, qualifications, machines, dictionaries, etc.; and thirdly, connected to institutions - places of learning, universities, libraries etc. (Grenfell and James, 1998). Importantly, capital is not readily available to everyone on the same basis and scarcity of capital can be seen as the lubricant of social systems (Grenfell and James, 1998). Bourdieu argues that capital attracts capital and the various forms are interconvertible. Those with cultural capital achieve in the educational sphere and high academic qualifications traditionally tend to 'buy' good jobs with good salaries.

There is much debate about whether Bourdieu was successful in his attempt to bridge the divide between structure and agency when accounting for social life. Early critics of Bourdieu argue that he was a structural Marxist. However, it is commonly accepted now that Bourdieu was not on either side of the structure / agency divide. It has been asserted that Bourdieu was seeking to articulate the view that social and cultural reproduction occurs by means of a constant reciprocity or dialectic between agency and structure (Robbins, 1998).

Others emphasise the importance of the concept of habitus in enabling Bourdieu to achieve a balanced viewpoint in the structure / agency debate; it seems it provides a group-distinctive framework of social cognition and interpretation so that the group can deal with the world. Miles (2000) stresses the importance Bourdieu
places on lifestyles. Bourdieu argues that lifestyles can be seen as the systematic products of habitus, and:

The dialectic of conditions and habitus is the basis of an alchemy which transforms the distribution of capital, the balance-sheet of a power relation, into a system of perceived differences, distinctive properties, that is, a distribution of symbolic capital, legitimate capital, whose objective truth is misrecognised (Bourdieu, 1984: 172 in Miles, 2000: 22).

Consequently, Bourdieu argues that habitus is separate from people as individuals, therefore it constrains people, whilst at the same time is constructed through human agency (Miles, 2000). Bourdieu proposes that the position a person has in a structure does in itself generate a way of life. Members of a social group may act, but they do so as agents of social action not as mirrors of the group to which they belong. Therefore consumption serves as a means of establishing, as opposed to merely expressing, variations between social groups (Miles, 2000). Indeed, lifestyles can be seen as revolving around behaving in culturally acceptable ways, depending on the cultural capital of the individual in question. Miles (2000) asserts that a hierarchy of taste exists whereby certain activities are deemed more culturally appropriate than others and lifestyles play an active role in upholding social hierarchies because some people have more access to cultural capital than others.

For Bourdieu, (1993) social capital consists of social networks and connections, contacts and group memberships which through the accumulation of exchanges, obligations and shared identities, provide actual or potential support and access to valued resources. Sociability, in other words how social networks are sustained, requires necessary skill and disposition. Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993) argue that changing family structures in terms of lone parents and absent fathers leads to a deficit of social capital as the norms, trust and obligations are no longer robustly produced. Both theorists have tended to denounce family diversity as a negative influence on the production of social capital. Coleman (1988) argues that close relations between parent and child allows a dense social structure of norms, extensive trust and obligations. These would develop as a result of the parents
'being physically present giving them attention and developing an intense relationship with them that involves talk about personal matters and expectations of their educational achievement' (Edwards, 2005a: 4). Coleman and Putnam's conceptualisations of 'parenting deficits' as characterised by lone mothers and absent fathers also takes into account large numbers of siblings in a household as this is meant to lead to less adult attention given to each individual child, which in turn produces weaker levels of social capital and therefore weaker educational outcomes.

For Putnam (2000) there are two types of social capital: bonding and bridging. Groups may have high levels of social capital that maintain group solidarity by bonding members together, but show very little of the kind of social capital that bridges other divisions such as social class, ethnicity or generation (Morrow, 2001a). In this conceptualisation social capital can both support and constrain individual actions and outcomes. Potentially positive bonds of community, without the bridging capital into the broader social context, can result in individuals and groups being trapped in excluded communities (Thomson et al, 2003). Others (Strathdee, 2001; Johnston et al, 2000; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005) highlight the paradox that exists in terms of social capital; that whilst connections to local networks may help in coping with the problems of growing up in a poor neighbourhood and generate a sense of inclusion, these same networks may limit opportunities for escaping these neighbourhoods and the poverty and 'social exclusion' that they experience.

Bourdieu has attracted criticism for apparently employing mechanistic notions of power and domination, an overly deterministic view of human agency and the over-simplification of class cultures and their relationships to each other (Grenfell and James, 1998). Some argue that Bourdieu's theory seems to leave no room for notions like resistance, incorporation and accommodation (Nash, 1999). Morrow (1999) asserts that there may be different rules for the conversion of capital for men and women, which relates to women's historical concentration in the private sphere. Nowotny (1991) develops the concept of emotional capital to overcome this gap; emotional capital can be viewed as knowledge, contacts and relations as well as emotionally valued skills and assets, which hold within any social network.
characterised at least partly by affective ties. Morrow contends that this is likely to have relevance for differences between girls and boys, especially in relation to self-identity, experiences of puberty and body-image, 'which appear to be so critical during mid to late childhood' (Morrow, 1999: 755). Even though numerous limitations have been identified with Bourdieu’s theorising, many commentators argue that the struggle to work with his concepts is 'worth the candle' because ‘it forces one to think’ (Nash, 1999: 185). Jenkins believes Bourdieu is ‘good to think with’ because he is concerned with the:

Manner in which the routine practices of individual actors are determined ... by the history and objective structure of their existing social world and how .... those practices contribute – without this being their intention – to the maintenance of its existing hierarchal structure (Jenkins, 1992: 141).

Whilst developing, and combining, Bourdieu’s and Beck’s theories, Raffo and Reeves (2000) endeavour to explain the relationship between the agency exercised by socially excluded young people and the contribution made by social ‘structures’ in shaping their school to work transitions. By appropriating the terms ‘structured individualisation, chains of mutual independence, habitus and social capital theory’, Raffo and Reeves develop a theoretical framework which attempted to cast the complex and sophisticated agency and actions of young people within the context, of what they define as individualised systems of social capital, that both support and constrain young people. Expanding on Beck’s (1992) work they assert that processes of individualisation and social policies have fractured and extended young peoples’ transitions, and that young people growing up in cities have borne the brunt of these changes and been disproportionately affected by their associated risks. They contend that young peoples’ individualised transitions, incorporating elements of agency, resistance and accommodation, are conditioned to a large extent by the evolutionary and adaptive characteristics of their individualised systems of social capital, rather than by prescribed social characteristics. The agency many of the young people in their research appeared to have is emphasised; they assert that their participants actively made decisions regarding how they conducted themselves and the level of participation they made in the classroom, and also about
which lessons they chose to attend, and how they will spend their time when ‘wagging’. However, they assert that their research also clearly shows that actions and choices made by young people are not completely free and open:

Choices are often constrained by a practical knowledge and understanding of what is possible – a knowledge and understanding clearly mediated by locality, gender and class, and to a lesser extent, ethnicity (Raffo and Reeves, 2000: 149).

Expanding on Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, Raffo and Reeves assert that the active choices made, and everyday practical tasks resolved by young people are a consequence of an individual practical knowledge (both direct and mediated) and understanding of circumstances that are situated and created within individualised systems of social capital. Importantly though they view:

These individualised systems or networks did not evolve as the result of a collectivised social consciousness, but rather as a consequence of an individual’s experience of the dynamic collection of doing and thinking that is within that individual’s constellation of social relations – social relations that are however, mediated by structural factors (Raffo and Reeves, 2000: 150).

Their approach can be seen to differ from Bourdieu’s, they argue, because whereas Bourdieu envisages habitus as predetermining an inescapable destiny, they believe that their notion of individualised systems of social capital conceives of a more open-ended future for young people. They propose that individualised systems of social capital are the embodiment of the regular interactions an individual young person has with various significant others and peers. An individuals’ knowledge, perspectives, social skills are created through an enculturation process with this individualised constellation of social relations, as an individual deals with risks ‘which are often structurally imposed, such as the disappearance of the labour market’ (Raffo and Reeves, 2000: 154).

The preceding examination of the theories concerning fragmentation and risk (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997) and Bourdieu’s (1986) self-proclaimed bridging of the structure and agency divide, has raised some interesting theoretical concerns which
are pertinent to this thesis. The concepts of fragmentation and risk, habitus and capital are particularly significant to this thesis and will be returned to later, however the concept of resistance is also central to this thesis. As previously mentioned the notion of resistance behaviour as forwarded by Willis (1977) has been heavily criticised in the last couple of decades, but it does seem that the idea of young people employing resistant strategies in schools has begun to gain currency in recent years once again, at least within the sociology of education (Wright et al, 2000). Wright et al (2000) propose that the concept of resistance has been employed by a number of writers who are keen:

To explore how specific groups of pupils negotiate and respond to their marginal positions in schools, whilst avoiding a deterministic analysis of the ability of schools to reproduce these social and cultural inequalities (Wright et al, 2000: 9).

Some education theorists argue that the concept of resistance is more appropriate now than ever before due to the increased regulation of schools and the (over)prescriptive national curriculum. According to this premise the lack of choice pupils experience at school has left little option for a minority of pupils to do anything other than resist the school and its structures. This highlights one of the features of resistance theory: resistance appears to be conceptualised as an option for only a select few. For example, Woods (1990) asserts that the majority of the students in school continue to cope with its pressures while a minority actively resist, with differential consequences, the offers and the advantages which education is said to bring.

2.7 Summary
This chapter has focused on social and school exclusion and examined the concepts of resistance as used by sociologists to account for young people’s ‘unruly’ behaviour. Also explored were Bourdieu’s notions of habitus and capital. The chapter has traced how these concepts evolved and positioned them as integral within the context of this thesis.
When New Labour came to power in 1997 concern was voiced over the relatively new phenomenon of 'social exclusion' and the Social Exclusion Unit was established with a remit of targeting young people, for example by reducing the numbers of pupils excluded from school. Such factors as special educational needs, age, ethnicity, socio-economic factors and the ethos of individual schools have all been seen to contribute to exclusion rates. However these discourses are still situated within a predominantly male framework. Both gender and ethnicity appear to be significant factors determining whether a particular behaviour will result in exclusion. Osler et al (2002 and 2003) conducted seminal research into the exclusion of girls. However, their work tended to consider girls' at-school-lives and unfortunately tended to overlook their out-of-school lives. This thesis aims to locate the experiences of 'girls who fail' within the wider contexts of adolescence, youth culture and the performance of identity. This research also intends to build on previous research which examines the contributory factors of family circumstances on the exclusion of girls. It aims to contribute to sociological understanding by providing a more timely, contextually situated account which aims to understand the wider, often more complex reasons behind female exclusions from secondary schools.

In the second half of this chapter I was concerned with placing these areas of 'policy' concern within sociological frameworks, particularly resistance, and I explored the varying critiques of this concept. McFadden (1995) identifies problems with resistance theory, but also concerns with the critique of resistance theory which labelled it as resting on either side of dualistic structure / agency divide. The proponents of the 'risk society' thesis who argue that class cultures and familial relationships no longer exert the same influence over young peoples' lives that they once did, and Furlong and Cartmel's (1997) assertion that young people are now pitted against each in order to maximise their educational attainment has implications for those who cannot work the education system to their advantage is highly relevant to my research. Bourdieu’s (1986) contribution to the debates on whether social life is governed by individual agency or macro-level factors such as class and his use of the terms habitus and cultural and social capital is very much fundamental to this research. More recent research by McDonald and Marsh (2005)
calls for a re-examination of the wider structural influences on young peoples’ lives. As Jones (2005) notes the main element of most current analyses of social class is the interaction between structure and agency rather than their opposition. The role of structure and agency are again central to the arguments raised in this chapter and will be addressed further in chapter 10. A major area which has an influencing factor in the lives of girls is the performance of femininity and it is to research in this area which I now turn.
Chapter 3: Femininity and young women

Having reviewed existing literature concerning social and school exclusion and debates regarding resistance and agency I now turn my attention to theoretical and empirical research focusing on the construction and performance of femininity. I review research which illuminates the ways in which femininity has been and continues to be constructed and the pressures which are brought to bear on young women to behave in socially appropriate ways. I explore the role of macro-level factors such as social class, as referred to in chapter 2, which are highly pertinent to this critical discussion of the constructions of femininities. I examine some of the differing concepts and perceptions surrounding femininity which are negotiated by working-class young women in their lives today.

It has been contended that successful women are now considered to be normal rather than deviant as the de-traditionalisation of women’s and girls’ lives has left them allegedly free to compete in an open market place for qualifications and jobs (Gauntlett, 2002). Some sections of the media have highlighted the revolution in the educational sphere with girls out-performing boys at both GCSEs and A-levels. However, it has been noted that boys from professional families are not allowed to fail while girls from lower income families are not doing very well (Walkerdine et al, 2001). Thus it seems that the opening up of opportunities to women does not apply to all; many working-class women are still entrapped by discourses surrounding femininities and class. As will be discussed below, the performance of desirable femininity can be seen to be a key feature in girls’ inclusion or exclusion from friendship groups, school and wider society. I begin this chapter by examining how femininity has been conventionally regarded and subjected to gender and class regulations. The dichotomous relationship between adolescence with connections of trouble and conflict (Hudson, 1984) and the performance of femininity characterised by a lack of aggression, passivity and conformity is then explored. Girls’ culture and the notion of girls’ friendships acting as a site where identities are practised, appropriated, resisted and negotiated (Hey, 1997) is then explored. The more recent research by theorists such as Day (2003), McRobbie
(2007) and Renold (2005) deal with how young women present themselves in the modern age, particularly focusing on those who subvert or resist the conventional notions of femininity, which has particular pertinence for my study, is then discussed. In the final section of this chapter I discuss the implications of this work for my thesis when examining the biographies of excluded young women.

3.1 The Performativity of Femininity

Modern theorists have conceptualised gender, and therefore, femininity as a performative construct. de Beauvoir famously claimed that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman' (1949: 281). For Butler (1990, 1993) female gender is not something that one is, nor is it to be understood in terms of traits that one has. Rather it is an effect that is produced by way of particular things being done, 'a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory time frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a "natural" kind of being' (1990: 33). Female gender is something that is accomplished through a repetitive performativity or 'girling' inaugurated by the utterance 'it's a girl', but constantly reaffirmed by repeatedly performing particular acts in accordance with the cultural norms (themselves historically and socially constructed and consequently variable) that define femininity. Thus gender is a particular type of process, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame (Salih, 2002).

If we view femininity as a performative construct it becomes important to map its route to dominance. Poovey (1984) has charted the emergence of femininity in the eighteen century. The femininity which was produced had an affinity with the habitus of the upper classes, of ease, restraint, calm and luxurious decoration. It was produced as a sign of difference from other women and conduct was equated with appearance. Skeggs (1997) asserts that white middle-class femininity was defined as the ideal, but also as the most passive and dependent of femininities. This femininity was always coded as respectable. Walkerdine (1987) argues that by the end of the nineteenth century femininity was seen to be the property of middle-class women who could prove themselves to be respectable through their appearance and conduct. Skeggs asserts that white middle-class women's investments in the ideal of femininity enabled them to gain access to limited status.
and moral superiority. Those who lacked femininity were deemed to be lacking in respectability and ultimately, dangerous, disruptive sexual women. Skeggs asserts that working-class girls were involved in forms of labour that prevented femininity from being a possibility. Skeggs (1997: 100) argues that:

Femininity requires the display of classed dispositions, of forms of conduct and behaviour, different forms of cultural capital, which are not part of their [working-class women's] cultural baggage: they are unlikely to display "divine composure", which included the components of femininity as silent, static, invisible and composed.

In contrast Skeggs highlights the positioning of working-class women as vulgar, pathological, tasteless and sexual.

Skeggs went on to theorise about the concept of respectability. Victorian ideals such as 'cleanliness is next to godliness' were invoked to seal the status of particular feminine roles and functions, such as the feminine domestic ideal, which were represented as an unsurpassable goal to which all women would naturally aspire. Middle-class women taught working-class women to take pleasure from bourgeois domesticity, and as Skeggs (1997: 46) asserts 'if pleasure can be gained from that which is oppressive it is far easier not to notice the oppressive features of it'. The working-class began to adopt the concept of respectability as they were able to define themselves against the rough working-classes and thus ascertain social superiority. Skeggs (1997: 46) argues that:

Respectability was organised around a complex set of practices and representations which defined appropriate and acceptable modes of behaviour, language and appearance; these operated as both social rules and moral codes. They impacted upon women's use of public space whereby respectability only occurred inside the home and not in the public realm of the streets.

Thus women of the streets became a euphemism for prostitution.
For many years this interpretation has come to dominate discourses of femininity dictating what is and what is not considered to be respectable behaviour. I will return to Skeggs' (1997) research later in this chapter when I discuss young women and respectability in the present day.

3.2 The dichotomous relationship of femininity and adolescence

Before discussing the construction of femininities further at this point I am going to draw attention to the notion of 'being a teenager' and how this interacts with varying constructions of femininities. Some commentators argue that the term 'youth' is an ambiguous and highly contested concept (Valentine et al, 1998). Aries's (1962) assertion that in the middle-ages children were treated as miniature adults, rather than as conceptually different from adults, has been widely accepted. In the fifteenth century children began to be identified as having separate needs from adults, but it was not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the introduction of mass education and 'childhood' legislation that a universal notion of what it meant to be a child developed (Valentine et al, 1998). The notion of the 'teenager' came into being in the 1950s as that decade saw an increase in affluence and an emphasis on consumption, style and leisure led to the development of a range of goods and services aimed at young people. It seems that youth has always been, and still remains, a contested concept, as it is ambiguously wedged between childhood and adulthood (Sibley, 1995). Sibley asserts that:

The boundary separating child and adult is a decidedly fuzzy one. Adolescence is an ambiguous zone within which the child/adult boundary can be variously located according to who is doing the categorising. Thus adolescents are denied access to the adult world, but they attempt to distance themselves from the world of the child. Adolescents may appear threatening to adults because they transgress the adult/child boundary and appear discrepant in 'adult' spaces (Sibley, 1995: 35).

Other writers, such as James (1986) have also concentrated on the liminal positioning of youth, pointing out that the only boundaries which define the teenage years are boundaries of exclusion which define what young people are not, cannot do, or cannot be. The term youth tends to refer to people aged 18-25, which has no correlation with any of the diverse legal classifications of childhood or
adulthood (Valentine et al, 1998). Various laws set boundaries for young people stating when they are legally allowed to do certain things such as smoke, drink, have sex, get married and vote. Many of these boundaries are highly contested and resisted by young people which has led to James’ (1986) assertion that the use of physical age to control and define young people is ineffective and simply represents attempts to tame time by chopping it up into manageable slices. Youth can also be viewed as a performance. For example, some young people may be legally defined as adults, yet may resist this definition by performing their identity in a way which is read as younger than they actually are; whereas others may actually perform their identity such that they can pass as being older than the actual age of their physical body (Valentine et al, 1998). Some theorists argue that the concept of adolescence is patronising because it suggests that young people do not have value in their own right and are instead valued only to the extent to which they are in the process of ‘becoming’ an adult (Frankenberg, 1992). It is important to note that young people are judged on whether they are displaying behaviour which can be deemed as ‘age appropriate’. The extent to which behaviour is interpreted as appropriate to the age of young people has relevance to the analysis of the biographical accounts of the young women who took part in this study.

It has been suggested that femininity and adolescence are subversive of each other (Hudson, 1984). Hudson argues that teenage girls are confronted by conflicting sets of expectations arising from the connotations attached to femininity and adolescence. She asserts that:

> Young girls’ attempts to be accepted as “young women” are always liable to be undermined (subverted) by perceptions of them as childish, immature, or any other of the terms by which we define the status ‘adolescent’ (Hudson, 1984: 32).

Hudson (1984) argues that adolescence is a masculine construct and images such as the restless searching youth, the Hamlet figure and the sower of wild oats are masculine images. She continues:
This is the basis of many of the conflicts posed by the coexistence of adolescence and femininity: if adolescence is characterised by masculine constructs, then any attempts by girls to satisfy society's demands of them qua adolescence, are bound to involve them in displaying not only lack of maturity (since adolescence is dichotomised with maturity), but also lack of femininity. Thus, the girl playing a lot of sport is doing something which is still conceived of as essentially masculine (Hudson, 1984: 35).

Hudson points to an existence of a discourse of adolescence framed in the concepts of trouble and conflict. She argues that the problem of adolescence as defined by adult society is that it is a time of uncontrolled appetites, a time when teenagers need protecting against themselves if they are not to damage their chances of reaching respectable adulthood; the problem of adolescence for teenagers is that they must demonstrate maturity and responsibility if they are to move out of this stigmatised status, and yet because adolescence is conceived as a time of irresponsibility and lack of maturity, they are given few opportunities to demonstrate these qualities which are essential for their admission as adults. Discourses surrounding femininity have focused on lack of aggression and passivity-conformity as universal feminine traits. Hudson (1984) highlights classroom observation studies (for example Wolpe 1977) which have indicated that teachers respond positively to 'feminine' girls. However, she asserts that schools strive to manage femininity; teachers encourage a modest and traditional feminine development whilst at the same time discouraging inappropriate degrees of femininity, especially a markedly sexualised femininity. She asserts that girls themselves are faced with the problems of knowing how much to display femininity and assessing in what social situations it is appropriate to be feminine.

Hudson (1984) goes on to argue that the existence of the two discourses of femininity and adolescence means that girls must expect their behaviour to be judged by adults in terms of adults' own, rather than girls', invocations of one or the other of the discourses. She asserts that girls' claims to femininity are constantly open to subversion by judgements of their behaviour as adolescent, whilst at the same time if they display too much of a mature feminine persona, they are told to
have more fun and be the thoughtless, selfish person we see as the 'typical teenager'. Hudson concludes that girl's are judged by:

Two incongruent sets of expectations as the feeling that whatever they do, it is always wrong; a correct impression since so often if they are fulfilling the expectations of femininity they will be disappointing those of adolescence and vice versa (Hudson, 1984: 53).

Even though Hudson was writing in the early 1980s her ideas regarding the two conflicting discourses of femininity and adolescence still appear to be relevant in today's society. It can be asserted that prevalent discourses in many schools envisage the ideal female pupil as passive; hard working, high achieving but submissive. Those who breach such stereotypes by either displaying too much femininity, or by indulging in behaviour perceived to be masculine or lacking in maturity, are liable to find themselves at odds with their schools' and communities' expectations. This may have consequences for their subsequent treatment and perhaps exclusion from school and even from wider society. This notion of the dichotomous positions of femininity and adolescence is particularly pertinent when studying a group of excluded young women.

3.3 'Girl' culture

It is pertinent at this juncture to examine the sociological work which exists on teenage girls' identity constructions. Feminists have argued that until the late 1970s sociology was dominated by men and consequently produced a distorted picture of the world. For example, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham produced a wealth of work on youth cultures in the 1970s, but failed to account for the activities, forms and meanings of girls. Youth was presented as deviant, spectacular and male. Male connotations of youth had pervaded sociology as the emphasis which was placed on masculine public discourse avoided relationships between youth and the family, and thereby marginalised the whole question of women and sexual divisions among youth (Valentine et al, 1998). Efforts were made to remedy this situation in the 1980s when researchers began to focus on girls in ordinary contexts and in the domestic sphere (Valentine et al, 1998).
Feminists such as McRobbie and Garber (1976) called for a shift of attention to girls' cultures and to the construction of ideologies about girlhood and the way femininity is articulated in a range of institutions and cultural forms such as school, the family, law and popular media.

As referred to in chapter 2, in the late 1970s, feminist researchers, such as McRobbie and Garber (1976) began to criticise the way that previous studies focused exclusively on boys' sub-cultural styles and their entrance into waged work. They argue that girls do have a female subculture of their own, but it is less obviously rebellious than that of males. They describe this as a bedroom culture, since it typically involves girls spending time in their bedrooms, often in pairs, rather than in gangs on the street. They assert that girls listen to music, experiment with make-up and discuss sex, pop idols and the latest gossip. McRobbie and Garber (1976) assert that the obsession with particular pop stars can be viewed as a meaningful reaction against the selective and authoritarian structures which control the girls' lives at school. They argue that 'teeny bopper' culture offers teenage girls a chance to create a space which they control themselves. McRobbie and Garber acknowledge that music acted as a 'code' for the subcultural life of a teenage girl within the private sphere of the bedroom. For McRobbie and Garber (1991) the 'code of pop music' was part of a standardised Gramscian 'map of meaning' transposed onto the life of the teenage girl lacking any musical depth beyond this primary connection (Lincoln, 2005). The bedroom is safe and accessible for young girls; there are no entry qualifications and compared to going out with boys, the risks of personal humiliation involved are minimal. In McRobbie and Garber's conceptualisation, the teenage girl is understood as passive, void of individuality and uninterested in any cultural activity beyond the realms of romance.

The early 1980s witnessed a range of textual and ethnographic studies which were conducted on topics such as girls' comics (McRobbie, 1982) and magazines, school (Griffin, 1982), women's magazines (Winship, 1987), soap operas such as Dallas (Ang, 1985) and dance (McRobbie and Nava, 1984). It seems that feminine bonding, cultures of romance and consumption, and use of clothes, make-up and pop music
were examined as distinctive elements of female sub-cultures. However, there are limitations to these studies, as Valentine et al (1998) describe:

What there was little space for in such studies were the girls who did not do these things, who were what might be termed "tomboys", who rejected hyper-femininity. Apart from the occasional autobiographical essay by lesbians, girls who did not conform to the above "distinctive elements" of female youth culture, lesbian identified or not, were not considered at all (Valentine et al, 1998: 17).

Indeed, according to Valentine et al (1998) this early 1980s research concluded that girls' leisure was more restricted than that of boys, they were often unable to engage in spectacular leisure activities which were dangerous or hedonistic, such as hanging around the urban streets and girls spent more time in the home, supervised by parents. Whereas boys' leisure time was presented as being structured around the move from school to work, girls' was perceived to be structured by their relationship to men. The studies also argued that for the majority of adolescent women the main objective was to attract a boyfriend and that femininity was constructed to secure a future married life. This notion of femininity as almost one-dimensional, functioning only to snare men, is critiqued by later studies discussed in this chapter and also by the data generated in the current study which illuminates the possibilities of many differing femininities.

In the late 1990s Lincoln (2004) conducted a study which aimed to update McRobbie and Garber's study of teenage girls' bedroom culture. Lincoln asserts that for teenage girls in the late 1990s, the bedroom is often the only space within the home that is personal, personalised and intimate. Lincoln constructs the teenage bedroom as a private area which provides respite from the demands of peers, siblings and parents. She used the concept of 'zoning' in order to refer to the:

Physical and visible arrangement of furniture, technical equipment, beauty products, school books, in fact any item that is contained (Lefebvre, 1991: 83) within bedroom space. It is orientated by the social activities that take place within the space, therefore it may not be fixed in physical or cognitive activities; zones can over-lap and integrate ... As a conceptual tool, the zone, unlike McRobbie's "code" and the
CCCS concept of "subculture", is material rather than abstract, and is constructed by the teenagers themselves who occupy the space of the bedroom and who select from their "pick and mix" culture and, as mentioned above, their immense "cultural choices" (Lincoln, 2004: 98).

Lincoln constructs zones as both physical and cognitive, and as being derived from the media, rather than being constructed by it. She argues that one teenage girl’s bedroom is never the same as another, but is specific to the individual teenager in relation to her social labour imposed on bedroom space to maintain it as a representation of contemporary cultural and social life. For Lincoln’s research participants, the bedroom was able to fulfil every entertainment need and they often only left in order to get food. As opposed to McRobbie’s study where boys were purely a romantic character found only in daydreams, in Lincoln’s study boyfriends were often invited by teenage girls into their bedrooms. They would often wait for their girlfriends to get ready before going out and therefore rather than imposing masculinity upon the space, fitted into ‘a controlled and passive aspect of the bedroom’s socio-spatial configuration’ (2004: 100).

Lincoln (2004: 100) found that music and the way in which it was used was not specific to the going out ritual, but was rather ‘a soundscape, a constant mediator of the emotional tone of bedroom culture’. This led Lincoln to assert that music is not just an important part of their youth cultural activity in the public sphere but it is just as crucial within the private sphere and that its significance to the girls is associated primarily with the creation of a specific type of ambience. All of the girls in her study had a TV, video and stereo in their bedrooms which could create the emotional and sensuous ethos of the room. They also had mobile phones, some also had landline telephones in their bedrooms and some had access to the internet in their room, although this was mainly used for school work. Lincoln asserts that the bedroom is a place to create a haven of memorabilia that represents their role in social life worlds and therefore the bedroom walls represent the girls’ biography through childhood toys, photographs of family and friends, posters and flyers for club nights. As opposed to McRobbie’s study where girls created fantasy ‘love affairs’ with pop idols the girls in Lincoln’s study documented their coolness
through active participation in the public sphere of the pub or club by displaying photos of nights out and club flyers.

Lincoln asserts that the girls in her study divided their bedrooms up into distinct zones such as the school work zone, the fashion and beauty zone and the sleeping zone. For example, the college work zone could be isolated and compacted onto the desk with files and pens and pencils, while the fashion and beauty zones were often centred around dressing tables adorned with products that contributed to beauty routines such as moisturizers, hairspray and perfume. Lincoln found that there is a routine that girls follow in terms of fashion and beauty, as McRobbie had stated, although ‘there is a shift from McRobbie’s code of fashion and beauty as being associated primarily with the pursuit of romance (which would often only be lived out in a fantasy world restricted to the bedroom) to simply getting ready for a night out (which involves cultural consumption within the public sphere)’ (Lincoln, 2005: 105).

Lincoln’s research shows a shift away from the romanticised teenybopper image of McRobbie’s study of girls’ bedrooms as a safe haven to act out their lives without leaving the home. Her research points to some of the new freedoms enjoyed by girls with changing parental attitudes, such as allowing boys as friends into girls’ bedrooms. Her emphasis on the pick and mix attitude of the girls’ to their rooms, and by implication to their lives, resonates with the risk society theorists, Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991). However, Lincoln is open to similar criticisms about how free young women are to make choices as their actions are ultimately constrained by the degree to which they wish to be accepted by their peers, as will be discussed below. Both McRobbie’s and Lincoln’s research neglects young women who do not have the luxury of their own bedroom or access to furnish their rooms in the way described or to buy the latest mobile phones. Research which addresses these points will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.4 Class and femininity
As was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter the performance of femininities does not happen in a society devoid of the influence of social class,
although its significance is contested. In Skeggs’s (1997) ethnographic research focusing on working-class women she found the women she spoke to wished to distance themselves from the concept of ‘working-class’ and also positioned themselves carefully in relation to the construct of femininity. Skeggs bases the framework for her study on Bourdieu’s three types of capital, social, economic and cultural, but also highlights the notion of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital can be viewed as the form different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognised as legitimate. She asserts that the women in her study tried to challenge their working-class identity. The women she interviewed viewed the working-class as poor, depraved, depriving, dangerous and degraded. They were all ‘well aware of the jokes about “Sharons and Kevins”, about “tackiness”, about white high heeled shoes’ (Skeggs, 1997: 76).

Therefore it was very important for the young women to appear respectable and they tried to achieve this through undertaking caring courses. Skeggs found the women’s investments in femininity were very important to them. She asserts that:

They do not recognise themselves by the category of femininity but their appearance is central to how they know themselves. This suggests that women are not feminine by default but that femininity is a carefully constructed appearance and / or form of conduct that can be displayed. It is a knowing construction, publicly performed (Skeggs, 1997: 107).

For the women in Skegg’s study femininity was not an aspiration but something which is struggled with in order to gain some value and ameliorate invalidation. The women distinguished between being looked at in admiration and looked at as a sexual object. Those who appeared feminine all the time had little value as their performance was considered unnecessary. Making too much effort was a problem but so were women who did not invest in themselves and were seen to be not making any effort at all. Their feminine appearance was complemented and reinforced by their caring performances. They saw marriage as offering them validation, legitimation and most importantly, respectability thus distancing themselves from the connotations of being working-class.
Although the women in Skegg's study tried to distance themselves from conceptions of social class Skeggs (1997: 161) found that class was 'completely central to the lives of the women'. Through her use of Bourdieu's metaphors of capital and space Skeggs demonstrates how white working-class women were born into structures of inequality which provided differential amounts of capital which circumscribed their movements through social space. They did not have access to the sort of capital that could be capitalised upon, such as the cultural capital of the middle-classes which can be utilised in the education system and later in paid employment. She argues that the 'most fundamental marker of class was that of exclusion. The women were excluded from positions in the labour market, the education system, from forms of cultural capital and from trading arenas' (Skeggs, 1997: 163). They used notions of respectability to show that they were worthy and had value, but in doing so they locked themselves into systems of self-regulation and monitoring, producing themselves as governable subjects. Their productions of themselves as particular sorts of women were closely bound with public narratives of what it means to be a working-class woman. It should be noted that all the women in Skegg's study were doing a caring course at a particular college in one area of the country. Therefore a sampling bias may exist as these women may have been more concerned about appearing respectable than other working-class women. The notion of respectability tempered the appearance and behaviour of the young women in Skegg's study and they seemed to distance themselves from other working-class women who they considered less respectable. The concept of working-class respectability is a useful term to work with when examining the lives of socially excluded young women.

Friendships between girls can be seen as cultural resources and central to the construction of femininities. Hey (1997) conducted an ethnography of female friendships in order to examine how girls' cultural resources of friendship are devised, deployed, experienced and evaluated. Hey used girls' notes, talk, diaries and interviews gathered by observing girls' groups within city schools, in order to examine the relationship between forms of subjectivity produced in the privacy of girls' interpersonal lives and public forms of social power and regulation. Hey
utilises the notion of positionality in order to recognise the discursive economy in which different groups of subjects can and do try to position and out-position each other by using their access to differential resources of social, economic and cultural power. This notion accords with post-structuralist theory, which asserts that power is often employed, not through coercion, but through discursive practices which people as active agents within these practices either consent or resist. Hey asserts that her attempt to explore "how girls "do the cultural" through the material practices of girls friendships" involved an analysis of the "positions and places constructed, resisted and negotiated within the interstitial spaces of girls' interpersonal worlds which provides the site for the mediations between 'private forms of subjectivity and public versions, between the "male", adult world of formal schooling and the lived moments of personal meaning' (Hey, 1997: 33). This led her to contend that it is between and amongst girls as friends that identities are variously practised, appropriated, resisted and negotiated (Hey, 1997).

Hey contends that working-class girls have difficulties in achieving academic success. Their sense of rejection and disappointment at not doing well at school needs active cultural management which comes in the form of girlfriends. Given that 'the typical girls' had little access to the good life promised by academic compliance, they made sure that they could qualify for the more available forms of female identity as someone's friend. However, Hey (1997) argues that negotiating feminine friendship and its associated powers is a delicate business, being constituted through the socially coercive presence of the male gaze, which endlessly seeks to position girls within its regulation. Hey (1997) argues that the problem faced by girls is how:

They are to become simultaneously a "normal" schoolgirl and "a proper young women" within the respective cultural institutions of (compulsory) schooling and (compulsory) heterosexuality. One institution denies difference whilst the other is fundamentally invested in producing it, so that femininity as sexual difference under terms of subordination is always in play against masculinity in dominance (Hey, 1997: 132).
In a similar manner to the position Hudson (1984) highlights, Hey identifies another dichotomous situation. It seems that young women are bombarded with expectations regulating how they should behave, often in opposing and contrary manners.

Some of the girls that Hey encountered indulged in bitching as a ‘major cultural practice’. The pleasures it delivered and the pain inflicted ‘derived from the girls’ supervening investment in sexual and social competition, as opposed to feminine solidarity’ (Hey, 1997: 73). The girls’ cultural understandings about sexual and social boundaries played a large part in their bitching. Hey views defining the ‘other’ as central to bitching; ‘it is all those other girls who can be made to carry the “bad” habits of femininity – active heterosexual desire is something only other girls act on’ (Hey, 1997: 75). Hey asserts that the girls elected to read themselves in competitive relations with other girls, to become bitches, because their investment in the heterosexual marketplace is seen as the only route through to what they see as desirable femininity. Therefore it is apparent that girlfriends are the key to social inclusion or exclusion. Being accepted implied the performing of appropriate forms of femininity. Hey argues that the evaluation of other girls takes place in terms of their ‘performance of friendship’ as a ‘performance of femininity’ which organises the moral and social economy of girls’ relations (Hey, 1997: 135). Girls ‘made moral and social economy out of the interplay of discourses – of being nice, of being a good girl or of being one of the girls’ (Hey, 1997: 135). Hey asserts that the girls were heavily involved in making their friendships vernacular versions of ‘being normal’; however the place of normality can only be understood through its opposite, as the girl not to be. It seems that ‘a girl’s best friend is her best friend because here girls can find the reflection of a self-confirmed as ‘normal’ since the face that smiles back is our friend / our-self’ (Hey, 1997: 136).

In her study Hey drew attention to the notion that working-class school girls cannot be permitted to gain embodied power. Instead, other ways of acquiring knowledge and power have to be employed. For example one girl in Hey’s study, Carol, spent time acquiring the ‘really useful (heterosexual) knowledge that would assist her in the process of becoming an adult feminine subject’ (Hey, 1997: 93). Carol cultivated
boyfriends who offered her presents and places to go when she should have been at school. Hey argues that Carol's public account of boyfriends as meal tickets is indicative of her taking up hyper-femininity as a hard stance. For Hey hyper-femininity involved accessing the heterosexual economy and producing oneself as sexy. Carol's own mother had married three times, and Hey asserts that given Carol's experience of the serial nature of her mother's marriages, Carol probably and realistically reasoned that it may not pay to get too attached. Carol was involved in several conflicts with her mother and the school, which eventually saw Carol leaving both, and this leads Hey to assert that 'Carol transgressed that bit too far to be tolerated by either her friends, teachers and eventually by her family' (Hey, 1997: 136).

Although Hey's (1997) work concentrated on friendship groups within school, her work is important and pertinent to this research. She highlighted the importance of girls as friends as the key to social inclusion or exclusion. Belonging to certain groups generates class meanings about what it means to be a girl. Being accepted involves the performing of appropriate forms of femininity. Such performances aim to create feminine identities or reputations through conformity to classed sexual codes. Hey's work is important in showing how girls friendship groups are inextricably involved in defining what are acceptable or unacceptable performances of girls' roles as each other's friends in conditions controlled by forms of hegemonic masculinity. She demonstrated that in many ways girls do the work of hegemonic culture amongst and between themselves in positioning each other in particular places. Through normalisation and surveillance girls act as each other's critics and self regulators by compliance with numerous gender, class and race specific dimensions of normality. Hey showed that compliance with numerous gender, class and race specific dimensions of normality binds groups of girls together as they act as each others mirrors, confidants and minders of shared cultural understandings as classed female subjects, 'othering' those they do not want to be or can't be. Hey's work highlights the importance and significance of friendship groups and dyads within schools as a coping strategy employed by both working-class girls who fail to achieve success in the academic field and clever middle-class girls who are often berated as 'boffins'. Her research was innovative and, as will be
seen later in this chapter, inspired a new generation of theorists whose work concentrated on young women and femininity (such as Renold, 2005 and Archer et al, 2007).

In the face of research which assumed that girls were to be located in the home or private sphere, Skelton’s study of white working-class girls in the Rhondda Valley (an area that has suffered ‘economic collapse’ since the closing of the coal mines) focuses on what teenage girls ‘do’ outside. The girls in Skelton’s (2000) study utilised resources such as community or youth centres, in fact she recruited her sample from a local community project. Skelton asserts that the girls in her study chose to spend their spare time in local streets and parks and therefore disrupt the notion that these are only places for boys. The girls hung around outside and experienced resistance from local residents who frequently threatened to call the police. However, the girls displayed strategies to overcome this, as they often gave part of a park a wide girth for a few weeks until things ‘calm down’ but they were still out on the streets. The girls were expected to help their mothers with housework, but Skelton (2000: 90) notes that the girls in her study were able to avoid doing domestic work mostly by simply removing themselves from the house and in fact this was one of their reasons for ‘getting out of the house’ so much and as often as they could. Skelton highlights that the houses in the Rhondda valley tend to be small and consequently most of the girls in her study either shared a bedroom with their sister or had a very small bedroom to themselves. Therefore, she asserts that:

If faced with demands for domestic work or embroiled in some kind of adult-teenager conflict, the girls can’t go to their own rooms and have time alone from adult interference. Instead they will leave the space of the home and find their friends and spend the rest of the time on the street ... the girls escape from the home and use the public streets as an escape route (Skelton, 2000: 92)

Interestingly, Skelton notes that throughout her fieldwork with the girls none of them talked about their bedrooms and being in each other’s rooms as part of their experience with friends. She found that in contrast to the girls of McRobbie’s study,
the girls in the Rhondda, were not fixated with romantic notions of marriage, motherhood and domesticity and they had hopes of work and spending time away from the valley. It is worth drawing attention again to the fact that the girls in Skelton's study were engaged with a community project based at the local community centre. They could spend time at the clubs, eat and drink and watch TV and play games, and Skelton notes that when they were at the club the girls were kept away from negative youth activities such as violence and drug dealing. Skelton found that for the girls the club was a good place to be with interesting things happening and also somewhere to go other than the streets. They participated in the activities set up for them and attended most weeks. However Skelton notes that the girls in her study had clear ideas of what they were missing out on: 'they would like to go to commercial leisure spaces, the types of places many children and young people from more privileged backgrounds go to on a regular basis and perceive to be part of their culture' (Skelton, 2000: 95). For the girls in her study hanging around and participating in a dynamic and public teenage girl culture based on the streets and in the project youth clubs was of key importance. Being a 'valley girl' and 'having a laugh' was important to them and Skelton contends that their friendships enabled them to have significant freedom and mobility in an otherwise deprived and impoverished environment.

It could also be argued that the girls portrayed in recent studies such as Skelton's (2000) are now more used to going out and are subjected to far fewer regulations and parental control than the girls who featured in McRobbie's study. Skelton's study, although small scale and carried out in the relatively closed environment of 'the valleys' does resonate with more recent studies (see below) which show that girls are increasingly utilising outside spaces. It also highlights the lack of amenities available to poorer working-class girls in their own homes. Green and Singleton (2006) also examine teenage girls' use of outside spaces. They argue that space is gendered, sexualised, classed and racialised, and ease of access and movement through space for different groups is subject to constant negotiation and contestation, and is embedded in relations of power. Their data reveals that risk is spatially and temporally situated and relates to the social and cultural identities of the embodied self. The sources of risk referred to by their participants include male
physical, sexual and racial violence and harassment, damage to personal reputation and, for the South Asian women, injury to family honour through gossip and rumour and consequent community disapproval of, and pathologization of, the individual. They assert that the risk of public gossip about them being in the wrong place at the wrong time could damage both their own and their family’s reputation in the community. All of the young women in their study perceived themselves to be at risk from male violence and in order to avoid such violence certain streets were considered to be ‘out of bounds’ (Green and Singleton, 2006: 860). They found that for the young South Asian women in their study the streets were not used for leisure and many preferred home or indoor community based venues as ‘safe’ spaces for leisure. Green and Singleton assert that these women’s culture required that they protect their honour and modesty by participation in women-only leisure activities and staying inside after dark.

Most interestingly Green and Singleton (2006: 862) find that for the white girls in their study ‘being perceived as streetwise or part of the “in crowd” coincides with simultaneously being seen as “tarts” or “slappers” and can be related to wearing particular clothing and occupying risky spaces, especially after dark’. Green and Singleton’s sample of white girls referred to ‘other’ girls who were represented as choosing to hang out on the street and generally signified non-respectable bodies. They assert that ‘for the centre-based girls such embodied behaviour signified that the others were sexually available, not least through their occupation of outside space during the evening’ (2006: 862). They comment that the girls attending the group referred to themselves as good and respectable in contrast to the others. The street girls were viewed as not respectable and risky mainly because they occupied outside spaces that were perceived to be dangerous, a risk discourse underpinned by historical notions of respectability and responsibility. Risk was thus seen to be embodied by certain groups of girls felt to be almost contagious by association and inflected with a class narrative about ”distancing” themselves from the bodies of others that “they don’t want to be” (Green and Singleton, 2006: 865).

Again Skeggs’ (1997) notion of respectability features in the work of Green and Singleton (2006). The performance of the right kind of femininity which, although
different to McRobbie's (1978) study, is still important. The young women who feature in these studies are now outside or in organised clubs but they still distance themselves from girls who inhabit the streets, who they consider to indulge in risky behaviour and to be lacking in respectability and would therefore harm their own reputations by association. Therefore the importance of defining the other is highlighted, young women are giving credence to their positions by defining who they are not or do not wish to be. This accords with Hey's work (1997) as friends define what is acceptable as normal teenage girl behaviour in terms of the performance of femininity by the 'othering' or policing of those who do not conform to group norms.

One study which notably does not fit in with Skegg's notion of working-class respectability is Day et al's (2003) research on young women's aggression. Day et al (2003) note with some surprise that the women in their study positioned themselves in direct opposition to traditional constructs of femininity by presenting themselves as perpetrators and supporters of both verbal and physical abuse. This leads them to conclude that such forms of aggression play a pervasive role in the construction of some working-class femininities. During their focus group discussions with a sample of working-class women they note the prevalence of talk about whether or not people are 'hard'. People were defined as hard, soft or ambiguous and it was more desirable to be hard (Day et al, 2003). Although they found that the working-class women in the study did not seem to invest in traditional discourses around respectability there was 'some reproduction of discourses that construct femininity as passive or vulnerable, thus serving to soften their more dominant constructions of themselves as aggressive (Day et al, 2003: 153). They assert that this may have been in order to not appear to be trying to undermine men's masculinity by competing with them in the arena of violence. They contend that:

The role violence plays in the construction of working-class femininities can be partly understood if we consider the positioning of working-class women outside traditional and middle-class definitions of femininity as respectable and passive. Yet (perhaps more tellingly) we can also shed light on the women's talk of aggression by attending to their location in working-class cultural contexts that promote hard
reputations, public demonstrations of aggressive prowess and defending oneself and one's group in an atmosphere of surveillance (Day et al, 2003: 154).

They also assert that such aggression could be viewed in terms of resistance to or rejection of dominant middle-class femininities defined as respectable and, as such, challenges aspects of feminism in the academy which assumes middle-class values.

The notion of respectability in working-class girls lives has been somewhat displaced by media accounts of girls behaving badly. As was highlighted in the introductory section to this thesis the link between working-class femininity and the need to appear 'tough' has also been presented in the media. The journalist and self confessed 'chav' Julie Birchall in her documentary 'Chavs' which was shown on Sky 1 in 2005, asserts that in order for women to be a 'chav' a certain level of 'toughness' was required. For example, she asserts that the Spice Girls were too insecure and vulnerable to be 'chavs'. 'Chav' can be viewed to be a disparaging term, similar to the 'tacky Sharons and Kevins' which Skeggs (1997) comments on. However, it could be argued that the 'Sharons' of the 1980s /1990s were constructed as still retaining elements of femininity (for example, they were associated with white stilettos), whereas the 'Chavs' of the 2000s are constructed as being 'hard', possibly criminal and certainly connected to, if not part of, the 'ASBO' generation.

Indeed, the changing identity of women in contemporary Britain has been highlighted as women are believed to be no longer defined in terms of husbands, fathers or boyfriends which thus leads them free to compete with each other (McRobbie, 2004: 100). People are supposedly increasingly individualised, they are required to invent themselves, they are called upon to shape themselves so as to be flexible, to fit with the new circumstances where they cannot be passively part of the workforce but instead keep themselves employable and adapt themselves and their skills for the rapidly changing demands or the labour market. McRobbie (2004) argues that female individualization is a social process bringing into being new social divisions through the denigration of low class or poor and disadvantaged women by means of symbolic violence. This results in more sharply polarised class positions of shabby failure or well-groomed success, therefore the pre-welfarist
rough and respectable divide is re-invented for the 21st Century. In order to illustrate this assertion she gives the example of the young single mother who has been labelled ‘pramface’ by certain sections of the media. Kerry Katona, who used to sing in the girl-band Atomic Kitten, is one woman who has been labelled in this manner and therefore is ‘deemed to look like the kind of poor low class girl with a baby in a push chair’ (McRobbie, 2004: 102). McRobbie asserts that certain assumptions accompany the term ‘pramface’: that the girl is single, therefore ‘not sufficiently attractive enough to attract a partner’, unmarried and reliant on benefits. These stereotypes were played out during a recent Channel 4 programme called Pramface (2006). The two young, working-class mothers which the programme followed were dependent on benefits, without partners and had tempestuous relationships with the fathers of their children. McRobbie asserts that:

As a seemingly recognisable social type it is assumed that there must be many like her. The insult is thus indicative of a renewed and injurious practice of social reordering. The bodies of young women are now to be understood according to a scale running from welfare-dependent, single maternity, marking failure, to well-groomed, slim, sophistication, marking success. The pramface girl who is pinched and poor-looking, common and cheaply dressed, with a child in a buggy, is in sharp contrast to the ‘A1’ girls who can spend a disposable income on themselves and aspire to full participation in consumer culture (McRobbie, 2004: 102).

McRobbie asserts that the prevalence of language in the media or ‘journalistic field’ such as ‘pramface’ or ‘minger’ to depict working-class women marks the ‘cultural undoing of the social and liberal reforms which had an institutional life in the UK from the late 1960s until the 1990s’ (McRobbie, 2004: 103). The notion of acceptable working-class femininity being constructed in such a way as to signify respectability has been an enduring feature of sociological research. However, as has been discussed more recent research has shown the rise in a new trend in working-class femininities. Researchers such as Archer et al (2007a, 2007b) identify the importance to young women of performing strong, loud femininities. In a similar vein the characteristics of being hard or tough are now often seen as desirable traits (Day et al, 2003).
The socially constructed, multiple and performative nature of gender has been widely recognised, but much less so can be said of sexuality and specifically heterosexuality (Renold, 2005). It is useful here to return to the work of Butler (1990) who argues that categories such as ‘man’, ‘woman’, ‘male’ and ‘female’ are discursively constructed within a heterosexual matrix of power. Butler contends that a heterosexual, heterosexist culture establishes the coherence of categories such as sex and gender in order to perpetuate and maintain compulsory heterosexuality (the dominant order in which men and women are required or even forced to be heterosexual) (Salih, 2002). Gender identities that do not conform to the system of compulsory and naturalised heterosexuality expose how gender norms are socially instituted and maintained. To deviate from normative ‘masculinities’ and ‘femininities’ can throw heterosexuality into doubt and therefore the hegemony of the heterosexual matrix is maintained through the policing and shaming of ‘abnormal’ or Other sexual / gendered identities (Renold, 2005).

As discussed in chapter 2, theorists such as Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) assert that in the late modern era young people’s lives are increasingly fragmented and characterised by individual choice. Recently, in a similar vein Angela McRobbie (2006) asserts that girls are currently centre stage in prevalent discourses, but this has provoked intense cultural anxieties. She has identified four ‘luminosities’ of contemporary girlhood which have used Butler’s concept of the heterosexual matrix. McRobbie uses the term luminosity in order to capture how young women might be understood as currently becoming visible, but the luminosities are also suggestive of post-feminist equality while also defining and circumscribing the conditions of such a status. The four can be summarised as:

1. The field and role of the fashion and beauty complex. From within this emerges a post-feminist masquerade as a distinctive modality of feminine agency.
2. The field of education and work and an insistence on the successful working girl.
3. The field of sexuality, fertility and reproduction. This encapsulates the cultural incitement to be badly behaved and the phallic girl.
4. The global production of commercial femininities and the new consumer colonialism.
Therefore, the luminosities function on the basis of the illusion of movement and agency. They give the appearance of young women coming forward through choice as all obstacles have been removed. McRobbie asserts that these new levels of attention and intervention directed towards young women can be viewed as a new sexual contract, or the re-ordering of the heterosexual matrix in order to secure, once again the existence of patriarchal law and masculine hegemony. In her first luminosity McRobbie argues that the hyper-femininity of the post-feminist masquerade allegedly no longer locates women inside the terms of traditional gender hierarchies, as now wearing stiletto heels and pencil skirts is a choice rather than an obligation. In reference to her second luminosity McRobbie notes that young women under-achievers and those who do not have the requisite motivation and ambition to improve themselves become more emphatically condemned for their lack of status and other failings than would have been the case in the past. Women are now expected to have a career and children, to 'heroically do it all'. In McRobbie's fourth luminosity the global girl comes forward primarily in the advertising images from fashion companies like Benetton, but also through magazines like Vogue, as emblematic of the power and success of corporate multi-culturalism.

It is McRobbie's third luminosity which is most pertinent to this discussion. She asserts that the phallic girl gives the impression of having won equality with men by becoming like her male counterparts but with this transformation, there is no critique of masculine hegemony. The ladette is a young woman for whom the freedoms associated with masculine sexual pleasures are not just made available but encouraged and also celebrated. Luminosity falls upon the girl who adopts the habits of masculinity including heavy drinking, swearing, getting into fights, and getting arrested by the police but without relinquishing her own desirability to men, indeed for whom such seeming masculinity enhances her desirability within the visual economy of heterosexuality. McRobbie asserts that the increase in aggressive behaviour on the part of young women, for example carrying and using knives and weapons can be understood in these terms. This mimicry of masculinism disavows, and discounts as relevant or desirable the idea of a femininity critique. McRobbie asserts that the phallic girl's unfeminine behaviour permits the re-visiting of debates
on sexual violence and rape, if for example the girl in question has drunk so much that she has no idea what has happened. Therefore by endorsing norms of male conduct in the field of sexuality she removes any obligation on the part of men to reflect on their own behaviour and their treatment of women. McRobbie concludes that the luminosities theatrically convey the notion that young women are now able to emerge unhindered to make choices in an empowered manner, whereas the converse is true: young women come forward on condition that feminist politics fade away and the illusion of movement and success marks the subtle and not so subtle re-instatement of sexual hierarchies. McRobbie’s third luminosity resonates with many of the excluded young women’s narratives. They felt that performing a tough repertoire empowered them, but according to McRobbie, they have been hoodwinked by the illusion of equality and behaving as men behave. This is acceptable for men, but not for women.

According to McRobbie the conceptual tool of the luminosities allows her to highlight the prevalent assumption that there are no boundaries to young women achieving success in education and employment in contemporary society. Comic depictions of girls not achieving success such as Little Britain’s Vicky Pollard character or Catherine Tate’s Lauren come to symbolise what happens if young women do not comply with the new work order. These characters, along with the much malingered ‘chavs’ or ‘pramfaces’ symbolise what it might be like to truly let oneself go (Hey, 2007). The Little Britain and Catherine Tate characters are obviously a comedy projection but Freud highlights how comedy can be viewed as another form of aggression or even hatred (Hey, 2007). This again brings us back to the notion of young women stepping outside of heteronormative femininity. I argue that heteronormative femininity is the contemporary prevalent, bourgeois notion of femininity. Young women who behave in a manner consistent with McRobbie’s third luminosity are regarded as unmanageable or unrespectable, and as Skeggs (1997) highlights, the risks associated with this can be great.

McRobbie’s (2006) conceptualisation of her four luminosities is a useful tool to work with and I will return to this notion later in this thesis. However, it is possible to criticise her luminosities in several ways. Firstly proponents of the risk society
thesis who argue that individuals are allowed to pick and mix different elements from different areas free from traditional constraints such as social class would argue that it is too limiting to only identify four luminosities. Do McRobbie’s four luminosities cover all cultural and class backgrounds? Are they applicable to only this country? What evidence does McRobbie base her theorising on? McRobbie is due to publish a book further elaborating her theories later this year (2008) and perhaps these questions will be addressed.

3.5 Resisting Femininity
At varying points in this chapter I have touched upon examples of women who do not conform to the traditional view of femininity. The notion of resisting heteronormative femininity has been raised in the work of many theorists such as Hey (1997). The term resistance was discussed in chapter 2. Although this term has been critiqued by many, theorists such as Blackman (1998) argue that the term resistance is ethnographically useful because it does enable researchers to show how groups of young people really do face struggles and challenges with respect to family, school, masculinity and femininity. In his study of a group of adolescent school girls, Blackman acknowledges that resistance theory does have serious flaws which are mainly attributable to the structuralist theoretical approach members of the CCCS such as Willis (1977) applied. Blackman argues that:

The problem is not with resistance theory per se, but rather its application as the basis for youth studies which became theory led, with only a thin basis in empirical data collection. Thus resistance as a theoretical concept has its major weakness a thin foundation in empirical work, upon which grand theoretical constructions have been erected (Blackman, 1998: 211).

Blackman employs the concept of resistance extensively in his work. He reports examples of ‘The New Wave Girls’ resistant behaviour which he conceptualises as acts of challenge against power relations across four sites: sexuality, family, school and society. He asserts that forms of oppositional behaviour do not in themselves demonstrate resistance but taken together he believes that the examples he cites can be described as aspects of the New Wave Girls resistance and could be viewed as antipatriarchal practice. Blackman argues that the girls’ cultural practice
encouraged critical thinking which made them question male dominance. Therefore, he believes the concept of resistance is potentially useful to explain and interpret the New Wave Girls’ actions because the underlying principle of their antipatriarchal practice is emancipatory. Blackman theorises that patriarchal culture forces the girls into a position where they are made to respond to and challenge masculinity, and the collective action taken by the girls allows them to confront the contradictions they meet daily.

The concept of resistance in regard to the resistance of femininities is also used extensively by Renold (2005) in her study of primary school girls and boys. By employing Butler’s notion of the heterosexual matrix, and more specifically Butler’s notion of heterosexual hegemony (1993), Renold (2005: 8) analyses the ways that girls and boys were ‘performing and practicing heterosexuality in multiple and diverse ways that could at different moments and in different contexts subvert and maintain hierarchal normative gender / sexual power relations’. She argues that all the girls in her study actively negotiated an increasingly compulsory, yet multiple and hierarchal, heterosexual matrix which permeates and regulates their relations with each other and boys. Renold (2005:15) found that over two thirds of the girls in her research were investing in a range of often contradictory discourses to produce their own and each others’ bodies as heterosexually desirable commodities. However, she also encountered girls who actively constructed their femininities in opposition to sexualised girlie femininities and thus directly ‘challenged the ways in which girls are both objects, subjects and agents of a heterosexualised male gaze (through a critique of girlie femininities and their access to dominant discourses of masculinity)’. Some girls, and boys, recounted being routinely teased, bullied and excluded for choosing not to invest in the dominant and hegemonic forms of age-appropriate heteromasculinities, heterofemininities and heterosexualities. They were very much positioned as Others by those who did invest in hegemonic femininity, masculinity and sexuality. This is similar to Hey’s (1997) work which I discussed earlier in this chapter which showed the importance of othering in the regulation of feminine behaviour. However, Renold identifies complex relationships between what she termed ‘Othering’, ‘doing Other’ and ‘being Other’
in relation to children’s constructions of their gendered identities. Renold defines these terms in the following way:

Othering: the daily performances engaged in by all children to delineate their particular gender /sexual identity (in relation to what they are not) and the means by which some genders are constructed as ‘normal’ and others as ‘abnormal’.
Doing Other: the ways in which some (usually dominant) girls and boys could try on and temporarily engage with Other ‘non-hegemonic’ femininities, masculinities and sexualities.
Being Other: the ways in which girls and boys consistently located themselves and were located by others as ‘different’ from hegemonic and other dominant forms of masculinity, femininity and sexuality (Renold, 2005: 148).

Renold argues that those who were positioned as Others were not devoid of power. For example, Renold highlights the cases of Kelly and Jo, two girls who were located by their peers as gender misfits as neither embraced the ‘girlie’ culture. Both girls actively pursued marginalised boys as potential boyfriends in a ‘predatory’ manner (Jo almost stalked her boyfriend and when Kelly’s boyfriend terminated their relationship she threatened him with violence). Renold comments that both girls actively transgressed and transformed conventional heterosexual performances as Kelly refused to be subordinately positioned as a dumpee whilst Jo’s physically turbulent relationship with her boyfriend echoed much of the boys’ play fighting practices.

Subordinate positions were also challenged by other girls, for example through witty responses. By answering back to teasing comments, Renold argues that some girls were able to mobilise, to great effect, the ways in which discourse as power can operate as a point of resistance. Therefore the ‘Others’ were not automatically placed in a position of passive powerlessness, nor were they on a trajectory of oppression and marginalisation. Instead, Renold argues that these instances showed the fragile and illusory nature of dominant discourses. However, Renold argues that challenges to heterosexualised femininities were only really successful when conducted as a group. Renold notes that the more conformist high achieving middle-class girls were the most successful in sustaining their resistance to heterosexualisation of femininity. For example, staying in class to act as a class
helper at break times 'did not compromise femininity because compliant and conscientious behaviour is normatively constructed as feminine' (Renold, 2005: 163).

Renold (2005) concludes that contrary to Butler’s thesis the pupils in her study who violated gender and sexual norms were regularly punished by other children using a range of gendered and sexualised bullying thereby reinforcing rather than undermining gender norms. Resisters of the gendered status quo developed a range of strategies themselves to circumvent and maintain living out the category of 'girl' and 'boy' in the way they wanted, often outside of the mainstream. Discursive retaliations by the marginalised boys and girls may have worked for them in the short term, but as Renold (2005: 166) comments:

> It seemed that neither the marginalised girls or boys had much awareness that their retaliations (e.g. girls' use of sexism, or boys' misogyny) effectively reinforced the very forms of hegemonic masculinity / dominant femininity that curtailed their own alternative versions.

This resonates again with McRobbie’s (2006) conceptualisation of luminosities which was discussed earlier, by retaliating the boys and girls in Renold’s study acted to destabilise the gendered and heteronormative status quo but effectively reinforced hegemonic masculinity. Renold’s work is important as it demonstrates how heteronormative femininities and masculinities are resisted and policed in the primary school.

Another study which has explicitly made use of the concept of young women resisting femininity was that conducted by Archer, Halsall and Hollingworth (2007a; 2007b). Unlike Renold’s study which focused on primary school children, Archer et al’s (2007a; 2007b) study was conducted with secondary school girls. The interviews which they conducted with 37 young women examined the girls’ investments in 'glamorous working-class hetero-femininities' (others may term these hyper-femininities) and the limitations these identities had as a form of capital and resistance (Archer et al, 2007a). They note that the majority of the young women in their study were substantially investing in producing heterosexual,
desirable and glamorous femininities through manipulation of their bodies and appearance, for example by spending the majority, if not all, of their money on items such as nail varnish and hair products. Archer et al (2007a) comment that successful performances brought peer status and approval and were a means for generating capital and exercising agency in their everyday lives. However they argue that this form of capital 'was also paradoxical because it is implicated in positioning the girls conflictually within educational discourses and it plays into the formation and reinforcement of oppressive social relationships, rather than providing a simple release/escape from social inequalities' (Archer et al, 2007a). Again, this resonates with the work of Hey (1997), Renold (2005) and McRobbie (2006). The young women in their study recounted being frequently chastised by their teachers for wearing too much make-up and dis-allowed items of clothing. Archer et al, (2007a) contend that the members of staff that they interviewed also suggested that working-class girls' embodied femininities and investments in appearance were antithetical to a 'good' pupil subject position and were deemed to be a distraction which made the young women less engaged with education. Archer et al (2007a) argue:

While it has been popularly argued that education is (now) "femininised" and equated with a female subject position ... we would suggest that the "ideal (female) pupil" is actually a specifically middle-class (and de-sexualised) subject position, which excludes many working-class girls ... working-class femininities can be understood as occupying a paradoxical space within schools – while they can accrue capital within the field of heterosexuality through the performance of desirable and desired embodied identities, the young women are also located within a discourse of derision that positions them as "other" and as incompatible with educational success (Archer et al, 2007a: 170).

Archer et al (2007a) argue that the young women's performances of femininity can be understood as being governed by a tyranny of conformity to both the patriarchal regulation of heterosexuality and to a fixing of the young women within disadvantaged social class locations. The authors see this fixing as being brought about by the social and economic implications of their investments in hyper-heterosexual femininities. For example, many girls wanted to get jobs at 16 rather
than go into further education so that they could earn money to continue performing fashionable femininities.

Another way in which Archer et al (2007b: 555) found that the young women in their study resisted their schools was by being 'loud' and 'speaking my mind'. They found that many of the girls in their study had notions of assertive, strong femininities and their performances of a loud, active femininity could be understood as challenging the forms of submissive, passive and quiet femininity which is normally rewarded within schools. Many of the girls they spoke to frequently came into conflict with the school over the expression of their opinions, particularly when they disagreed with school rules. However, Archer et al (2007b) assert that the girls in their study were often at pains to point out that despite conflicts with teachers they were good underneath. The young women valued education, although they admitted they did not like school. Archer et al (2007b) contend that many of the young women were aware that they actively played into a cycle of conflict in various ways, but they also complained about being unfairly picked on and their assertiveness was punished, constrained and read negatively within schools. This led them to argue that:

Gender, class and 'race' relations between teachers and pupils mean that schools can be experienced as alien spaces for 'other' femininities. The girls' data also conveys the impossibility for working-class girls to attain valued (and respected) forms of middle-class female 'goodness'—which remained a desired yet refused subject position. The girls also appeared to be constrained by the lack of a discursive space within which to enact an acceptable, or accepted, 'bad girl' femininity. Young women are not seen as 'lovable rogues' in the same way as boys because power geometries (Massey, 1994) operate to produce gendered (and classed/racialized) subject positions in different and unequal ways (Archer et al, 2007b: 558).

Similar to primary school girls in Renold’s (2005) study, Archer et al (2007a) found that the young women who invested in 'Other' working-class hetero-femininities had pressure exerted on them to change. For example one girl, Melissa, produced herself as a tomboy by wearing lots of Nike sportswear and playing football with
boys. Archer et al (2007a) note that the Nike label is often coded as masculine, black and working-class which are all identities associated with educational disengagement. Archer et al comment that Melissa was keenly aware that her teachers labelled her as ‘bad’ and they assert that she actually came to the realisation over the course of the study that she would have to shed her non-feminine appearance and transform into a proper girl. Melissa’s cousins helped her to ‘do’ femininity by advising her to wear make-up and different clothes. Archer et al (2007a: 176) argue that Melissa’s performance of a dominant, socially valued version of femininity that required her to adopt responsibility and care of the self was rewarded ‘symbolically (through praise and respect from her family, friends and peers), educationally (through her grades and positive support and feedback from her new college and materially (e.g. through her access to policies such as the Education Maintenance Allowance and other related services)’.

Archer et al’s (2007a; 2007b) findings resonate with that of Hey (1997) and Renold (2005) as they highlight how young women learn to develop their own forms of self-regulation and policing in the production of heteronormative gender identities. Archer et al (2007b) draw on Foucault’s (1978) theorization of the panopticon to suggest that the young women’s narratives of ‘change’ reveal their internalization of authority through taking up increased surveillance of the self. Melissa’s transformation could be viewed as a ‘success story’ of a young woman who is beginning to turn her life around and ‘escape’ from low status, low pay life paths, but also as an example of how society regulates the working-class female subject and produces ‘normative’ femininities. According to Archer et al (2007b: 564) their interview data reveal:

How the young women are learning to develop their own forms of self-regulation and a self-surveillant gaze, for which they are rewarded as ‘good’ girls and pupils. They also learn that there are only a few, narrow possible subject positions open to them, and that for working-class girls, being ‘bad’ or transgressive is difficult to sustain. In this sense, reflexivity can be understood as a technology of ‘categorization, classification, difference, division and hierarchy’ (Adkins, 2002, p. 129) that is integral to the production of gender identities.
Although Archer et al (2007a) acknowledge that Melissa benefited by performing a desirable femininity they caution that the young women in their study are located within a web of negotiations around acceptable forms of hetero-femininity, in which they are caught between the conflicting pleasures and capitals that their performances can generate in relation to different audiences such as friends, family, school and in terms of their own social mobility and educational engagement. Therefore they assert that the pleasure of performing hyper-heterosexual femininities can be understood as always partial and incomplete, and the potential capital these identity investments can generate is tempered by their negative positioning within dominant educational discourses. Many of the authors discussed in this chapter, particularly Skeggs (1997), Hey (1997), Renolds (2005) and Archer et al (2007a; 2007b) have pointed to the ways in which femininity is produced, regulated and maintained and indicated that different forms of femininities exist and these are mediated by social class.

Although the concept of resistance lost favour during the later part of the twentieth century various theorists such as MacDonald and Marsh (2005) have tried to reassert the importance of social structure in research relating to young people, whilst other researchers argue for the importance of using resistance as a concept (Wright et al, 2000). The work of several researchers such as Renold (2005) and Archer et al (2007) have demonstrated the timeliness in using the concept of resistance when analysing the lives of young women and their construction, negotiations and performances of femininities in their daily lives.

3.6 Summary
This chapter has examined some key areas of research which have important implications for my research. I began with an examination of the early conceptions of femininity, how they may have altered in recent years and the differing issues that girls negotiate when performing femininity. I have examined research which highlights the importance of social class to the construction and performance of femininities. The performance of desirable femininity can be seen to be a key feature in girls' inclusion or exclusion from friendship groups, school and wider society. Also, I have highlighted the overarching finding of many of the researchers
who have used the term resistance in connection with heteronormative femininity -
namely that attempts to challenge the hegemony through resistance, although
agentic, often serve to only reinforce gender and power relations. In this chapter I
have examined the resurgence in the use of resistance in research relating to the
production and maintenance of heteronormative femininity in the lives of young
working-class women. I will return to these concepts of resistance and
heteronormative femininity in the discussion of this thesis to assess how useful they
were as tools when theorising about my group of excluded young women.
Chapter 4: Methodology

In this chapter I review the methods I used in the collection of data, its management and analysis. The aims of the current research were explored in chapter 1, but suffice to say here that in my research I wished to explore the girls’ social, home and school careers (Humphrey, 1993) and the roles and / or identities they constructed and performed in their everyday lives. My research was conducted with thirty-one young women aged between twelve and sixteen. The research was carried out at varying locations in England, some of which experienced high to very high levels of social deprivation (ONS 2005). The young women were excluded from school either for bad behaviour or truanting. I sought access to the young women through Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), educational establishments for young people who have been excluded from school.

This chapter provides an account of my journey from imagining data generation to undertaking fieldwork and the analysis of my data. I begin by examining the settings in which the research took place. I then review the potential obstacles to gaining access to excluded girls and the role gatekeepers can play in shaping the relationship between researcher and researched. The third section looks in detail at the use of the methods which I considered to be most ethically acceptable and which worked successfully with my participants. The chapter finishes with an overview of the status accorded to the data generated and the processes involved in analysing the data including my use of interpretative repertoires.

4.1 The research setting and the young women

The research was carried out in six Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in England. PRUs are a type of school, established and maintained by the local authorities, that provide education for children who require alternative educational provision. Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 placed a duty on each local education authority to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education in or out-of-school for those children of compulsory school age who may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them (DfES, 2005).
well as pupils who have been excluded and children with medical problems, PRUs may also provide education for school-aged mothers, pregnant schoolgirls, school-phobics, and pupils awaiting placement in a maintained school. Many children attending PRUs have been permanently excluded and some are at risk of exclusion. The Department of Education and Skills (DfES) asserts that the focus of units should be on getting pupils back into a mainstream school, although this is not always possible. There are currently over 400 PRUs in England (DfES, 2005). Information collated through the January annual schools’ census reveals that in 2002-03, 17,523 pupils attended PRUs at some point during that year (DfES, 2005).

Like other schools, PRUs are inspected by Ofsted. Local authorities may operate different models of PRU provision which they have developed to meet local circumstances and in line with local policies. Provision may be on a single site, or on multiple sites under one management structure (DfES, 2005). Provision may include hospital or home-teaching services, separate provision for young mothers and pregnant schoolgirls, and peripatetic pupil referral services in rural areas. PRUs may provide full or part-time education. Requirements in terms of the minimum level of education to be offered vary depending on the nature of provision and the reasons why pupils are not attending mainstream school. However, pupils who have been permanently excluded from school must receive full-time education (a minimum of 25 hours a week for pupils at Key Stage 4) from the 16th day following the headteacher's decision to exclude (DfES, 2005).

PRUs may offer education directly, or they may organise packages of educational provision (for pupils of secondary school age) that involve external providers, such as further education colleges, employers, work-based trainers, and programmes offered by independent schools, voluntary organisations or other agencies. Many PRUs also work jointly with mainstream schools to support vulnerable pupils and pupils at risk of exclusion. They may do this through outreach support to pupils within mainstream settings, or through 'dual registration', whereby pupils attend the PRU (possibly on a part-time basis) but remain registered also with their mainstream school (DfES, 2005). One key difference which distinguishes PRUs
from mainstream schools is the taught curriculum. Although PRUs do not have to teach the full National Curriculum they should offer a basic curriculum which includes English, Maths, Sciences, PSHE and ICT. It is a requirement that pupils' progress and attainment are monitored.

I decided to choose six PRUs in different areas of the country (see chapter 5 for further details on the sample localities) in the hope that if commonalities were found between the excluded young women it might be possible to explore whether these elements transcended the difference of the six settings. The PRUs I contacted were selected for a mixture of pragmatic reasons and convenience. I wanted to select different locales, but in order to conduct the research successfully I knew I would need to be based in these areas for a certain amount of time. Therefore several PRUs within commuting distance of my home in South East England were contacted, and I also made contact with several PRUs in the Midlands, which were close to a relative's home. The young women themselves represented a mix of ethnicity and culture, but were from similar socio-economic backgrounds (as is reflected upon in chapter 5).

This research aimed to examine the subjective interpretations of girls who were excluded from school. At the outset of my research qualitative methods recommended themselves to me for two reasons; firstly a qualitative approach best accesses the meanings people assign to certain activities and experiences (Lee, 1998); secondly qualitative methods are better suited to dealing with multiple perspectives, thus doing 'justice to the complexity of the object under study' (Flick, 2002: 5). Therefore commitment to a holistic understanding of the range of excluded girls' perspectives and their lives necessitated a qualitative study. Before 'officially' embarking on my research I decided to conduct some observation work at the PRUs to gain an insight into the day-to-day interactions within these institutions. As will be discussed below my experiences during these visits confirmed to me the direction that my methodological stance should take. For reasons which will be discussed shortly, I decided that an in-depth qualitative interviewing approach would be most appropriate. The young women all took part
in at least one task-based biographical interview session. Many of them were given cameras at the end of their first interview and were then interviewed again in order to discuss the photos they had taken. These methods were chosen in order to give the young women a certain level of autonomy over the research process.

4.2 Gaining access but losing control of the research?
I discovered that gaining access to girls who had been excluded from school was problematic; few of the young women used organised activities such as youth clubs. Therefore my only viable option was to gain access through PRUs. I encountered my first challenge to the implementation of my open research approach at the first PRU I contacted. My planned strategy of conducting observation followed by interviews was discussed with the head-teacher who requested that I carry out covert observation whilst acting as a teaching assistant. She felt this would prevent the pupils from feeling uncomfortable and help me to build relationships with the pupils without them showing any hostility towards me. Her concerns arose from attendance problems that existed at the unit. She felt that the presence of a researcher, who some pupils might be inclined to view as yet another source of surveillance, might make them less likely to attend. I felt that her request for me to act covertly led to, what may be seen as, a competing ethics of practice.

As most researchers are aware, there are no ‘absolute’ doctrines of ethical conduct in social research. There are various sets of guidelines (for example the British Sociological Association or Social Research Association ethical guidelines) which researchers are advised to follow, but these are not without their critics (Alderson, 2004). Some researchers argue that the key notions which these guidelines are built upon, of informed consent, confidentiality and avoidance of harm are at best problematic and, at worst, misguided (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). For example Hollway and Jefferson (2000) argue that researchers should not always strive to avoid harm as people may get upset in interviews but their distress may be cathartic to them in the long term. However, even though the dictums within ethical guidelines can be seen to have problems, they do also have benefits. For example although informed consent does not actually eliminate risks, it can be seen to give
the subjects a degree of control over their participation and over perceived risks (Herrera, 1999).

After careful consideration of the ethical implications and methodological difficulties involved I decided against undertaking covert research. Herrera (1999: 1) asserts that in fieldwork ‘there is often only apparent separation between the honest, open study and the covert, or deceptive one’. My imagined research strategy which entailed an open and honest engagement with my research participants was directly at odds with the notion of covertness at any point in the process. I felt it would be deceptive of me to take on this role as I have no training as a teaching assistant. It would also have made my intention of conducting observation followed by interviews untenable, as the young women would have realised that they had been deceived, which could have made my situation very difficult. After outlining my problems with the proposed research strategy to the head I chose to withdraw from the first unit.

4.3 Gaining access again

I made contact with six other units in different regions of England (I was aided in this through a reference provided by the deputy head of one unit – see Appendix 1) and began my fieldwork by observing classes to understand the daily lives of the people in the units, but I encountered further ethical and practical problems. I was often taken into lessons which were already in progress with no opportunity to introduce myself to the staff and pupils or inform them about the research. I found that some of the staff at the PRUs did not have the same concerns regarding informed consent that I had (a point I will return to later).

I am not the only researcher to have experienced difficulties trying to adhere to ethical practice in a school setting. Morrow (1999: 212) comments that in all school based research there is an uneasy sense that because the research takes place in school and because of the agreement of their teachers and schools the research participants are to a large extent a ‘captive sample’. Therefore it seems that because children:
Are the "objects" of schooling, it is possible to argue that they are similarly the objects of the research. As other researchers have suggested, the "voluntary nature of any student participation in a school-based study may be doubted at a general level" (Wallace et al 1994: 177 cited in Morrow: 1999: 212).

My experiences lead me to agree with this assertion. The observations enabled me to see the young women I would be coming into contact with later which helped me to develop some relevant participatory approaches. It could be argued that as pupils are often subject to other people, for example government inspectors, observing classes without their agreement there should be no problem with researchers taking a similar course of action. I do not argue that consent should be obtained in all cases of observation, as if this were to be the case then much ethnographic work would be impossible, but that observing was wrong in the context of my research. I wanted to be able to go on to build a rapport with my research participants and I felt that the awkward situations I was placed in during the observations might hinder my chances of achieving this during the interviews.

Another challenge I encountered with non-participant observation was the way I was positioned by staff at the units. The atmosphere and work ethic in the units were different from that of secondary schools in which I had previously conducted research. Many of the pupils in the PRUs exhibit challenging behaviour both towards members of staff and fellow pupils. Staff tried to encourage pupils to get involved in school work but it was often very difficult for them to teach without multiple disruptions. Pupils were frequently sent home during the course of the day due to their disruptive behaviour. Staff often commented that the pupils tended to do things with encouragement on their own terms rather than being told directly what to do.

After conducting several observations in two units in the South of England I came to the conclusion that non-participant observation as a research method was not working in the context of my research. Each class had an average of six pupils, one teacher and one teaching assistant. This made non-participant observation difficult as the pupils would try to engage me in their rebellions against the teaching staff
and the teachers would try to use me as an extra member of staff in order to maintain order. Other researchers have experienced similar problems when conducting research in a school setting (Burgess, 1984; Griffiths, 1995; Pole et al, 1999). These competing desires for what my role should be made observation untenable. Therefore I decided to move on to conducting interviews and task-based activities with the young women.

4.4 Participatory research methods: a suitable method for excluded girls?
In deciding how to approach the interviews it was necessary to carefully consider debates surrounding participatory research approaches. Giving young people control over the research has become increasingly popular in recent years. Debates concerning ethics and power are especially pertinent in relation to researching children and young people. Previous ethical debates have centred on the tendency to view young people as innocent and in need of protection (Harden et al, 2000). Punch (2002a) recognises that young people are marginalized in adult-centred society; their lives are controlled and limited by adults, consequently they can be seen to experience unequal power relations. Traditional research techniques have been accused of emphasising the unequal power relationship between the adult researcher and young person as researched. Recently researchers have argued for children's competence as research participants to be recognised (Alderson, 1995; Alderson and Morrow, 2004).

I was aware that during the last decade there has been a growing literature which has emphasised 'working with children as subjects not objects of research, listening to children, and respecting the rights of children' (Curtis et al, 2004: 167). New 'methodologies of representation' have been developed to enable children to communicate through mediums such as drawing, photography or stories (Barker and Weller, 2003; Christensen and James, 2000; Thomas and O'Kane, 1998). However, such methods have been criticised for making the assumption that young people are not capable competent social actors. As Punch (2002a: 321) asserts 'If children are competent social actors, why are special “child-friendly” methods needed to communicate with them?'. Frazer (2004) answers this question by asserting that child friendly methods are negotiated compromises that allow
communication between the different conceptual outlooks of children and young people on the one hand, and those of researchers on the other. It should be noted that constructs such as 'children' and 'young people' tend to produce homogenised groups, but within these categories there are complex differences of age. In terms of working with these constituencies age is significant; approaches that are suitable for young children may be inappropriate or unacceptable to teenagers and vice versa (Hill, 1997).

Participatory methods have been increasingly used over the last decade but the term seems to mean different things to different researchers. A review of the relevant research suggests some researchers allude to participatory methods as meaning child-based tasks and activities, whilst other advocates of participatory methods promote the 'employment' of children and young-people as co-researchers (Goodley and Clough, 2004). Kellett (2005b) highlights the recent tendency for young people to be invited onto steering groups and involved in some aspects of data collection in a tokenistic manner. However, she emphasizes:

...the adult manipulation, unequal power-relations and the adult focus of such research. It is the adults who frame the research questions, choose the methods and control the analysis. For the most part, children are unequal partners (Kellett, 2005b: 5).

Kellett's (2004: 331) solution to this is 'going a step beyond involving children as participants to handing over the initiative and empowering them as active researchers'. She believes that young people's competence is different from, not lesser than, adults' competence therefore asks why not teach young people research skills? (Kellett, 2005b). Jones (2004) argues that involving children as researchers requires attention to six key processes: identification of barriers and boundaries, negotiation, planning and design, access, creating the work environment and reflection. Enlisting young people as co-researchers often involves a period of training for them in social research methods, followed by devising and designing a research project on a topic of their choice, delivering and disseminating the research 'entirely from their own perspective' (Kellett 2004: 329).
Programmes initiated by Kellett (2005b; 2005c) involved training selected children in research methods. Kellett (2005b: 11) recruited schools by stating the project 'would help meet some of the additional needs of able children, particularly in relation to the development of higher order thinking skills'. However, she does state that 'children as active researchers' is not exclusively for able children, 'all children who are sufficiently interested in undertaking their own research can be encouraged to do this by adjusting the level of support accordingly' (Kellett, 2005b: 11). This raises questions about whether all children will be sufficiently able or interested. For the advocates of this method (Kellett, 2004; 2005a; 2005b) participatory research is not participatory unless the young people themselves have a significant input at every level.

However, I would argue that such a level of participation is not only impractical but can also be undesirable, particularly with excluded young people. I have identified a number of key problems with participatory research which tend to be somewhat glossed over. The first relates to agenda setting; if research was only carried out by children and young people who had chosen what to research then it can be argued that important issues may be under-researched simply because they are not interesting or they may not have occurred to the 'co-researchers'. Some agendas are not necessarily on children's horizons but they are still important.

An added complication is that without a great deal of training young people may not be very proficient at implementing Jones's (2004) model. In my own research time was to prove a key issue when dealing with young women at the PRUs. Most girls were scheduled to spend a few hours each day for up to four days a week at the units. To compound this, the girls' attendance was often erratic and even exclusions from the units were not uncommon. Therefore involving the girls in the planning of the research from an early stage would have been problematic. When applying for funding for my research the strict timetables and formats funding bodies adhere to became apparent to me. Research has to be conducted to an agreed budget and timetable from which there can be little deviation, therefore the nature of research funding can be seen to 'systematically preclude the involvement
of young people’ (Pole et al, 1999: 47). The complex, transient nature of the pupils’ lives at the PRUs also made involvement at every stage of the research process highly impractical.

My third problem with participatory research relates to the alleged reduction of power differentials between researcher and researched where young people are involved. Young people who are trained in, and asked to conduct, social research are being placed in an elevated position over other young people, in the same way as adult researchers who conduct research with young people. In the context of the present research giving some socially excluded young women authority to conduct research on others raises a plethora of ethical issues. The disclosure of sensitive data in a closed system such as the PRUs, where competing temptations, concerns and interests exist may have lead to exploitation and bullying. Many of the girls were either the victims or perpetrators of bullying and violence. Foucault (1980: 52) asserts that ‘it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power’. Therefore knowledge is not dispassionate but rather an integral part of struggles over power and in producing knowledge one is also making a claim for power (Mills, 2003). The potential for young people to misuse knowledge and power bestowed upon them in the research situation is real (Smith et al, 2002). Knowledge could easily be transferred from the individual to the meta-level. I encountered the potential for such a situation when in one PRU I witnessed the abusive and violent disintegration of a friendship group when a rumour spread about the identity of one girl’s sexual partner.

Fourthly, it could be argued that issues of informed consent and confidentiality are more precarious when research is carried out by young people. This is closely tied to the issues of power and knowledge discussed above. As Smith et al (2002) assert research methods, such as group interviews, routinely pose questions relating to confidentiality but this may be further complicated where the researcher and researched are part of the same social network. This was true of the units because they were small in size. In such situations children and young people may find it hard to say they do not wish to take part in research.
In the context of my research, I contend that engaging young people as co-researchers is at best unfeasible and at worst, somewhat unethical. The success of participatory methods depends on a certain level of commitment, (Leyshon, 2002) sensitivity and confidentiality. It is not possible to make such assumptions for many excluded young women as their lives are often fragmented and transitory. The young women had often experienced considerable difficulties in their lives and working with them required a certain amount of sensitivity. Their experiences differ from each other and it would be wrong to assume that simply because they share the categorisation of ‘excluded from school’ that they would have a shared understanding of all aspects of each others lives. Many of the young women had an anti-work ethic, therefore being seen to take an active interest in school work or research projects was not perceived by them to be ‘cool’. Life for many of the girls, both at the PRUs and outside, was often characterised by conflict which sometimes escalated into violence. I believe it would have been unethical to ask them to act as co-researchers both from the point of view of their own safety and those with whom they may have conducted research. Similar arguments could be made against involvement of excluded young people in the collective analysis of data.

Whilst participatory research was not feasible with my group of young people I still wished to enlist them in the co-production of data on an individual basis. I imagined an open and honest exchange with my participants, and I believed that this openness would give the girls scope to shape the nature of the research. I envisaged conducting some observational work with the young women followed by using different tasks in interview settings. I believed such activities would be a good way of facilitating discussion, building rapport and to some extent enable the young people to set the agenda. I wanted to approach the generation of data in a reflexive manner in order to critically examine my inter-subjective influences upon the research process and the production of data (Pink, 2001). An emphasis has been placed on the necessity for researchers to:

Reflect upon their own position and roles and evaluate their research in its attempts to achieve meaningful participation, rather than to simply adopt a tokenistic view of
what the researcher perceives to be an appropriate method (Barker and Weller, 2003: 37).

4.5 The reflexive co-construction of biographies through task-based interviews

Most gatekeepers asked me to obtain parental consent before speaking to the girls on a one-to-one basis. However, several of the young women complained that they were old enough for their consent to be adequate; they did not want their parents to be asked to provide consent. The Trust for the Study of Adolescence (TSA) asserts it ‘has no fixed view about obtaining parental consent and believes the decision should be based on the competence of the young person to make an informed choice about participation’ (TSA, 2004: 2). Indeed, there is no legal obligation for the researcher to gain parental consent (France, 2004) and as Masson (2000) observes in practice the final decision whether to gain parental consent is often left with the gatekeepers. At one PRU the gatekeeper decided that parents did not need to give consent and instead they were simply informed that the research was taking place. At another unit I was asked to telephone the young peoples’ parents or carers in order to ascertain whether they were happy for their daughters to participate. I conducted interviews away from the domain of the teachers, often in a private counselling room in a one to one situation where I asked the young women to give their own consent. Information / consent leaflets were given out with the intention of providing the participants with ‘bite-sized’ pieces of information about the study and the interview process (see Appendix 2).

Although I rejected ‘full’ participatory research for the reasons already outlined, I still wanted the young women to have some ownership of the research process, therefore I adopted what can be seen as ‘the middle ground’. I decided to employ methods that would allow me to understand their lives and what was important to them, a technique I called the reflexive co-construction of biographies through task-based interviewing. I interviewed each girl individually and planned a range of task-based activities but gave each young person the choice of which of these they took part in and in which order. The task-based activities included drawing timelines which enabled the young women to represent the major biographical events that had occurred in their lives and social activity sheets which depicted the
days of the week in order to give an indication of how the girls spent their time. Sentence completion tasks were also used which enabled participants to finish sentences such as:

When I am with my friends we spend our time ...
When I am at home I feel ...
I think I was excluded from school because of ...
When I leave the PRU I want to ...

Some of the young women also chose to draw family trees. These were particularly useful for those who had large or reconstituted families as this would often help me to understand which family members the girls referred to in their narratives. (Please see appendix 3 for the interview guide and appendices 4, 5 and 6 for examples of the task-based activities that were used during the interviews). As will be discussed later, photo elicitation was also used.

Task-based methods are often used by social researchers to encourage young people to express their views and opinions on the topics raised in the research and also to foster a rapport between young people and the researcher (Harden et al 2000; Punch 2002b). I found these tasks also altered the power differential between researcher and researched as they enabled a two-way exchange of information. Before asking the young women to draw timelines or family trees I found that showing them my own family tree and a timeline of the major events that have happened to me enabled a free exchange of information to take place. At the time of the fieldwork I was ten years older than many of the girls. I included details of my life up to the age of 18 such as attending a comprehensive school in a city setting, the divorce of my parents and my home burning down. The break-up of my family and my experiences of inner city schooling, which cannot be regarded as any way unusual in contemporary society, resonated with many of my interviewees and proved a useful starting point for our discussions. Foucault argues that power is exercised rather than possessed (Mills, 2003) and this exchange of knowledge seemed to set things off on a more equal footing. Although revealing information about myself
may have made the young women present themselves to me in a certain way, I would not have felt able to ask in-depth, sensitive questions about their lives without first revealing something about my own life. I am not the first researcher to have adopted an approach such as this; Oakley (1981) has documented the collaborative approach she developed with her interviewees in her study about women becoming mothers. I am not advocating that such an open approach is always possible or indeed necessary, but in the case of these socially excluded young women my willingness to disclose information about myself seemed to lead to free and easy discussions.

The activities I employed during the interviews stimulated the production of a great deal of rich data. Out of the thirty-one young women interviewed only three stated that they could not draw a timeline because nothing had happened in their lives. However they did draw family trees which served as a starting point for the interview. I found the young women’s visual representations of their lives very useful as it enabled them to clearly express their experiences, feelings and relationships. The narratives of this socially excluded group frequently illustrated the complex and transient nature of their lives, such as not having a permanent home often instead sleeping on friends’ and distant relatives’ floors.

Although most girls seemed keen to participate in all aspects of the research and became engaged in the process, this was not always the case. Two girls I approached stated that they did not want to be interviewed, and in a further two cases it became clear that after having initially agreed, the participants did not wish to be interviewed. One girl, whilst walking with me to the designated interview room, had an argument with a teacher and then hit a pupil. When we got to the room the girl was obviously still agitated and found it hard to concentrate. In another interview it became clear that the interviewee was not engaged and she soon requested to return to her lesson. I gave these girls the opportunity to be interviewed at a later stage but they declined. Overall the young women I came into contact with were very keen to participate. I believe this was in part due to my assurances of confidentiality and the rapport I was able to build with each girl. I feel
that such data would not have been obtainable if a ‘full’ participatory approach had been adopted.

The next stage of the research, photo elicitation, involved giving single-use camera to each young woman who wanted one at the end of her interview. I asked these girls to take photos of things that were important to them, such as places and people. ‘Photo elicitation’ has become increasingly popular as a research method to be used with young people (Barker and Weller, 2003; Orellena, 1999; Morrow, 2001; Young and Barrett, 2001). Previous research (for example Morrow, 2001) has indicated that such methods produce an abundance of rich data providing insights into the importance of social relationships and locale in participants’ daily lives.

When the cameras were returned to me I had two copies of the film processed; a copy for my research purposes and a copy for each photographer. In a follow up session I gave the young women their pack of photos unopened and I asked them to write a couple of sentences on the back of each photo about why it had been taken. I tape-recorded these sessions as I found the girls would often talk at length about the relevance the places or people depicted in the photos had to them. As Barker and Weller (2003) and Orellena (1999) have noted it is vital for researchers to ascertain children’s own reasons for taking photographs, rather than giving their own ‘adultist’ interpretation and assumptions to the pictures.

The young women were competent at using the single use cameras. A problem arose from the fact that many of the young women spend their time in the evenings outside with their friends in parks or on housing estates. Consequently some of the photos were taken in almost complete darkness and even though the cameras did have flashes, some of the pictures could not be seen clearly. On average from a film of twenty-four pictures, five would fail to turn out. The young women were disappointed when this happened but understood that the disposable cameras were quite basic.

Photo elicitation enabled the generation of data which may have been otherwise unobtainable. It is suggested that the use of photographs helps to frame and focus
the discussion, sharpen the memory, evoke rich descriptions and set the informant at ease (Alexander et al, 2005). The young women were able to construct a multimedia framed identity through their own selection of what they represented back. Choosing the subject matter of the photos and being able to discard photos gave the girls some control over the research process. I found that because the camera activity was perceived to be ‘fun’ (Barker and Weller, 2003; Young and Barrett, 2001) many of the girls became excited about participating and this seemed to result in them being interested and engaged in the research. Collection of the cameras did prove problematic in some instances, as many of the girls were often absent from the units. Some of the units were a long way from my home (in some cases a few hundred miles) and it was hard to arrange my visits around possible times when the girls might have been attending.

Informed consent was gained from the young women in relation to the dissemination of their photos. They were also cautioned to ask permission before taking photos of people to ensure that the individuals pictured were aware they would be used as part of a research project. Where researchers have used photo elicitation methods with young people some have decided that such pictures should not be displayed publicly (for example in published work) since there is no way of gaining informed consent from those depicted (Barker and Weller 2003). To overcome this problem a copy of each film was put onto CD ROM which enabled me to obscure individuals’ faces thereby preserving anonymity.

After the photo sorting sessions participants were given a £10 voucher for a shop of their choice. These were given in recognition of the time the young women spent on the research (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). The payment of research participants is sometimes looked down upon as a means of inducement which undermines the free choice of a person to participate in research (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). However, there seems to be increasing recognition that offering participants a ‘thank you’ for taking part in research is acceptable, particularly if such payments are not given as an incentive to participate (Roker, 2005; Smith et al, 2002). To avoid this I offered payment after participants had agreed to take part in the research. The
young women were left with information leaflets with my contact details in case they wished to discuss any issues in more depth.

The first gatekeeper’s request for me to do covert research could have endangered the integrity of the research. Choice of methods should be dictated by researchers’ ontological and epistemological stance, not by gatekeepers. It should be more widely acknowledged that it is hard for researchers to stand up to gatekeepers to ensure research is always conducted in the most desirable and appropriate manner, as they can be key to the research’s success or failure. I encountered competing ethical perspectives at the PRUs. However I found the research was conducted with greatest success at units which allowed me a certain autonomy to speak to the girls in an environment without interference. I found that a quiet space could be created away from the formality of the institution which allowed for the active participation of the young women in the co-production of their biographies.

I would argue for the need for the researcher to be reflexive throughout the whole research process. I believe that such an approach enabled me to react appropriately to the challenges I encountered resulting in the generation of rich data with a group of socially excluded young women. Rather than an objective process, data is produced and collected through inter-subjectivity between researcher, respondent and other significant individuals and institutions (Pink 2001). Researchers have argued that power relations can never be overcome but must be constantly analysed and made visible through reflexive discussion (Barker and Weller 2003). It is a truism that reflexivity itself is partial as the complete impact of the researcher upon the research process can never entirely be identified, but the researcher should always endeavor to be aware of the pitfalls involved in failing to be reflexive throughout their research.

4.6 Status of data generated and analytic approach

I transcribed all interviews fully to improve ‘thoroughness, accuracy and retrieve ability’ (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999: 78) as much data can be lost with partial transcription. Similarly it is necessary to recognise that transcripts are necessarily partial, both because they excluded non-verbal and other contextual data, and also
as they are themselves a form of analysis through representation (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). Consequently I supplemented transcripts with paperwork generated by the tasks the girls carried out and general field notes on the interaction between myself and the girls. Sufficient detail was included to ensure the transcripts were 'exact enough to reveal structures in those materials and ... permit approaches from different perspectives' (Flick, 2002: 174). I have included a selection of the photographs that the girls took in my analysis chapters, particularly in chapters 7, 8, and 9. The pictures were analysed, in the first instance, by the girls themselves, as they provided one or two sentences on each photograph commenting on why each photograph had been taken. The girls also discussed the reasons for taking the photographs and this was tape recorded and transcribed.

The following discussion of methodological theorists further helped me to formulate my own approach to the analysis of my data. I decided to use NVivo in the analysis of my data, which along with other qualitative software packages, is viewed by many qualitative researchers as a valuable tool in assisting with the retrieval and coding of the data. NVivo offered me a number of tools such as diagrammatic representations which was helpful to me in the analytical process of exploring relationships between categories (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Coding required me as the researcher to study the data closely. However, the codes can be viewed as reflecting the researcher's interests and perspectives as well as the information in the data (Charmaz, 2001). Charmaz asserts that researchers already have a set of 'sensitising concepts' which can be drawn upon to begin the coding of data. These 'sensitising concepts' can be seen to reflect researchers' assumptions and theoretical perspectives. I was therefore aware of the importance, as Charmaz (2001) emphasises, to be reflexive about the constructions, including preconstructions and assumptions, which inform the analysis of data.

I agree with Miller and Glassner who argue that qualitative interviews are the obvious choice for researchers who aim to try to understand and document others' understandings because:
It provides us with a means of exploring the points of view of our research subjects, while granting these points of view the culturally honoured status of reality (Miller and Glassner, 1997: 100).

However, this assertion also highlights what has been perceived to be a weakness of interview data. Can an interview provide a mirror reflection of the reality that exists in the social world, or as some radical social constructionists suggest, can no knowledge about a reality that is out there in the social world be obtained from the interview because the interview is an interaction between the interviewer and interview subject in which both participants create and construct narrative versions of the social world? (Miller and Glassner, 2004). This question encapsulates two extreme viewpoints from the epistemological debate. Less radical social constructionists, such as Charmaz, tend to make the following assumptions:

1. Multiple realities exist.
2. Data reflect the researcher's and the research participants' mutual constructions.
3. The researcher, however incompletely, enters and is affected by the participants' worlds (Charmaz, 2001: 678).

Holstein and Gubrium (2004) argue that all types of interviews should be conceptualised as 'active interviews'. This conceptualisation would mean 'attending more to the ways in which knowledge is assembled than is usually the case in traditional approaches' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 142). They view understanding how the meaning-making process unfolds in the interview is as essential as apprehending what is substantively asked and conveyed. They assert that:

The *hows* of interviewing refer to the interactional, narrative procedures of knowledge production, not merely to interview techniques. The *whats* pertain to the issues guiding the interview, the content of questions, and the substantive information communicated by the respondent. A dual interest in the *hows* and *whats* goes hand in hand, expanding an appreciation of the constitutive activeness of the interview process (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 142).
Holstein and Gubrium criticise 'linguistically attuned' approaches which they assert have been promoted by some ethnomethodologists, constructionists, poststructuralises, and feminists. Holstein and Gubrium believe these approaches emphasise the hows of the interview process at the expense of the whats of lived experience.

Holstein and Gubrium assert that interviewing is a form of interpretive practice involving respondents and interviewers as they articulate their orientations and understandings. Reality is continually under construction, using the interpretative resources at hand, although meaning is not constantly formulated anew but:

Reflects relatively enduring local contingencies and conditions of possibility (Foucault, 1979), such as the research topics presented by interviewers, participants' biographical particulars, local pathways of orienting to those topics, institutionalised ways of understanding and talking about things, and other accountable features of "what everyone knows" about a topic (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 149-150).

Therefore in Holstein and Gubrium's conceptualisation neither interviewer nor interviewee are passive. The interview can be viewed as a kind of limited 'improvisational' performance which is spontaneous, yet focused within the loose parameters provided by the interviewer, who is also an active participant. Holstein and Gubrium warn that the challenge of the active interview is to carefully consider what is said in relations to how, where, when and by whom experimental information is conveyed, and to what end.

Miller and Glassner (2004) suggest that narratives which emerge in interview contexts are situated in social worlds; they come out of worlds that exist outside of the interview itself. They argue for the existence of these worlds, but also for 'our ability as researchers to capture elements of these worlds in our scholarship' (Miller and Glassner, 2004: 131). In her study of young women who claimed affiliation with youth gangs, Miller (2001) was able to find realities within interviews but also accounts of events which ultimately contradicted the girls' narratives. For example most of the girls Miller interviewed denied that any gender inequality exited in the
gangs. However, the girls interviewed described a sexual double standard, the sexual exploitation of some young women, and most girls' exclusion from serious gang crime. By juxtaposing girls' collective stories with these incongruous facets of girls' interviews, Miller built her theoretical discussion around the contradictory operations of gender within gangs.

It may be a truism to assert that research cannot provide the mirror reflection of the social world that positivists strive for, but it may provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds. It seems that while the interview is itself a symbolic interaction, this does not discount the possibility that knowledge of the social world beyond the interaction can be obtained. Indeed as Miller and Glassner propose:

It is only in the context of non-positivistic interviews, which recognise and build on their interactive components (rather than trying to control and reduce them), that "inter-subjective depth" and "deep mutual understandings" can be achieved (and, with these, the achievement of knowledge of social worlds) (Miller and Glassner, 2004: 126).

In my analysis of the current research I tried to remain sensitive to the notion that data analysis is a construction that locates data in time, place, culture and context, but also reflects the researchers' own thinking. This approach provided me with an interpretive portrayal of the studied world of the girls, not an exact picture of it. My research aimed to discover participants' implicit meanings of their attitudes and experiences and to build a conceptual analysis of them (Charmaz, 2001).

In order to achieve this I took a broadly inductive approach to the data generated. The data were analysed through the utilisation of some elements of a grounded theory style analysis mixed with elements of discourse analysis. Discourse analysts are interested in the things people say and write (discourse practices) and the cultural resources they are drawing on (the discourse resources) (Gill, 1996). Discourse resources might include such things as category systems, narrative forms, imagery and generally the language scripts, metaphors and even clichés that are
available within a culture (McGhee and Meill, 1997). Discourse analysis does not treat linguistic accounts as simply factual statements of what really happened. Rather it considers how 'objects' in accounts (be they people, actions, feelings, incidents, etc.) are actively constructed in discourse through selective presentations and phrasings, even though presented in a way which implies that they are nevertheless 'solid, real and independent of the speaker' (Potter and Wetherell, 1995: 81). Therefore, discourse analysis tries to show how the versions of the world and experience in discourse are presented as matter-of-fact descriptions, when in fact they are discursive constructions (McGhee and Meill, 1997).

Although my analysis embraced elements from a broadly discourse-centered analytical style, principles from a more 'bottom-up' style of analysis (for example, Potter and Wetherell, 1987) were also incorporated into the analysis as a means of generating themes. In general, my analytical procedure involved placing text fragments in categories in order to identify themes that derived from the theoretical frame but also to me remaining open to new themes that could be found during the interviews or during the reading of them (Day et al, 2003). The next stage was then to take each theme in turn and identify the different ways of talking about that theme noting similarities and contradictions between types, while making efforts to remain faithful to the participants’ accounts (Philips and Jørgensen, 2002). From this discursive patterns were generated and interpretative repertoires were identified in the girls’ narratives.

During the young women’s interviews and whilst studying their transcripts, I was very conscious that the girls were not merely describing events that had happened in their lives, they were constructing their narratives to me in order to emphasise certain behaviours and traits to me. In doing this I realised that the girls were employing interpretative repertoires and these added depth to their narratives. McGhee and Meill (1998) assert that the most interesting findings in a discourse analytic study come from demonstrations that the same individual appears to be presenting subtly-different or even contradictory accounts. This shows that individuals are drawing upon a range of discourse resources (and interpretative
repertoires) as they make sense of their experiences. As I have established I did not be conduct a discourse analysis of the data generated however, I drew on elements of discourse analysis in my analytical approach. I felt that the pervasive use by the girls of such a technique could not be totally left out of my analysis and deserved further investigation.

4.7 Interpretative repertoires

'Recurrently used systems of terms used for characterising and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena' have been termed interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherall, 1987: 149). Interpretative repertoires may be characterised by a distinctive vocabulary, particular grammatical and stylistic features (Wooffitt, 2005) or comprised of connected images and metaphors which offer means of classifying and evaluating incidents, problems and ideas in terms of constructions already worked out and publicly available (McGhee and Miell, 1998: 69). According to Potter (1996: 131) the idea of an interpretative repertoire:

Is intended to accommodate two considerations: first, that there are resources available that have an "off-the-shelf" character and that can be used in a range of different settings to carry out particular tasks; and, second, that these resources also have a more "bespoke" flexibility, which allows them to be selectively drawn upon and reworked, according to the setting. It is the attempt to accommodate this flexible local use that differentiates interpretative repertoires from the more Foucauldian notion of discourses ... participants will often draw on a number of different repertoires, flitting between them as they construct the sense of a particular phenomenon or as they perform different actions.

The most cited example of research using the interpretative repertoire concept is the seminal work of Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) which examined scientists' discourse. They recorded the way in which scientists used one interpretative repertoire in their formal writing for justifying facts and another interpretative repertoire in their informal talk when accounting for why competing scientists were in error (Potter, 1996). Formal contexts were constituted through the use of an empiricist repertoire, which derives from and endorses a common sense or conventional view of scientific work: that the scientist is impartial as to the results of scientific work, and whose
feelings, attitudes, personality, and so on, are irrelevant to the outcome of research. The empiricist repertoire was also characterised by formal language which served to obscure the active role of individual scientists and the promotion of experimental procedures as a reliable method by which to discover objective facts about the physical universe (Wooffitt, 2005). Informal contexts were characterised by the use of the contingent repertoire which invoked personality features of scientists to account for scientific claims or activities, for example why particular theories may be endorsed or rejected. Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) reveal that scientists accounted for disputes by reference to a range of contingent factors such as 'personality (a dogmatic refusal to consider alternative theories); career biography (a life of research informed by that theory); social commitments (friendships with leading scientists associated with the theory) and even geography (the alternative theory is promoted by a scientist in a different country) (Wooffitt, 2005: 37).

The identification of the two interpretative repertoires raised a question: why did the scientists continue to research if beliefs are only accepted because of personalities and power? (Potter and Wetherall, 1987). The contradictions apparent between the two interpretative repertoires were solved through the use of a descriptive practice which Gilbert and Mulkay term the Truth Will Out Device (TWOD). The device allowed the scientists to draw upon the contingent repertoire to account for other scientists' erroneous beliefs, whilst at the same time implicitly supporting the broader principle that the scientific method does indeed provide a unique access to objective physical phenomena and will ultimately reveal Nature's secrets (Wooffitt, 2005). The TWOD has the interpretative advantage of allowing scientists to acknowledge that scientific controversies may be deep rooted and long lasting without also jeopardising the idea that the scientific method is infallible. For the scientist this device is important not because it reconciles potential contradictions between versions but because it re-establishes the importance of the empiricist repertoire (which is the dominant repertoire) (Potter and Wetherall, 1987).

It has been asserted that in recent years the use of interpretative repertoires in discourse analysis has been variable (Wooffitt, 2005). For example in psychological
studies which have relied particularly on a branch of discourse analysis known as
discursive psychology, there is little use of the concept of repertoires. However,
although I certainly make no claims towards adoption of a fully discourse analytical
stance in the analysis of my data, I do argue that the notion of interpretative
repertoires can be seen as key in identifying how individuals construct versions of
the world.

Over the next four chapters the themes to arise from the analysis of the data
generated will be presented. It is pertinent here to reflect on Giddens' theories
regarding identity in late modernity. Giddens (1991: 52) argues that in the setting
of modernity self-identity 'is not something that is just given, as a result of the
continuities of the individual's action-system, but something that has to be routinely
created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual'. Individuals
reflexively create an image of 'self' as they interpret a diversity of experiences. He
contends that self-identity is bound up with the fragile nature of the biography
which the individual supplies about herself or himself. Key to this notion is the idea
that a person's identity is not related to her behaviour, or the reactions of others, but
is the capacity to:

Keep a particular narrative going. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain
regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It
must continually integrate events which occur in the external world and sort them
into the on-going story about the self (Giddens, 1991: 54).

This narrative, whilst usually based upon a set of real events, needs to be creatively
and continuously maintained. Pride and self-esteem are based on confidence and in
the integrity and value of the narrative of self-identity (Gauntlett, 2002: 100). Shame,
meanwhile, stems from anxiety about the adequacy of the narrative on
which self-identity is based.

Similar to Gidden's notion of a person's identity being connected to their capacity to
maintain narratives, I argue that the data generated during research cannot be
separated from the 'overall narrative', that is how the individual wishes to present
themselves on a day-to-day basis, rather than just within the context of, what could be, a one off interaction (the interview). Whilst I was interviewing the young women I was conscious not only of what the young women were saying but also of how they were presenting themselves to me. I became aware of differing discursive patterns in the girls’ narratives which I felt amounted to interpretative repertoires as described above. The young women could be usefully understood as falling within two repertoires. At various points in their interviews the young women in my study presented two opposing accounts of femininity, toughness, which can be seen in many ways to challenge heteronormative femininity (Renold, 2005) and hyper-femininity which can be seen to reinforce much of heteronormative femininity, but is also an extreme manifestation of it. Many of the young women made reference to, what may be called, hyper-femininity as they showed a great deal of concern for their physical appearance, dress and grooming. This concern with physical aspects of femininity appeared to be in stark contrast to the fighting stories the girls recounted. As referred to in chapter 3, for Skeggs women are not feminine by default but femininity is rather ‘a carefully constructed appearance and / or form of conduct that can be displayed. It is a knowing construction, publicly performed’ (Skeggs, 1997: 107). The deployment of the interpretative repertoires of toughness and hyper-femininity enabled the girls to an extent to compartmentalise two seemingly extremely different performances of femininity. This is illustrated in the diagram below:
As can be seen from the diagram above, in a similar manner to Gilbert and Mulkay’s (1984) study, my two main interpretative repertoires are comprised of ‘factors’ such as ‘breaking rules’ or ‘acting in a motherly way’. However, unlike Gilbert and Mulkay’s, many of the factors which comprise the two main interpretative repertoires actually cross over between the two repertoires and can be seen to contribute to either repertoire in different contexts. For example showing loyalty to friends could contribute to the young women’s performance of tough femininities as it could make them behave violently. However, it could also be seen as evidence of the girls’ performance of the feminine trait of caring about others. Some of the factors which comprise the interpretative repertoires are exclusive to those repertoires, for example ‘showing empathy or caring’ is exclusive to the repertoire of ‘hyper-feminine’.
These interpretative repertoires helped me to identify the different constructions offered by the young women which were prevalent throughout their narratives. The variability in these interpretative repertoires, the times when some factors superseded others, were useful in identifying how individual’s performances were context dependent. The next four chapters will examine how the young women’s narratives were organised in ‘contextually appropriate ways’ (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984: 14). The reflexive co-construction of biographies through task-based interviews which I conducted with the excluded young women revealed four main themes which constitute the following four analysis chapters, school, family, time spent with friends and violence.

4.9 Summary

In this chapter I have reflected upon the challenges that I encountered in my fieldwork researching a group of socially excluded young women. I have argued that enlisting excluded young women as co-researchers would not have been practically achievable due to their transient lives and sometimes disaffected outlooks nor would it have been ethically desirable. Advocates of participatory methods may not concur with this assertion. Others, however, (for example Pole et al 1999) have noted the importance of recognising the limits of young people’s agency and acknowledging the constraints under which it is realised. The researcher is in a privileged position and should accept the responsibility of safeguarding the young people they work with. I realise that this may have limited the young women’s control over the research process but in order to counteract this I took great care to foster a reciprocal approach in the methods I used.

I found that the task-based activities I used were a practical way of promoting socially excluded young people’s active involvement in the research process. These activities were a key feature in providing a basis for the excluded young women to relate the stories of their lives. The collaborative nature of the research hopefully enabled the fusing of my agenda, as the researcher, with the agendas of the participants. The camera activity approximated a fuller participatory approach as it
allowed the young women to pursue their own agenda, collect their own data and then to analytically reflect on their data in the photo sorting session. I believe that the photos enabled the girls to communicate their lived experiences and locale in a way words cannot easily express. The use of varying data generation tasks allowed the girls to construct a multi-media framed identity reflecting the way the young people live their lives; in a variety of differing contexts and locales. As a method of reflecting the lived realities of a group of socially excluded young people I found that task-based approaches proved to be engaging and fun and facilitated the generation of a large amount of in-depth data. By using combining a broadly inductive style of analysis with the identification of interpretative repertoires in the girls' narratives I have been able to construct a detailed exploration of the aspects of the girls' lives that were important to them. In the following chapter I shall examine the sample in more detail before I move on to the analysis in part III of this thesis.
Chapter 5: The Sample

Having outlined the theoretical and methodological background to this study it is now necessary to introduce the characteristics of the different pupil referral units where data was collected and the young women whose experiences formed the basis of this research. Seven PRUs and 32 young women were involved in this research. However, one paired interview which was conducted at PRU 1 was not of a very good recording quality so unfortunately had to be disregarded. Another five interviews were also disregarded either because of poor recording quality or, as in the case of three girls at PRU number 4, because the girls had not been formally excluded and were still also attending at their mainstream schools part-time. This chapter will first examine the role of pupil referral units.

5.1 The Pupil Referral Units visited in this study

In table number 1 (see below) the characteristics of the PRUs I utilised are given. As can be seen from the table each PRU has been placed within a deprivation band. These bands are based upon deprivation ratings which have been taken from The Office of National Statistics ‘Neighbourhood Statistics’ website (ONS, 2005). The Neighbourhood Statistics Service offers users access to a vast range of social and economic aggregate data relating to a consistent small-area geography (known as LSOAs - Lower Layer Super Output Areas). The UK is split into 32,482 of these areas. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation combine information relating to income, employment, education, health, skills and training, barriers to housing and services and crime into an overall measure of deprivation. A score is calculated for each area; a low score indicates greater deprivation - the most deprived Local Authority is indicated by a rank of 1 and the least deprived is indicated by a rank of 32,482. The ONS complies the deprivation ratings from the 2004 English Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

For the purpose of this research I have allocated each PRU one of five social deprivation bands:
Very high - deprivation score ranked in the highest 5% in the UK
High - deprivation score ranked between 5% and 35% in the UK
Medium - deprivation score ranked between 35% and 65% in the UK
Low - deprivation score ranked between 65% and 95% in the UK
Very low - deprivation score ranked over 95% in the UK

For example, a LSOA with a ranking of 27,171 (which corresponds to 84%) lies in the low band. A graphical representation is given below.

Taken from ONS (2005) Neighbourhood Statistics available at:
http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/AreaProfile1.do?tab=4&print=true
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF UNIT</th>
<th>11 to 16</th>
<th>Mid</th>
<th>11 to 18</th>
<th>South East</th>
<th>Medium*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Predominantly Muslim</td>
<td>Exclusion Unit within a secondary school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominantly white</td>
<td>PRU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>PRU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>PRU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total number of pupils the unit can accommodate | 40 | 105 | 40 | 40 |
| Ages of pupils at the unit | 14 to 15 | 11 to 16 | 5 to 16 | 11 to 18 |
| Type of area unit serves | Urban | Urban | Semi-rural | PRU |
| Ethnic minority pupils | Mixed | Mixed | Predominantly white | PRU |
| Type of unit | PRU | PRU | PRU | PRU |
| Social deprivation rating | Very high | High | Low* | Medium* |
| Area of England | Midlands | Midlands | South East | South East |

* Please note that the social deprivation rating refers to where the PRUs are located. In the case of PRU 2 and 3 the pupils were transported to their centres via bus from some distance away. The girls I interviewed at PRU 2 and 3 came from semi-rural working-class estates and it is probable that the deprivation rating for these individual estates would have been much lower than for the areas in which the PRUs were situated.
5.2 Profile of interviewees

Having outlined the characteristics of the Pupil Referral Units it is now necessary to introduce the young people who participated in this research. Where it is stated that the parents’ occupations are unknown this is because the girl herself did not know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRU</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age at interview</th>
<th>Year at School</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of permanent exclusions</th>
<th>Currently living with ...</th>
<th>Dad’s job</th>
<th>Mum’s job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRU 2</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Builder</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mum &amp; Dad</td>
<td>Lorry driver</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Cleaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tiffany</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU 4</td>
<td>Shemeila</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Mum &amp; Dad</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shaunteis</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>African-Caribbean</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>African-Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Dinner lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU 3</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mum &amp; Dad</td>
<td>Works with computers</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kandice</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Works in a bike shop</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beany</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mum &amp; Dad</td>
<td>Landscape gardener</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jenni</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mum &amp; Dad</td>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lady sovereign</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Adoptive parents</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gemma</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td>Cleaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU 5</td>
<td>Alisha</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Truck driver</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nicola</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mum &amp; step-dad</td>
<td>Shelf stacker</td>
<td>Avon lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Builder</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU 6</td>
<td>Ashanti</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>African-Caribbean</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Bar worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU 7</td>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>African-Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Factory worker</td>
<td>Dinner lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keisha</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Lorry driver</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>African-Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Nursery Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shola</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>African-Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Office worker</td>
<td>Administrative assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mum &amp; Dad Step-uncle</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ameile</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>African-Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Fireplace fitter</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alexi</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Indian-Caribbean</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>Shop worker</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carrie</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kosie</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>African-Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Foster family</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Markeata</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>African-Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Foster family</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Characteristics of interviewees
Social class can be conceptualised as a 'fuzzy' and contested category (see Archer et al, 2007a). Within the analysis I draw upon a 'culturalist' form of class analysis (Skeggs, 1997) that understands social class as produced through a combination of social, cultural and economic practices and relations of power. The majority of participants in my study were identified as 'working-class' through various means - including self-identification, categorisation of pupils' parents'/guardians' occupations and through identifying the PRUs social deprivation scoring as described on the previous pages.

The purpose of this section is in order to give an overview of the young women’s lives. Therefore I have included segments from the interviewees’ timelines and their sentence completion tasks. I have not analysed these extracts as the purpose of this chapter is simply to provide a context for the following chapters and to introduce the reader to how the girls wished to present themselves.

PRU 2

Lucy
Lucy lived with her mum, dad and younger brother. In Lucy’s sentence completion task she asserted that when she left school she wanted to go to college.

Sarah
Sarah lived with friends. Sarah chose not to draw a timeline but in her sentence completion task she asserted that when she left school she wanted to 'move away and hopefully get an apprenticeship as an administrative marketer'.

Emily
Tiffany

PRU 3
Kandice
Kandice’s timeline focused mainly on her life out of school: ‘1988 – born; 1990 mum got a new boyfriend who was my ‘new’ dad; 1995 – my sister was born; 1997 – first time my dad ever hit my mum; 1999 – mum and dad split up; mum met Keith; 2001 – we had to move because of sum trouble; 2002 - started experimenting; 2003 – got a new best mate; 2004 – my brother was born; 2004 – got kicked out of school and went to PRU’.

Beany
Beany asserted that she choose her pseudonym because she used to take Ecstasy pills, which are also known as ‘beans’. Beany’s timeline focused mainly on her life out of school: ‘1989 – born; my dad went to prison for 2 years; started [school name]; arrested for shoplifting; met new friends; started to misbehave because I was bored, was put on special report, moved tutor group but didn’t get on with my new one; met Kandice; arrested for the new law at Somerfield; general messing around shoplifting, drinking, vandalism, breaking into houses; first tried drugs; kicked out of [school name]; started here; arrested for swearing at police when I was drunk and had to go to court’.

Gemma
Gemma lived with her mum and sister. Gemma’s timeline focused mainly on her life out of school: ‘- parents split up because dad cheated on my mum. I found out this and
told my mum so my dad gave me a lot of hassle, e.g. told me he hated me and it was
my fault; - started smoking; - started to try different things (drugs) e.g. puff, skunk,
Charlie, LSD, E, and for a year I was messed up from taking 2 pills; - I got expelled for
beating up a girl who was head girl'.

Jenni
Jenni's timeline focused mainly on her disrupted school career: '1989 - born; 1995
moved school; 1998 - moved back to first school; 2000 - perfect pupil in year 7; 2001 -
mum and dad spilt up and went crazy fighting; 2002 - punched a teacher and got
expelled; 2003 - got arrested for fighting and ABH; 2003 - started a different school and
started fighting, got kicked out and pushed teacher; 2004 - most of the year off school;
end of 2004 - started here; now - I want to join the army in the dog training
department'.

Lady Sovereign
Lady Sovereign asserted that she chose her pseudonym because it reflected the brand
of cigarettes she smoked, the sovereign rings she wore and because there is a female
hip hop artist called Lady Sovereign. In Lady Sovereign's sentence completion task she
asserted that when she left school she wanted to 'work with kids and possibly in a bar
in London'. She also asserted that when she was at home she felt 'bored and needing a
fag'. Lady Sovereign lived with her adoptive mum and dad.

Kate
In Kate's sentence completion task she asserted that when she left school she wanted to
'go to college and then to Uni'.

PRU 4
Shemeila
Shemeila's timeline focused mainly on the last year of her life: 'aged 13 to 16 - went to
[school name] till start of year 11 when I got kicked out. April - went to do a course on
childcare and worked in a nursery - I got kicked out of that for arguing with a girl - now I chill at home'. Shemeila lived with her mum, dad, sister and brother.

Shaunteis

Shaunteis's timeline focused mainly on her life out of school: '1988 - born; 1997 - mum and dad spilt up and me and my brothers and sisters went to live with my Nan; 1998 - we moved house to Ruby and then I went to Manchester to be with my aunt to finish off primary school (cos of my behavior at school); 2005 - got in trouble for messing around at school again'. Shaunteis lived with her mum.

June

June chose not to draw a timeline, instead drawing a family tree. Her family tree showed her sister's children and her older brother. She was not in contact with her father. June lived with her mum.

PRU 5

Alisha

Alisha's timeline focused mainly on her school career: '1997- started school; 2001 - started getting suspended; 2002 - moved house again; 2003 - not allowed back to primary school; 2004 - in year 8 suspended; 2005 - suspended about 5 - 6 times; Excluded'. Alisha asserted she wanted to be a beautician after finishing school.

Nicola

In Nicola's sentence completion task she asserted that when she left school she wanted to be a beautician or go into the army 'for discipline'. She stated on her timeline that in 2005 'my neck got cracked, my boyfriend finished with me and my friend is pregnant and so might my brother's girlfriend'.
Samantha

In Samantha’s sentence completion task she asserted that when she left school she wanted to be a beautician or go into childcare and she thought she was excluded from school because of fighting. Samantha lived with her mum and siblings.

PRU 6

Ashanti

Ashanti lived with her mum and sister. In Ashanti’s sentence completion task she asserted that when she left school she wanted to be a beautician or a choreographer and she thought she was excluded from school because of fighting.

Jade

Jade’s family tree revealed that she had nine brothers and sisters and fourteen nieces and nephews. Jade’s timeline read: ‘I was very good in primary school as there were no distractions. Then I started secondary school in year 7 and I was very immature and messed about, I used to talk a lot but I never used to get into that much trouble. The beginning of year 8 I calmed down, I weren’t that talkative or noisy but it was just that fight what I had that made me get excluded’.

PRU 7

Markeata

Markeata was born in Nigeria and lived with her mum until she was 5. At 5 her mum left her with an aunt and emigrated to Spain. Markeata’s Trinidadian father lived in England and when she was 12 he requested that she come to live with him. Markeata lived with him and his new wife for one year and after he beat her up she decided to leave. She stayed at a friends’ house for a couple of nights and the friend’s parents involved social services. Markeata had lived with her foster mum for the last 2 years.

Keisha
Lived with her mum. The last entry on Keisha’s timeline was: ‘2005 - I got stabbed and then started to get into trouble with the police then I got kicked out of school and sent to [the PRU]’.

Carrie
At the time of her second interview Carrie was living with her sister at a hostel. Carrie’s timeline featured the following bits of information: ‘2002 – expelled from [school name]; 2003 started [school name], 2003 a LOAD of family problems which rooted from years ago, 2004 expelled from [school name]’.

Ameile
In Ameile’s sentence completion task she asserted that when she is at home she felt ‘trapped and bored, I hate being at home’ and when she left school she wanted to be a ‘nursery nurse and start a life on my own as soon as possible’. Ameile lived with her mum and dad.

Shola
Shola’s timeline focused mainly on her home career: ‘1990 – born; 1993 – brother was born, parents separated, I started primary school; 2000 – I started smoking cigarettes and had my first suspension from school; 2001 – my baby sister was born. I started to smoke cannabis; 2002 – kicked out of my mum’s house for a month, had drug counselling; 2004 – became sexually active and was kicked out of my house again, I was allowed home a couple of weeks later; 2005 – my sister’s dad was kicked out and I built a new relationship with my mum, I was kicked out of [school name] and started at the PRU’. Shola lived with her mum and sister.

Kosie
In Kosie’s sentence completion task she asserted that on leaving school she wanted to go to college and become a midwife and she thought she was excluded from school because of her attendance. Kosie lived with her mum and brother.
Alexi

Alexi's timeline focused mainly on her home career: '1990 - born, my mum left my
dad; 1991 - Mum got a new boyfriend (my step-dad); 1997 - my brother was born; 2000
- my sister [name] was born; 2002 - my sister [name] was born; 2003 - my mum and
step-dad got married; 2005 - I left home'.

This chapter has provided contextual information about the areas in which recruitment
occurred and the girls themselves. It has also given brief details about each girls'
background before going to their PRUs. The next four chapters will analyse different
aspects of the girls' lives in more detail.
A point raised in both the introduction to this thesis and the methodology chapter and worth highlighting again here, is the dichotomous position of accounts of people's lives as they reflect not only the reality of an event but also the way in which the individual wishes to present herself to others, and the interviewer. Stories about particular events may be told and retold and may alter at each retelling depending on the audience to which the individual is recounting the story. This highlights the significance of the context of the data generation and the importance of the 'overall narrative', that is how the individual wishes to present themselves on a day-to-day basis, rather than just within the context of, what could be, a one off interaction (the interview). As Giddens' (1991) argues a person's biography is dependent on their ability to integrate events which occur in the external world and sort them into the on-going story about the self.

Therefore in interview accounts there necessarily always exists a tension between the reality of the event being described and the overall self narrative which an individual is trying to convey about herself. In their interviews the young women trusted me and openly related their stories about their lives. The sheer force of emotion which accompanied many of the young women's stories made them hard to disbelieve. I believed their stories and I am not trying to undermine the validity of what they were saying. What I am trying to do is add a further layer of analysis and unpick how these stories contributed to the girls' reflexive image of the self which individuals' construct through the accumulation of their narratives. In order to try to reconcile these two elements within my analysis of the young women's accounts I have used the concept of interpretative repertoires in order to understand which aspects of the girls' talk contributes towards their 'overall self narrative'.

The interpretative repertoires highlight the girls' agency and resistance in their own lives and how this was at times constrained through 'lived experiences of social exclusion' (MacDonald et al, 2005: 874). They also reveal the young women's both
subversion and maintenance of heteronormative femininities. In the analysis chapters I examine areas which dominated the girls' narratives, school, social networks and violence. The data presented in the school chapter demonstrates how the girls resisted dominant heteronormative femininities by engaging in 'loud, disruptive, often violent classroom behaviour' (Renold, 2005: 149). The school environment can be seen to constitute institutionalised, regimented and hierarchical structures with set boundaries defining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The girls knew that to cross the boundaries was wrong but did so in order to challenge and empower themselves and to demonstrate their own agency and resistance. The girls' determination to exert their own agency in the often complex and emotionally charged atmospheres of their families, where perhaps boundaries were less clearly defined, is then examined. The last two analysis chapters examine how the girls spent their leisure time and the violent aspects of the young women's lives.
Chapter 6: School

In this first analysis chapter I explore what the young women had to say about their school careers. As Potter (1996) points out, even the most open ended interviews are guided by a schedule that specifies topics and themes as being important. As most of the young women had recently been permanently excluded from school it is not surprising perhaps that this event and their experiences of school pre-exclusion featured prominently in the girls' narratives. This is in marked difference to Willis's (1977) study where he asked the lads to record the events of the day in diaries. The lads gave scant attention to events that had occurred in school, choosing instead to focus on events that happened during the evenings, such as going out with friends. I found that the girls I interviewed wanted to talk about school in great detail. As mentioned in the introduction to part III, I was interested not only in the events which the young women related to me about their school careers, I was also interested in the ways in which they chose to present themselves to me positioned as I was as an interested audience.

I begin this first analysis chapter by exploring the ways in which the majority of the excluded young women chose to present themselves to me as academically able. I then look at how messing around in school was constructed by the young women as providing entertainment for themselves and their peers. The girls’ narratives of rules and teachers, and how they resisted these, are then discussed. I go on to examine the girls' stories of their actual exclusions from school, which in many cases may be seen as the 'final straw' in a series of misdemeanours. Finally the girls' accounts of the consequences of going to the PRUs are discussed.

A key feature which emerged from the analysis of the data was the extent to which the girls' perceived that they had agency in many of the events that had occurred in their school careers. The manifestation of their agentic selves was described by the girls in the ways in which they resisted the rules and regulations imposed on them by the
structures of the school and the education system. However, further examination of the young women's narratives about other aspects of their lives revealed how structural constraints had helped to shape outcomes in their lives. These aspects will be discussed further in chapters 7, 8 and 9.

6.1 Academic ability
Recent research with those who are excluded from school highlights low academic ability as a risk factor. For example in his study, Daniels (2003: 16) found that over 40 percent of his sample of school excludees were identified as having special educational needs. Poor behaviour and lack of engagement in lessons often mask or contribute to low educational attainment. Contrasts between the more and less able pupils are even more visible in the modern schooling environment because of the current emphasis on key stage testing. This inevitably makes young people themselves even more aware of their own ability as compared to their peers. A notable feature which emerged when the excluded young women were discussing their school careers was the extent to which the majority of them emphasised their own academic ability, particularly during the early stages of their school careers. In the two extracts below the young women achieved this through reference to tangible evidence of academic ability such as winning awards for good work or their positions within the setting systems at school. This was often contrasted with references to the poor perceptions they thought their teachers had of them. For example in extract 1, June highlighted what she saw to be the discrepancy between the school's targeting of her bad behaviour and the rewards bestowed on her for good work:

Extract 1
Oh I won an award for French.
Did you?
Yes. As I am trying to say they say I am bad but they nominated me for the awards every year. That is the point. I either got a certificate or a medal.
(June, first interview)
Extract 2
Because apparently I am a bright kid, I dunno, I had this assessment thing with an educational psychologist, which I did when I was like 14, and had like an IQ test, you know like they have all the different little categories, all of them were 18 plus apart from one which was 17
(Kate, first & only interview)

Here Kate raised the issue of her academic prowess as an afterthought. Her use of the words ‘apparently’ and ‘I dunno’ acted as a disclaimer which served to play down her interest in presenting her particular version of events (that she is ‘bright’) in an attempt to make this seem more credible and thus more difficult to undermine (Day et al, 2003). Interestingly, Kate assumed that I would have knowledge of the IQ assessment and be able to confirm that scores of 18 plus were good (‘you know like’). Many of the girls presented themselves as aware of the standard of their academic work and fiercely defended their ability. In the quotation below Keisha interpreted my question regarding school to be about academic ability and asserted forcefully through repetition that her marks were good.

Extract 3
And had you been getting on well at school?
My marks were good, very good.
What sets were you in?
I wasn’t in the bottom set for nothing. I wasn’t in the top set though. There were eight sets. So I was like for Maths I was in 3. I think science I was in four but I moved up to set 2.
(Keisha, first & only interview)

Keisha was unusual in that she did not assert that she was in the top sets however, she made it clear that she certainly was not in the bottom, or even close to the bottom sets. The above three extracts were somewhat unique as the girls asserted that they were academically able and their ability remained constant during their school careers. It was more common for interviewees to refer to a change in their ability as their
academic success dissipated throughout their school career as is exemplified in extract 4. Similar to other interviewees, Gemma was keen to demonstrate her initial academic success through reference to her year 6 SATs results. She presented the top sets in secondary school as full of 'boffins and the choir', which were intended to be disparaging terms and therefore Gemma constructed the top sets as undesirable places to be:

Extract 4
Like when you go to secondary school they have got your year six results or whatever and I got 5 in science, 5 in English, 6 in Maths and people had like 3s and 4s and they were like 'that is really good' and they put me in all the high classes in with the boffins and the choir and that and I couldn't do it. I would get on with it but I can't handle this silence and that like oh I don't know people prefer working in silence but I don't I would rather have a bit of music or chat to someone while I am doing it
So you were in the top sets?
Yes, and then I couldn't be bothered to do anything I was like 'I am not doing it, I can't be arsed' and all my levels went down and that I was like I can't be arsed to do this. It is fucking pointless.
(Gemma, first interview)

Gemma again presented herself as academically able but she introduced tension into her account as she presented herself as not wishing to conform to the expected top set type of behaviour. In her account she set up the expected behaviour as a problem and therefore implicit in her account was the notion that her divergence from this expected path would be inevitable. Gemma constructed her inability to remain in the top sets as based on her inability to sit in silence, rather than any lack of academic inability. She 'othered' herself from fellow pupils in the high sets, the 'boffins and the choir', and presented herself as making an active choice to not be like those types of people. Her use of definite phrases such as 'I am not doing it' emphasised this sense of agency which Gemma believed she exerted over her schooling trajectory. Carrie recounted her academic trajectory in a similar manner:
In [1st secondary school] I was identified as gifted and talented. In the top 10% of the brainiest kids in the whole school. So I was always in the top set and then I got kicked out and I started [2nd secondary school] I really, really, really didn't want to go there and when I went there, and because there was no space in the other groups they put me in the bottom group. I went there and they were trying to get me to do my times tables and I was thinking .... that is what caused to me to start bunking. I started to think why am I going to school and they are teaching me things I know. There would be times where I was supposed to take an exam but I never did take it. And this was year 8. I just ended up like for the whole of year eight messing about basically. And then in year nine – I mean at the end of year 8, they had the end of year exams and then come year 9 I was in the top group and then they tried to say oh you have made a record. No one has ever been moved up like that I was just I don't care you should have looked at my record and put me there in the beginning.

(Carrie, first interview)

As the above extract illustrates, throughout her interviews Carrie was keen to present evidence of her academic ability and presented her exclusion from her first secondary school and subsequent attendance at an over-subscribed school as the reason for her placement in the 'bottom group'. It is apparent that Carrie felt strongly that she should have been in the top sets and she conveyed the notion that her agentic self was being frustrated by the system which limited places in the top sets by numbers. Carrie was keen to present herself as someone who had been wronged, but certainly not as a victim. Indeed, she emphasised the action she took next, to mess around and resist the system which she had found had not worked for her. The effect of her telling her narrative in this way invited me, as her audience, to see her as someone who was able to exert her own agency and control over events in her life, even if it was to rebel against the rules and norms of the school. Although Carrie asserted that she regained her rightful place in the top sets in Year 9, after being prompted she later recounted that she was moved out of the top sets in Year 10. This resonated with many of the girls' descriptions of their academic trajectories. The phrase 'perfect student' was used by many of the girls to describe their position at the beginning of their school trajectory:
Extract 6

[Reading from her timeline] you said you were a 'perfect pupil' in year 7.
I was a boffin in year 7.
What did you do?
I just sat down and did all my work.
(Jenni, first interview)

Extract 7

Well I was in school and in year seven and eight I was a perfect student, always completed homework, and stuff and I was in high sets and then I just stopped going to school completely and I was in all of the dumb sets — well the lower sets.
(Shola, first interview)

In extracts 6 and 7 the notion of the perfect student is constructed as one who completes schoolwork. Shola contrasted her identity of the perfect student to that of the non-attender who, when she did return to school, had been placed in the ‘dumb’ sets. The lower sets were described by all my interviewees as the ‘dumb’ sets, although some did not seem to mind this label in the way Shola appeared to (Shola purposively altered her description of the dumb sets to ‘the lower sets’).

There were a few exceptions amongst my interviewees to those who presented themselves as academically able:

Extract 8

And what sets were you in at school?
The dumb sets I think, 3 and 4. I have been in dummy sets mainly because of my behaviour. I never learnt anything because I used to get kicked out of every lesson. I used to mess around and never do no work and that.
(Shemeila, first interview)

Shemeila presented her position in lower sets as being due to her behaviour, therefore avoiding the notion that she might be considered ‘dumb’. Like many of my interviewees she seemed to be presenting herself as someone who could achieve if she
really wanted to, but instead she chose to misbehave. In this way she was actively steering my perceptions of her away from someone of below average ability to someone who could have perhaps have done better if she had actually wanted to. Nicola was the only one of my interviewees who said that she had learning difficulties, and therefore did not offer reasons for her academic performance as the others did. However, she did qualify her 'learning disability thing' as based merely on her difficulties with spelling. Nicola presented her experience of being made to write on the board as making her 'angry' as it felt like a punishment:

**Extract 9**

I was learning disability thing. Because I couldn't spell that good and I needed a hand. But everybody used to take the mickey out of me because I couldn't spell and the teacher always got me to write on the board which got me more angry because it felt like she was punishing me because I couldn't spell because she always got me to write on the board she would never ask anybody else. I wouldn't even put my hand up. I would be like 'no I don't want to do it' and she would be 'no Nicola come and write this down' and everybody used to laugh at me when I was writing on the board and she would say 'tell me what this was' and the teacher used to laugh sometimes.

*(Nicola, first interview)*

By presenting her story in this manner Nicola conveyed to me some of the deep rooted frustrations she had about her learning difficulties. Nicola was unusual in that she admitted she suffered difficulties with academic work and it was obvious to me that these caused her great distress, particularly when she was embarrassed in public. In chapter 9 I examine the anger and aggression Nicola reported feeling which often resulted in her behaving violently. I felt that in this extract Nicola was trying to get me to understand some of the possible causes of her unruly behaviour in school. Although her learning difficulties limited her academic attainment Nicola conveyed a sense of resisting humiliating treatment by her teachers.

The above extracts reveal how sensitive my interviewees were about their academic ability, most of them emphasised that they could have attained good grades and
positions within the setting system if they had chosen to do so. This can be seen to reveal the overriding feature of this theme: the excluded girls presented themselves as *actively choosing* not to follow the norms and rules expected by the education system and therefore their narratives emphasised their own sense of agency in their lives. The young women highlighted their agentic selves in choosing to misbehave rather than to do their school work which accounted for their poor academic attainment. Nicola’s case however, was different and her behaviour could be seen as an agentic pre-emptive action to avoid possible embarrassment in the classroom setting. As has been mentioned, although many of the interviewees were keen to present themselves as academically able they also acknowledged that they did not do very much work at school. This was mainly attributed to the time they spent messing about and it is to this which I now turn.

6.2 Messing about and resistance
As so many of the young women in my study stated that they had deliberately chosen not to work in school, I was interested to find out how they occupied their time. Messing around in school was a topic all the young women talked about and they mainly presented this to me in terms of trying to make school entertaining and fun. There were some noticeable similarities between my group of young women and the lads in Willis’s (1977) study. The lads had come to realise that, for whatever reasons, they were not going to succeed academically and therefore aimed instead to gain status amongst their peers with ‘irreverent marauding behaviour’ and ‘having a laff’. By engaging in such resisting behaviour, Willis concluded that the lads had their own counter-school culture which was opposed to the values espoused by the school. In a similar manner to the lads in Willis’s study, my interviewees frequently intertwined accounts of their enjoyment of the social aspects of school with the enjoyment and amusement which messing around could bring. In the extract below Carrie emphasised to me how much she enjoyed being in year 9 at school and attributed this to the friends she had made:
Extract 10
When I settled into [school] in year 9 and made loads of friends, it was probably one of the best years really because in year 10 I got kicked out and I wasn't really... I missed the whole of year ten basically because when I was there – it became a thing where school was a social thing for me. I got so comfortable within my surroundings because everybody knew us, everybody – at lunch times and break times there would be like twenty people from each year group together so there would be all of us which were the year nine, the year tens, and the year elevens and we would all be together and just like crack jokes obviously like we were ... after a while it became like a social thing to me. I kind of thought I am in the top class like
(Carrie, first interview)

Carrie appeared very keen to demonstrate to me her gregarious nature in this extract. Her repetition of the phrase ‘it became ... a social thing to me’ serves to emphasise the enjoyment she gained from socialising with friends from different year groups in the school. Carrie asserted that she was in year 9 at this point and through her reference to friendships with year 10 and year 11 pupils she informed me of her status within the school. Pupils from higher year groups within schools do not usually socialise with younger pupils and therefore Carrie could be seen to be establishing her credentials as a popular girl. Carrie uses the metaphor of being in the ‘top class’ to illustrate her high social position in her school. Other interviewees also made reference to being popular and joining in with the popular groups at school:

Extract 11
I started to hang around with the more popular groups, people would say that, they used to just do silly things and mess about so I thought I would do it too. But I went much further than they did, because I was just bored.
So what sort of things did they do?
They would just sit in class and chuck things around. But I would stand up and like swear at the teachers. I don't know. Teachers - I didn't like teachers at [school].
And so what sort of things were you doing?
Just like I would run around school, swear, scream. Distract classes and rip up everyone's work and spit on everyone's work and stuff. I got put on a pastoral report programme. It is like one of the stages to getting permanently excluded. I passed the first one. I got put on it twice. I passed the first one. Most of the time I had been on like a little report. That is just a general check on
your behaviour if you have misbehaved a bit. This one was like quite a high one. I think I was the only girl that was on it. There was only a couple of people on it you know.

(Beany, first interview)

Beany attributed her behaviour as originating from hanging around with the more popular groups. I felt that Beany displayed a palpable sense of pride in her account when she described going further than the others in her group with her disruptive behaviour as this gave her status within the group. However, Beany constructed herself as ready to accept responsibility when she had committed misdemours, but similarly to my other interviewees, being wrongly accused only served to make her angry. In her response to my inquiry regarding her behaviour she happily accepted the chance to recount her bad behaviour and very proudly told me about being placed on the pastoral report programme. She seemed to view the fact that she was the only girl on the 'high' report as an achievement which added to her status within the school.

Beany's construction of femininity can be seen as somewhat paradoxical. She seemed pleased to be identified as the only girl to have entered the male preserve of being placed on a 'high' report. In her stories recounting her behaviour, I could see that giving the appearance of being tough was important to Beany. She asserted in her second interview that she wanted to become a motorbike mechanic, a job that has traditionally been viewed as masculine. Somewhat conversely, Beany invested in her appearance through 'glamorous' working-class hyper-femininity. Indeed, her appearance was extremely feminine as she had very long hair which was well groomed and she wore feminine clothes and make-up.

Evidence of a dichotomous position of qualities associated with tough, loud and visible femininities, which many of the girls exhibited, and the forms of submissive and quiet femininity, that are usually rewarded within schools, was a common feature running through many of the girls' lives and as such reoccurs in later chapters. As with Beany glamorous hyper-femininities were also often thrown into the mix and these sometimes seemed to be in opposition to both 'ideal pupil' forms of femininity and tough,
assertive femininities. In certain situations I found that the excluded young women were careful to present their biographies in ways which emphasised their willingness to break rules and display their unyielding, determined attitudes to the way in which they lived their lives. When recounting other events the girls were keen to emphasise more feminine characteristics such as behaving in a motherly and/or 'hyper-feminine' manner and this is discussed at length in chapter 8. I felt the contrast here very sharply between the way in which Beany recounted her behaviour and the desire she espoused to be a motorbike mechanic and her 'hyper-feminine' appearance.

During the interviews several of the excluded girls revealed how they had misbehaved in school with a best friend and in many ways this behaviour had helped to cement their friendship.

Extract 12
Because I was being rude. And I got blamed for things that I never even did anyway. He still blamed it on me. Its me and Shaunteis all the time. It has to be me and Shaunteis. Me and Shaunteis. Everything that happened is June and Shaunteis. And it wasn't even us.
(June, first interview)

June’s repetition of her best friend’s name along with her own name, served to cement the notion that they were perceived, by the teachers, to be an inseparable team in trouble-making enterprises. Kandice and Beany were keen to describe each other as best friends and their accounts displayed ways in which they loyally supported each other in their messing around in school. They had been excluded from school together and both attended the same PRU. In the extract below Kandice recounted how their friendship had become closely entwined with making trouble at school:

Extract 13
I met her at [school] actually and we both actually said if we hadn't met each other we would have been kicked out of school anyway kind of because we are exactly the same. And we were still really, really naughty and that. It is just the fact that it got worse when we got together. But I
don't - like we both don't regret it kind of thing. I mean I don't regret becoming mates with her and that. And even - because she wasn't in my tutor at first but in year ten she came into my tutor and everyone was like 'oh you two are going to be best mates' and that - like my form teacher said Beany and Kandice in the same class is going to be a nightmare and then she was like 'oh I bet you two end up being best mates' and all that kind of stuff.

*And what sort of things did you used to do. How did you get into trouble*?

I don't know. Mostly just mouthing off teachers, couldn't be bothered to go to lessons. Skiving.

*(Kandice, first interview)*

Kandice referred to her friendship with Beany in an intimate manner and spoke on her behalf ('and we both actually said if we hadn't met each other ...'; 'I don't - like we both don't regret it').

In their narratives about messing around in school, my interviewees often used the term 'it was funny'. Willis (1977) states that his 'lads' often used the term 'having a laff' when talking about their misdemeanours in school. At first sight these terms might be construed as having very similar meaning. However, I felt that the excluded young women in my study used the term 'it was funny' not only to convey their perceived humorous interpretations of their behaviour, but also to convey to me the contempt they felt for their school and its rules. The following extracts exemplify how the young women used this term.

**Extract 14**

Yes I did actually do drugs in school. I was stoned on the field at lunch. It was so funny. What else. Just fighting as well and just being mouthy back to teachers and that. Oh graffiti in the toilets. That was funny. That was proper funny. Just everything.

*(Gemma, first interview)*

**Extract 15**

I never liked being on report, cos if you are naughty they have to write down what you have done and everything, so I thought I don't want them knowing what I have been doing, so I ripped up the report sheets all the time, it was quite funny

*(Lucy, first interview)*
Extract 16

I used to be the naughtiest one and I used to be up front and then everyone else in my class used to be so sly and then we used to get into trouble

So they were better at pretending they had done nothing?

Yes. And I used to get all the blame. All the time. Me and my best friend Kiran, it was funny. And I used to get in trouble all the time wearing make up and that.

Did you?

All the time and I used to - they used to tell me to take it off okay and then after two hours I am back with all my slap on. I would still have my hoops on as well. I always wear hoops.

(Shemeila, first interview)

All three girls recounted quite serious misdemeanours in the above extracts. Gemma, Lucy and Shemeila, similar to many of the other girls, seemed to judge their own behaviour not in terms of whether it was right or wrong, but by the degree to which it could be considered funny. They used the term ‘it was funny’ not only as a means of serving to show me the entertainment value of their behaviour but also to show me that they did not care about the effects their behaviour had for themselves or their school communities. Lucy’s actions in particular can be interpreted as a public statement against the surveillance which the school tried to impose upon her. By using humour in this way to resist the school structure Lucy can be seen to be using it as a tool to diffuse and trivialise the seriousness of her own behaviour. It is likely that she had recounted this story many times and she can be seen to be presenting herself not only as someone who constantly challenged the authority of her teachers but as someone who was doing something for fun. I felt that Lucy knew that by framing her action as funny it would be hard for anyone to challenge her behaviour as they would then appear to be devoid of humour. The girls’ acts of defiance which were framed in terms of humour can be seen as strategies used in order to increase their sense of power, in institutions which otherwise had rendered them powerless.

The importance of Shemeila’s construction of femininity is also highlighted in extract 16 as she recounted being unwilling to remove her make-up and reapplying her ‘slap’. 139
Archer et al (2007a) have highlighted the tension between working-class girls' constructions of glamorous femininities and teachers' notions of the ideal pupil as demure, passive and sexually restrained. It is apparent that hyper-femininities are positioned as antithetical to educational attainment and therefore are likely to bring girls who invest in them into conflict with schools.

Much of this section has dealt with the ways in which the excluded young women engaged in messing around behaviour at school. Most children and young people mess around to some degree at school. However, the extent to which the excluded young women indulged in such behaviour and the way in which they purported to purposefully resist the structures of the school, such as its rules and regulations, can be considered to be unusual. It is this which I now consider in more detail.

6.3 Rules, teachers and resistance

It has been contended that the underlying intent of the school curriculum is to produce docile bodies (Hoskin, 1990: 31). Foucault highlights the necessity of docile bodies to the smooth and efficient management of institutions such as schools (Simpson, 2000). Simpson goes on to argue that in relation to the body a number of school rules revolve around notions of spatiality and embodiment. For example the control exercised within schools can be seen to be aimed at maintaining the correct use of space and directing pupils to appropriate places at appropriate times. All schools have rules and regulations and it is part of the teachers' role to enforce them. Many of the excludees I interviewed treated rules and teachers with hostility and viewed their struggles with their teachers as sites where they could express agentic resistance. The excluded young women did not only challenge their teachers but they were often openly hostile to them. Many of the young women prefixed their narratives of rules, teachers and resistance with reported aversions to being told what to do at school.

Extract 17

Why were you naughty at school?
I don't know. It was just the way I am so... I don't know I have never been good at obeying orders.

(Kandice, first interview)

Extract 18
I just don't like being told what to do. If I want to do it, I do it when I want to do it. And they were trying to tell me what to do. And I just said I am not doing it fuck off basically.

(Jenni, first interview)

Extract 19
I didn't listen. I don't listen to anyone. I only listen to myself. I just did what I wanted to do. I didn't listen to one person. That is what they say. I don't really care. If the teachers do something I don't like I will tell them to shut up. I am just rude. I was rude to everyone I was even rude to the head. But I don't see why. I mean what silly rules. What dumb rules. I go to school with a black jacket and they will say 'you can't do your lessons for the day wearing that jacket'. And you say 'okay I am going to take it off' and they say 'no'. Like hairbands. If you wear a yellow hair band or something. They are all dumb. I don't like rules.

(Amelie, first & only interview)

By presenting themselves to me in this way Kandice, Jenni and Amelie succeeded in informing me of their determination to resist the efforts of their teachers to get them to conform to the expected modes of behaviour in school. Amelie, similar to many of my interviewees, highlighted the surveillance and monitoring she was subjected to in school. Simpson (2000) highlights how school staff attempt to enforce their power by controlling children's bodies, informing how the pupils should comport themselves and when and where they should be. Simpson (2000) asserts that the pupils rebel, the girls by pushing at the boundaries of the school dress code, and the boys by exploiting parts of their bodily functions. In my study some of the excluded girls recounted actively resisting any attempts by their teachers to control their bodies, for example wearing brightly coloured hairbands, make-up, jewellery and clothing. The performance of hyper-femininity can enhance girls' social standing at school and generate capital amongst peers. Many of the girls I interviewed spoke about their abhorrence of rules and how they overtly flouted them by publicly challenging their
teachers' authority. Amelie presented the teachers as having a negative view of her and asserted that she did not listen to them. In a similar way to Kandice and Jenni in extracts 17 and 18, Amelie presented herself to me as resisting the school, for example she reported being at ease with telling the teachers to ‘shut up’. Amelie’s presentation of herself as not caring about what the teachers said to her and her abhorrence of the rules that they tried to enforce exemplified a nonchalant attitude which I felt was present throughout her interview. These three girls left me in no doubt about their willingness to exert their own agency against the will of their teachers and the structure of the school. As Archer et al (2007b) note dominant educational discourses of the ideal female pupil may be experienced as narrow and constraining by young working-class women, who find it difficult to reconcile a positive view of themselves as pupils with their own notions of an assertive, strong femininity. The girls’ in my study assertions of ‘loud’ and ‘not to be messed with’ femininities can be understood as challenging the forms of quiet femininities that are usually rewarded within schools, thereby bringing them into conflict with schools.

Closely tied with the girls’ dislike of being told what to do are their accounts of how they interacted with their teachers. It was therefore not surprising to find that most of the young women recounted stories detailing their strong feelings against teachers who most of the girls perceived to be the public embodiment of their schools’ authority. Many of the girls gave the impression that they set out to deliberately challenge the authority of their teachers by poor time keeping, wearing their own interpretation of school uniforms or messing about in class. In their stories about their interactions with teachers the girls often constructed them as hate figures who were fair game for attack. In accounts of relationships with teachers the girls often cited incidents where they believed that they had been personally offended by teachers as is exemplified by the account below.
Extract 20
I hated my English teacher and one time she kept me behind to shout at me and she told me, do you remember that shooting up at Barr Hill? She told me and she said that she wished it was me that was one of the girls.
What did you say to that?
I just stood there and a couple of weeks after or a couple of months after she said to the whole class ‘if you lot were in the same position as those girls I would be glad for most of you lot to be gone’. That is what she said to the whole class.
(Shaunteis, first interview)

Shaunteis justified her hatred of her teacher by referring to the teacher’s alleged comment that she wished Shaunteis was dead. I was rather taken aback by this, but the reaction Shaunteis’ related was also surprising as she stated that she just stood there. By stating that she did this Shaunteis allowed me to see the impact which this event had on her. Through describing an incident where she did not react to provocation, Shaunteis showed me a passivity which was unusual amongst my interviewees. Some girls referred to ways in which they directly challenged teachers who tried to control their behaviour. When I asked Emily which teachers she did not get on with she very quickly informed me of her depth of feeling towards her form teacher.

Extract 21
Are there any teachers you didn’t get on with there?
My tutor. She is a bitch.
Why is she bad?
She has got a real bad attitude towards me. I don’t know because I have got an attitude towards her and she is just like that to everyone. So ... she always shouts. She has got a massive voice. And she is just bitchy. When I say that – it is hard to think of a teacher being bitchy, but the way she acts and that. Whenever there aren’t other teachers around when you are in there you can see she is being a bitch.
What did she do?
She just sort of mucks around and gives me pure attitude. I was just like sitting down and she will come and say ‘get on with your work’. ‘Well I am’. ‘Good blah blah blah’
(Emily, first interview)
It is notable that in this extract Emily used phrases normally associated with teachers describing pupils’ poor behaviour, such as ‘mucks around’ and ‘gives me pure attitude’. By using such phrases Emily indicated to me that she was elevating her own position giving her the right to challenge her teachers’ authority and thereby reversing the normal status quo of the teacher-pupil power dynamic. Emily’s depiction of her teacher saying ‘blah, blah, blah’ elucidated her view that she did not think her teacher had anything of value to say to her. Throughout her two interviews Emily presented her relationship with her teacher as characterised by conflictual encounters and power struggles. Unlike Emily, in the extract below, Gemma immediately justified her hatred of her teacher by providing an example of an incident that occurred between them.

Extract 22

I proper hated one of my teachers because she called me a slag. She actually called me a slag my teacher. And like she didn't say it around everyone else, like she took me out of the classroom, she didn't say as such you are a slag but basically she said to me, ‘you like attention from boys don't you’ and she was like giving me abuse and I was like excuse me, who do you think you are? You are a teacher. Do your job teach’. I was like ‘don't start slagging me down’, I said ‘it is fuck all to do with you what I do’. And I threw a chair at her because she was like winding me up. Like proper winding me up. So I threw a chair at her. I was like ‘shut up’ and threw a chair at her. Yes I didn't get on with her.

And did they exclude you for throwing a chair at her?

Yes.

How long for?

Four days.

(Gemma, first interview)

Gemma provided details of her teacher’s reactions to this incident, but did not clarify why the teacher removed her from the classroom in the first instance. After initially firmly asserting that her teacher called her ‘a slag’ Gemma contradicted this by stating ‘she didn't say as such you are a slag but basically she said to me, you like attention from boys don't you’. She expressed her dislike at being told what to do or to accept any criticism of her behaviour. In contrast to Shaunties in extract 20, Gemma was not
afraid to tell the teacher what she thought and was definite in her assertion that her teacher was not in a position to comment on her morality. In a very similar manner to Emily’s narrative above, Gemma’s story provided an example of the reversal of the expected relationship between teacher and pupil. As a finale to her story Gemma asserted ‘yes I didn't get on with her’. This statement seemed quite amusing to me as Gemma’s feelings towards this teacher were quite obvious from the preceding narrative, however it is likely that Gemma was trying to re-assure me that she only reacted violently against people whom she disliked. In the extract below June presented herself as disliked by her teachers and highlighted what she perceived to be the teacher’s failings, of gossiping behind her back. In common with the majority of the interviewees, June characterised her relationships with teachers as fraught with conflict and power struggles.

Extract 23
It was like they didn't like me. And they used to talk about me in the staff room. They thought I didn't hear them, but I was ill one day and I was sitting outside the staff room and I could hear ‘June, June’. I thought if you have anything to say, say it to my face. But they don't do that. They gossip to the other teachers.
(June, first interview)

Extract 24
The teachers called us animals. We are not animals and I would be the only one to say ‘no don’t call me an animal, I am not an animal’, everyone else would keep quiet because they are scared of getting into trouble but I wasn't. I think teachers don’t like being wrong, even if they are wrong they will never admit to being wrong. That is how it is so, I got into trouble from day one. That is it. 
But being a devil’s advocate you could say they have to keep control of the class in order to be able to speak and let people learn?
Some of them are nice and tell you to be quiet, but you get the ones that say shut up and don’t explain anything and that is just rude, like you are speaking you don’t say shut up or be quiet. If I am still talking obviously they want to get rid of that but some of them tend to shout for no reason.
(Keisha, first & only interview)
In a similar manner to June, Keisha objected to what she perceived to be the teachers' rudeness. Keisha presented her teachers to me as not liking her and her fellow pupils. She seemed keen to present a strong sense of altruism in her account as she described standing up to the teachers for the good of the collective, her peers. She asserted her peers would 'keep quiet because they are scared of getting into trouble but I wasn't'. She stated that 'teachers don't like being wrong, even if they are wrong they will never admit to being wrong'. It has been argued that explicit or implicit references to right or wrong and the appropriateness of behaviour can be motivated by an awareness that the behaviour is not unequivocally wrong and that there is a debate (McGhee and Meill, 1998). By positioning the teachers as wrong Keisha was able to establish herself as better than the teachers as she made it clear that she knew right from wrong. I felt that Keisha used a mechanism of presenting herself as altruistic throughout her interviews in order for me to empathise with her and to understand her feelings. She was unusual in doing this as most girls only referred to altruistic acts when referring to their 'final straw' event which lead to their most recent permanent exclusion. As in other areas of their lives, it was not common for the interviewees to discuss feelings of remorse. Not all of the interviewees recounted stories of messing about mainly because some did not attend school regularly.

Another way in which the girls demonstrated their resistance to the constraints of the schools norms and rules was in the girls' term, 'bunking'. Most of my interviewees admitted truanting from school on a regular basis, but as already discussed, often the social aspects of school were a big attraction which encouraged the girls to attend school, if somewhat erratically and on their own terms. For a few girls bunking from school, sometimes with parental permission, became a way of life and was a contributing factor in their final exclusion from school. In the two extracts below Amelie differs from Alexi who seemed happy to accept the identity of the non-attender without trying to justify her actions. However, after her initial assertion that she simply did not like school, Amelie introduced her place within her social circle in order to account for her absenteeism ('everyone was bunking .. you know all the good kids
... the people I ran around with’). Amelie asserted that only the ‘good ones’ would be at school and it appeared important for her to disassociate herself from the ‘good ones’. Even though Amelie presented herself as not attending school she constructed herself as academically able as she emphasised ‘I still passed all my exams though ... and I got high levels’.

Extract 25

I didn't go in to school. I never went in for the whole of year nine.

Why was that?

I didn't like school, I would go to school and there was no one there because everyone was bunking. You know all the good kids. But all the people that I ran around with would never be there just the good ones. But when I was in year nine I didn't do any more work I still passed all my exams though and I didn't do it. And I passed them all. And I got high levels.

(Amelie, first & only interview)

Extract 26

Sometimes I would go like for a couple of days and then I wouldn't be seen for about two weeks, but then the education welfare used to come round the house like on a Sunday – on a Sunday morning knocking on my door saying are you going to school tomorrow. I was like yes and then I never used to go.

What did your mum say?

Well my mum wasn't happy – like she wasn't happy with it but she understood because sometimes, the thing with my mum she used to say to me when I was younger, when I was in primary school, oh don't go to school you can stay home with me today and then she used to like let me stay home, which is bad really, she should have sent me, but the thing is if my mum sent me to school I wouldn't go to school anyway, so she just didn't really bother. She preferred me to stay there where she could see me.

(Alexi, first & only interview)

Alexi expressed a strong dislike of school throughout her interview. She asserted that she found it hard to join in with lessons as she had missed so much work. To a certain extent Alexi appeared to blame her mum for colluding in her non-attendance at school, but she did defend her mum by saying that ‘she preferred me to stay at home where she could see me’. Alexi conveyed to me a sense that she actively encouraged her mum
to keep her at home and in this way I became aware of her sense of agency in her resistance against the school system. For many of the girls exclusion was the consequence of a series of inappropriate behaviours at school and I will now discuss how the girls' constructed their exclusions.

6.4 The 'final straw': exclusion from school

Many of the girls I interviewed listed a catalogue of misdemeanours and flaunting of school rules and conventions during their time in mainstream schools. Such 'challenging' behaviours may bring young women into conflict with schools because they are interpreted as deviant and undesirable aspects of femininity. Some girls were put on various reports and behaviour improvement programmes in attempts to curb the excesses of their behaviour in school. For some of the excluded young women the culmination of a series of misdemeanours, whilst on report, resulted in their exclusion from school. For others a more serious 'final straw' event acted as the trigger for the girls' permanent exclusion. Emily reported that her exclusion from school was the result of a series of 'little things'.

Extract 27

When I was excluded, it is like they give you a big letter like those are the things that you have done, lots of detentions, you swore at the teachers. It is like little things that you have done altogether they just - because they do that to everyone. Like you know Jaz, the girl that was here, they did the same thing to her. They add all the things together because otherwise you don't really get done for it. So they just get it all together and put it into one. Lots happened.

(Emily, first interview)

In order to validate her account of her exclusion from school to me Emily referred to another girl at the PRU who had been excluded in similar circumstances. By doing this Emily implied that I could have corroborated her story if I wanted to. Emily's referral to an independent source for corroboration constructed her version of the school's actions as truthful to me, in that her exclusion was due to 'the little things' added 'together'. She presented the sequence of events which lead to her exclusion to me almost in terms of being unlucky because she implied that everyone at her school
indulged in such behaviour. Much more common amongst my group of interviewees were stories of a ‘final straw’ act which lead to exclusion. Many of these ‘final straw’ stories were significant in the way the girls presented them to me, as unlike their ‘messing around’ stories the girls often brought in extenuating circumstances in order for me to understand their actions during these final occasions. There was often a palpable sense of loss of agency in the stories as perhaps the girls realised they had reached a point of no return within the school structure. This may be the reason behind why some of the girls chose to account for their ‘final straw’ events in terms of extenuating circumstances which they considered to be directing events in their lives at that time, thereby accounting for their loss of agency. In the accounts below Sarah and Nicola referred to mitigating circumstances which they felt contributed towards their final straw acts in school.

Extract 28

*How have you come to be here?*

Threw a chair at my counsellor, in [school], but throughout my life I have had time off school, so I am very behind, and so obviously because my age are a lot more smarter than me, in lessons I would get really stressed out because I can't do it, I mean they would be sitting there doing long division and I haven't even learnt bloody division yet, so I need to be able to calm down and have a fag. In a mainstream school you are not allowed to smoke. You know what, sod the fucking the rules, is what I did. I would get up, walk out and have a fag and then come back in and sit down. ‘Where have you been’ ‘went for a fag’, half the time I would even come in and say ‘I have been for a joint, got a problem with that, if you want some there is half a joint of the floor outside’. That is what I have always done, and when you haven't been in school for so long, you are used to having a fag when you need a fag. If you can't smoke its so fucking hard, I mean I have tried to quit but it is hard.

*(Sarah, first & only interview)*

Extract 29

*Why did you get excluded?*

Robbing the teacher’s bag.

*What did you take?*

I had just seen it. I didn't know it was hers and I just picked it up and my mum was going through money problems as well so ... I took the bag and then I put it back.
So how did they know …

They have got a camera there. I would never do it again. Because I got kicked out of school for it and I ain't been allowed back in since then.

(Nicola, first interview)

In her story of the ‘final straw’ event (the chair throwing incident) Sarah introduced extenuating circumstances by placing this within the context of her disrupted school career. By presenting the story in this way she displayed to me the frustration that she felt with herself and her school at not being able to cope with her school work. Sarah also showed me her agentic self in that she was used to smoking ‘fags’ and ‘joints’ and was not prepared to be told if or when she could do this, even in school. By including such details in her final straw account, Sarah managed to steer my attention away from the chair throwing incident as details of her not being able to do long division and her need to smoke took precedence in her account. Her narrative clearly indicated the agency she believed she had in school for example, to remove herself from situations which she found difficult to deal with. Nicola cited events outside of school as being instrumental in her ‘final straw’ act. In presenting her account of ‘robbing the teacher’s bag’ to me Nicola contextualised it within the money problems her family were experiencing at the time. She went on to defend her actions by asserting that she put the bag back, although she did not make it clear to me whether she had removed anything from the bag. Although Nicola asserted that ‘she would never do it again’, her meaning was ambiguous about whether she meant stealing from a teacher or stealing in general. Similar to some of Nicola’s other stories about events in her life, as will be shown in chapter 9, here she successfully introduced extenuating circumstances into her ‘final straw’ act. By presenting her account in this way she emphasised to me the temptation she encountered as she portrayed her actions as understandable in the light of the money problems her family were having. She appeared almost repentant (‘I would never do it again’) and she seemed genuinely surprised that she had ‘got kicked out of school’ which may have reflected the loss of agency which I detected in her final straw account.
Notions of justice permeated many of the excluded girls ‘final straw’ stories. Some of my interviewees attributed their exclusion from school to the notion that they had been treated unfairly by their schools as in June’s account of her ‘final straw’ incident. Unusually amongst my group of interviewees, June cited racism as a primary reason for her exclusion from school.

Extract 30

*So you didn’t like school – why not?*

They are racist.

*What makes you say that?*

Because in like the first two weeks a load of black people got kicked out of the school. Who was first – I think it was me. I don’t know but I think it was my brother got kicked out the day before me. I got kicked out. His friend was let go on early study leave. Because he was bad. Well he wasn’t really bad. There is badder people than me in the school but they are Asian. It was like don’t let them go. And there was Matthew and there was Gavin and there was me and there was my brother. There were a load of them that weren’t black and they let them stay in school.

*What reasons were given?*

The head of the school called me in. Because we came in me and my friend, I don’t know if we were making a noise, but we came in and then the head was there and he came and then he took me out. I asked him, why me. He took me. And then I went home. The next morning I came into school and he said ‘you think you can just come into this school and just go to your class’. What was I supposed to do? And then he was like shouting at me, and I didn’t know what he was shouting at me for I am not deaf you know. He started right then and I told him ‘I can understand you don’t need to shout, and your breath stinks’ and then that was it. He didn’t have any reason to say that he was kicking me out of the school. It was other people that should have been excluded more than me. They were worser than me. But he just wanted me out because I said it to him. He thinks I should kiss his feet because he is the head. I don’t think so.

(June, first interview)

June and her friend Shaunteis were the only two interviewees who recounted racist experiences at school. June attended a school in an area which had witnessed an increase in tensions between different religious and ethnic groups, most notably
Muslim and African-Caribbean. These tensions were reflected in all the interviews I conducted in this area. The injustice June felt about her exclusion was closely entwined with the notion that peers from an Asian background were behaving in a similar manner and not receiving comparable punishments from the school. June commented elsewhere in her interview that the majority of the teachers at her school were of Asian origin which again made her feel that she was being treated unfairly, as she felt that students of an Asian ethnicity were likely to receive preferential treatment. There was a strong sense of injustice in her account that others from an Asian background were not being penalised in the same way. By embedding her account of her exclusion within the context of the perceived unfair treatment of African-Caribbean pupils within her school, June perhaps minimised the importance of her own behaviour and the effects it may have had. I felt that June and Shaunteis may have felt able to talk to me about their experiences of racism as these events did not involve people from my ethnic group, white. It is completely possible that other excluded girls may have encountered racism but may not have felt able to talk about it to me due to my ethnicity.

Several of the excluded girls introduced altruism and loyalty to friends in their ‘final straw’ accounts which served as extenuating factors in their stories. Indeed loyalty was a re-occurring theme throughout many interviews. In the two extracts below, Lucy and Keisha presented themselves to me as placing a high value on loyalty to friends which involved them acting altruistically and damaging their own self interest.

Extract 31

*How many suspensions do you think you had?*

I dunno, probably between 10 and 20 somewhere, the final straw before I got excluded was me setting off the fire alarms, I done it twice, and then I went back into school after being all excluded and shit and then Mr Oliver come and speak to me, cos my mate was getting the blame as well, although she didn't do anything, this was Becky, she was off school, umm, so instead of her getting in trouble, I thought I would take all the blame, because I said I done it anyway, so Mr Oliver says 'I want you to write down what you done', I put 'I went into the school and set off the fire alarms' and that's it, and he expelled me
(Lucy, first interview)

Extract 32
Well I was in my textile class and two of my friends were going to fight. And they were arguing and they were going to fight and I wasn’t doing nothing and the teacher was standing there so I got one of my friends away, taken away and she went out of the classroom and then I was talking to my friend and another teacher came in and didn’t know nothing about it and she comes and starts shouting at me and telling me to shut up and go back to my seat. That got me angry – because I did something - I did something good I didn’t need to stop the fight and then her coming in and shouting at me in my face and spitting on me and stuff and I said ‘oh shut up before I fucking kill you’. She was getting on my nerves like and she started like following me round the school afterwards. Because I walked out to calm myself down and she was following me. And then I got excluded.

(Keisha, first & only interview)

The way in which Lucy referred to her best friend in this account is similar to the accounts of getting into trouble with friends given in earlier extracts. In her account Lucy does not actually specify whether her best friend was involved in the fire alarm incident, however, she did inform me that Becky had gotten into trouble because of it. Lucy constructed her story in such a way as to show me that she would act to defend her friend against any possible retribution. By presenting herself as someone who would act altruistically to defend a friend, Lucy, in a similar manner to Gemma, June and Sarah managed to divert my attention away from her ‘final straw’ act. I was left with the impression that she valued loyalty to her friend above her own school career. Similarly, Keisha presented herself as acting for the good of others and morally right (‘I did something good’). In doing this, Keisha allowed me to see the sense of injustice that she felt about her subsequent exclusion from school. Keisha highlighted to me that the teacher had arrived on the scene after the initial incident had occurred, (the teacher ‘didn’t know nothing about it’) and therefore was not in a position to make judgements about who was right or wrong. Keisha’s sense of injustice is paramount in her story of her ‘final straw’ incident and the notion that she threatened to kill the teacher is very much secondary in her account.
Notions of justice and injustice permeated many of the excluded girls' accounts of exclusion. For example, in the next extract I raised the concept of justice to Kandice, but although I initiated this direction in the interview, it was a concept that Kandice readily utilised and she provided examples of peers behaving in, what she perceived to be, a similar manner without receiving the same punishment. Kandice and Beany were excluded from their school for the same 'final straw' event and in the accounts below they offered slightly different interpretations of their exclusions from school. I felt that both the girls were keen to demonstrate their loyalty to each other as opposed to the structure of the school.

Extract 33

*Then you got kicked out of [school] …*

I set off some fire alarms and then they kicked me out for it.

*And do you think that is justified?*

What do you mean?

*Sort of them kicking you out for setting the alarms off?*

No not really. Because to this day there is still people setting off fire alarms, and to this day they are still in the school. Do you know what I mean and me and Beany we both got kicked out for doing fire alarms and she kind of - the head teacher because we have got a new head teacher now he kicked us out but yet there is still loads of people in that school doing fire alarms every day I know for a fact. Because people have even said to me 'oh I done the fire alarm today'. I am like 'did you get caught'. 'Yes'. 'Well why haven't you been kicked out of school'. 'I don't know'. I am like 'that is out of order'.

(Kandice, first interview)

Extract 34

We had a new head teacher come. And I was known as - they asked every teacher to put on five kids on the list who they would like to be chucked out the school and apparently I was on every single list. And you know basically they didn't want me there. It was obvious. And then I just thought I would get my head down and I would work for about a month and then I just flipped one day because a teacher started having a go at me. And I just said 'you fucking get away' and stuff like that and I got suspended for ten days. I didn't tell my parents. I sat in the woods for a couple of days. And then my mum rang me up one day and she said 'Beany I know
you have been excluded'. And I said 'shit'. And then so when we had a meeting I went back to school and I got put back on that report and then I wasn't doing very well on the report so they said you have got a four week trial now. If you don't work properly then you go. I chucked wood stain on the wall and chunked bleach round the toilet and made a teepee with the toilet paper. So they said 'look you really do have to buckle down now'. And so I did and then they put me in an internal exclusion for not going to detentions from ages ago. And then the teacher wound me up for no reason. I know that they was praying for me to like swear at them so they could kick me out. But I didn't. She said 'oh you are scruffy, and dragged up, and you are a nasty girl' and this lot and she said 'now tell me what you think of me' expecting me to come out with abuse and stuff like that. But I didn't I said 'no I am not gonna because then I will get excluded'. She said 'oh yes well I am going to exclude you anyway'. So I was like 'fine. Go on then'. Like trying to keep calm. I walked off to get my anger out and then I just set off a fire alarm. And Kandice tried to help to me out and she got herself chucked out.

(Beany, first interview)

Kandice and Beany framed their exclusions from school in terms of their teachers’ dislike of them and the new head teacher’s desire to appear effective by excluding pupils. Both the girls used the heads approach as a mitigating factor in their ‘final straw’ stories. By presenting their stories in this way to me they succeeded in diverting my attention away from their ‘final straw’ act. However, I did detect in Kandice’s story a real sense that she had tried to help her friend and by showing such loyalty herself she had been drawn into Beany’s ‘final straw’ act. Notably Kandice directed her sense of injustice at the head teacher and the school rather towards her friend. This sense of injustice was further heightened as she felt others had done similar things and had not been excluded. Beany’s account of her own and Kandice’s exclusion presented her as the leader of their friendship and the instigator of trouble.

The excluded young women’s ‘final straw’ stories shared several similarities. There was a pervasive sense of finality in all the accounts, perhaps attributable to the realisation that things would not be the same anymore. I sensed that feelings of injustice which many of the young women expressed about their final exclusions were intrinsically bound up with their feelings of agency and loss of control. I was aware that the excluded young women thought they had lost agency as they related these
'final straw' stories. They were no longer able to convey a sense of controlling their own destininations in their school careers. The schools' decision to exclude the girls often seemed to come as a surprise to the young women which again heightened the lack of control they felt they had over their own lives at this stage.

6.5 Consequences of going to PRUs

Many of the excluded young women reported their post school / pre PRU experiences in negative terms. Three of my interviewees reported that their parents had lodged appeals against the schools decision to exclude them. This resulted in a great deal of time elapsing before the results were known. Many commentators have asserted that this is a major flaw of the appeal system (Osler and Vincent, 2003). The majority of the girls I interviewed referred to the periods of time they were 'out of school doing nothing' after their exclusions prior to being allocated a PRU place and they all asserted that this time was not enjoyable:

Extract 35

No, sometime in year 10, because I waited five months, I got well bored sitting at home, just waiting and waiting and waiting. And then I started here end of year 10.

(Lucy second interview)

Lucy's assertion that she 'got well bored at home' was characteristic of most of the excluded girls. Many of the girls reported that they disliked being stuck at home and related how they missed the social interaction of mixing with friends which school had provided. The sense that the girls had lost agency and control of their lives was apparent during their 'final straw' stories and this continued in their accounts of the time they spent out of school. Even when they were given places at PRUs many of the young women reported that their social interactions were different and they seemed to regret no longer having frequent contact with their school friends.

Extract 36

I have got my friends here but it is not the same. And people talk to you like you are an invalid and they will turn round and they will be like 'it is your lesson time now Gemma like could you
please come into your lesson. It is your lesson time'. They talk to me like I am five years old. I might have got expelled but it don't mean I am thick. It just means, I don't know, I beat a girl up. It doesn't mean I am thick. They don't have to talk to me like I am fucking five.

(Gemma, first interview)

Gemma went on to construct the staff at the PRU as patronising and this again highlighted some sensitivities regarding academic ability and intelligence which many of the excluded girls displayed. I sensed that this also reflected the loss of agency which Gemma experienced at the PRU as she felt she was positioned as a naughty child by staff. Many of the girls referred to the ways in which their final exclusion had impacted on their academic aspirations. The excluded young women spent variable amounts of time at the PRUs, ranging from two days to full time. Different work regimes and competencies were also noticeable at the PRUs in which I conducted fieldwork, as was reflected by many of their PRUs’ Ofsted reports. Therefore, as was to be expected, the girls reported varying experiences of their PRUs. Around half of the excluded girls I interviewed constructed their attendance at their PRU negatively.

Extract 37
I am not going to get any GCSEs - if I get any GCSEs they are going to be rubbish. And I am going to have to, basically I am prepared for when I am out of here to do my GCSEs again. I am prepared to start again, like I never had this year. I will start completely over again. I don't think I will get much here. But it is not because I am coming here. It is because when I come here I don't work. I hardly do any work. I am going to try but I mean I try but they haven't got enough time to teach me anything. And I am not one of the people that will push myself. Because I know there is no point. I am really lazy. I am not going to push myself because I know I am not going to do it.

(Amelie, first & only interview)

Extract 38
I was like all Cs and Bs and then I was kicked out and in this place where you can only get five GCSEs and they can only be Foundation in which you can only get a C. So I wasted – I wasted my life there. All that work I done before to try and get all them GCSEs and try and get good grades now they have given me this. And that is not even – I want to go to like – and nothing the GCSEs here are different. Like for example you can only get five and art is one of those.
And I didn't choose art back in my old school, so I probably won't get that. So I will only get four. So it is not going to get me where I want to be. I want to get on in life.

(Keisha, first & only interview)

Amelie attended her PRU for only 1 whole day and two mornings each week. She blamed her projected failure on not doing any work when she got to the PRU, but she also acknowledged that the teachers 'haven't got enough time to teach me' and she felt that no-one was pushing her. Keisha, like Amelie, also realised that attending a PRU had damaged her potential to succeed in her GCSEs. Both girls conveyed a sense of loss of their agentic selves as they expressed a realisation that their ability to control their academic progress was out of their control. Amelie had come to terms with this realisation as she asserted that she would spend a year doing her GCSEs after leaving school. I felt that Keisha displayed more anger in the presentation of her predicament as she highlighted a sense of injustice at not being able to fulfil her ambitions. However, other interviewees reported that they were happier at the PRUs than they had been at school:

Extract 39
I am actually happy that I got kicked out of that school because I wasn't doing any good there. Here I am doing quite well and I know that I will get good grades but at [school] I wouldn't.

(Beany, first interview)

Extract 40
I think coming here has really, really, really changed me. I mean I have never actually felt the need to do my work. Here it is like you want to learn. Because this is obviously a much smaller environment. There is nothing you can do to cause trouble you know and because I am only here from nine until 12.30 Monday and the rest until three, it is just, I look at it, I come here to do what I have got to do and I do it. Like since I have been here if you ask the teachers, 'oh she is one of the star pupils'.

(Carrie, first interview)
Extract 41
Because I like it here because I had a one to one thing and like if there is too many people in the class I do start playing up because I do not like loads of people in a class because one is I get distracted really easily and two when I wanted to learn other people want to take that away from you and they'll just start playing up and then all the teacher's attention is on this person and that is why I didn't really like being in mainstream school as well.
(Alexi, first interview)

Beany, Carrie and Alexi were happy at their PRUs and constructed being placed there as an opportunity. Beany framed this in terms of academic success, whereas Carrie framed her attendance at her PRU as a life changing experience. Other interviewees echoed Alexi's comments that they felt happier at their PRUs than they had done at a mainstream school because they received more individual attention. It is worth bearing in mind that not all of my interviewees had alternative education provision found for them, for example June had been out of school for fourteen months when I interviewed her and was subsequently about to miss her GCSE exams. This is not an uncommon scenario as education authorities are often unable to find places for many excluded pupils.

6.6 Summary
This chapter has explored my interviewees' experiences of school and the way in which they chose to present significant aspects of their school careers to me. The analysis in this chapter has focused on academic ability, messing around, rules and teachers as cites of resistance, 'final straw' acts where loss of agency was identified and the consequences of going into PRUs. The evidence presented in this chapter suggested that the majority of the excluded girls regarded themselves as academically able, at least in the beginning of their school careers. In fact only one girl stated that she had been told that she was classified as having SEN. This is contrary to previous research which found that up to 40 per cent of excludees were classified as SEN (DfES, 2003). What was also significant in these findings was the way in which my group of interviewees asserted that from a high starting point most of the young women reported a sharp decline in their academic trajectories. The girls indicated that they
had purposefully chosen not to work in order to exercise their agency in their school settings. This appears to have been a deliberate act on most of the girls' part to resist the constraints, rules and regulations imposed on them by the structures of their schools. Teachers were often identified by the girls to be 'hate figures' and as sites to be resisted in their schools' 'locus of discipline' (Simpson: 2000: 60). It has been asserted that the underlying intent of the school curriculum is to produce docile bodies (Hoskin, 1990: 31). Many authors, including Neill and Caswell (1993), emphasise the importance to teachers of gaining control over pupils' unruly bodies. They assert that teachers must counteract any possible challenges to their authority by showing it is not acceptable for pupils to behave in unruly ways, for example for pupils to arrive late and in a dishevelled state. Pupils are meant to look neat and tidy, which involves wearing their uniform in an appropriate manner, and to either sit or stand in a quiet, orderly manner. In this way the classroom is shown to be the site of a complicated power struggle in which the body constitutes a potent weapon. Indeed the performances of tough femininities and hyper-femininities which many of the girls enacted brought them into conflict with members of staff as they are antithetical to notions of the ideal pupil.

Anyon (1983) lists the ways in which the girls in her study resisted attempts to control their behaviour, for example by giggling, whispering and stretching dress codes. In her study Simpson (2000) distinguishes between the ways in which girls and boys indulged in resisting behaviour in school, girls by pushing at the boundaries of the school dress code, and the boys by exploiting parts of their bodily functions. In his study Willis (1977) notes that resisting behaviour indulged in by the lads involved employing tactics such as messing around and having a laff in order to defeat the schools' main purpose: to engage children in their school work.

However, the findings in this chapter demonstrate the greater lengths to which the girls went in order to resist their teachers' efforts to control them. In their assertions of the agency they professed to exert in their school settings, the young women presented
themselves to me as determined not to be told what to do and they gave many examples of ways in which they actively resisted the attempts by teachers to exercise control over them. In this way the girls successfully presented the behaviours and characteristics which I detailed in the introduction to part three, describing the varying femininities which they presented. Furthermore the girls talked in detail about the role loyalty played in their behaviour, particularly in their ‘final straw’ stories. By displaying such loyalty many of the young women were strengthening their links of bonding social capital within their friendship networks.

Strong protestations of agency were prevalent throughout the girls’ narratives dealing with school. However, the ‘final straw’ stories were characterised by a sense of loss of the girls’ agency at that time. The extent to which the girls exercised agency or were constrained by factors over which they had little control is closely linked to the notion of social capital in both its forms, bridging and bonding capital. Research suggests that most children and young people resist the efforts of their teachers to control them to some extent. I was interested to find out why the girls in this study so strongly resisted school structures and this in part contributed to my interest in finding out about the girls’ lives outside of school. In the next chapter their family lives are explored.
Chapter 7: Family, transience and community

With their exclusion from school the girls were officially termed 'socially excluded' by the government's definition (as referred to in chapter 2). However, the behaviour and choices that the young women made in their school careers cannot be seen in isolation from their experiences of being members of families and part of wider community networks. It is now to these areas that I turn my attention. Such a task would be an enormous undertaking and I do not pretend to have covered every influencing factor in the girls' lives. However, social networks (chapters 7 and 8) and aggression and violence (chapter 9) were re-occurring themes which most of the girls referred to in their narratives. These themes were also present in the photo elicitation tasks. As mentioned in the methodology chapter a sub-sample of my interviewees were given cameras and were asked to take photos of anything that they considered important to them. During the photo sorting sessions I asked the young women to write one or two sentences on the back of their photos about their chosen subjects and I then discussed their photos with them. The girls' photos and their captions which I have used in the following analysis chapters gave further insights into the day to day lives of the young women.

The following two chapters seek to explore how the young women negotiated heteronormative femininity within the contexts of their families, social networks and communities. The girls' sense of agency, or occasionally lack of agency as constraining factors came into force, are themes which again permeated their narratives. Many of the girls and their families lived in locales which experienced many of the characteristics of social exclusion. It is not surprising therefore, to find that lack of money was an ever present issue in all the girls' accounts of family life and their social networks.

In the first section I examine the case studies of three girls which serve to highlight many common elements in all the interviewees' accounts of their family lives. Many of
the girls recounted experiencing family break-ups which often involved the girls having to adjust to changing parental and step-parental influences and the acquisition or loss of brothers, sisters and extended family members. For many of the girls such changing circumstances resulted in conflict within the family home. Although several of the girls blamed their 'bad' behaviour on what was going on in their lives at home and outside of school few dwelt on their emotional wellbeing. However, I became acutely aware during the interviews that many of the girls were deeply unhappy with their home circumstances. The most constant relationship that the majority of the girls had in their lives was their relationship with their mothers. But a closer examination of these relationships revealed their non-conventional nature and indeed conflict and even aggression were evident in many of the girls' accounts. I then go on to examine the transient nature of many of the girls' lives as they related frequently moving home with or without family members. Similar to other researchers who have worked with socially excluded young people (for example Smith et al, 2002) I discovered that some of my interviewees were 'nomadic' and moved around from parents to grandparents to aunts and uncles to older siblings or friends or even into foster care. I also look at the perceptions the girls had of the areas in which they lived and their sense of belonging. Some of the girls identified very strongly with the areas in which they lived and being seen to be part of such a community greatly added to their sense of self-identity.

Many events in the girls' lives could be perceived by outsiders to be upsetting for the young women involved. However, I will argue that the lack of upset or sadness with which the girls recounted such events was often juxtaposed with stories of aggression which served to emphasise the value they placed on tough, strong femininities. I argue that such behaviour may be viewed as a coping strategy to deal with events which most people would find emotionally taxing.

7.1 Families
I have chosen to use case studies to illustrate the nature of the families that many of the girls experienced. During my reading of the original interview transcripts I selected a
number of case studies that best exemplified the diverse and often complicated family structures that the girls had. These cases were chosen because they clearly articulated common experiences amongst my group of interviewees. Antaki et al (2003) describe how a reliance on quotations may be a substitute for analysis. While it is tempting for the researcher to list a number of different examples of the same phenomenon to substantiate a claim, by using case studies to examine the diverse nature of the girls' families I hope to reduce the risk of substituting quotations for analysis. The three girls I have chosen to analyse in this way are: Nicola, Kandice and Jenni.

Nicola: complex families
Nicola lived in an inner city area as referred to in chapter 5. Her family structure as will be seen can be described as diverse and complex. On meeting Nicola I was immediately struck by her willingness to chat to me and to tell me things in detail about her life, unlike other interviewees who required some ice-breaking activities until they felt at ease to divulge personal information. However, I sensed with Nicola that her chattiness was part of her attempt to gain my full attention in order to have a captive audience. During her interviews Nicola swung between presenting herself to me as wanting someone to talk to, to aggressive and self-contained, particularly when she talked about her fighting exploits.

Nicola, like most of my interviewees had drawn a family tree and went on to describe her relationships with the people she had chosen to include. As mentioned in chapter 5 Nicola was one of six children who lived with her mum and step-dad. Although no girls amongst my group of interviewees could be said to have had all features of their family structures the same, several features, as will be seen, did dominate the young women's narratives. In many ways Nicola exemplified the complex nature of the relationships which had evolved in many of the girls families:

Extract 1
My step-dad was living with me now and that was my youngest sister. And that was my other sister. She was eight or nine I forget. And then there was me. That was my dad. And his dad
and his mum and I don't know his name and she has got three sisters and then there was someone I can't spell and then there was my step brother and he has got two sisters and there was my uncle, my Nan, my uncle – and she died when she was a baby. She would be 16 and then there was Lauren and then he got put in care for something with my Nan and there was Steve and that was his girlfriend Teresa. 

(Nicola, first interview)

Although Nicola’s family exemplified the diversity of family structure which I found amongst my interviewees she was unusual in that she felt compelled to talk about her uncles, Nan and cousins as well as her immediate family who lived with her at home. The majority of the young women who drew and described their family trees did not refer to their grandparents or aunts or uncles in any detail. This may have been because of the complex nature of many of the young women’s nuclear family trees and the addition of grandparents would have been too complicated for one side of A4 paper, or it may simply have been that for many of the girls, grandparents did not feature frequently in their lives. In the above extract Nicola notably referred to two members of her family who were absent, a cousin who died as a baby and another cousin who was ‘in care’. As will be examined later in this chapter, the topics of fostering and going into ‘care’ featured regularly in the girls’ narratives. Many of the excluded girls mentioned their mothers’ and fathers’ partners, step-parents, step-siblings and half-brothers and sisters. Several step-fathers had featured in Nicola’s life and she had five half-brothers and sisters.

The most enduring relationship Nicola had in her life was with her mother, however, her feelings about her were somewhat ambivalent. Nicola had taken many photos of friends and family members and had written a few sentences about each one. As can be seen below of the photo that Nicola took of her mother, her only comment was to label it ‘my mom’:
Nicola did not offer any further description of her mother when discussing the photograph which contrasted to her chattiness when discussing other family members. Indeed Nicola’s lack of comment served to highlight to me the coolness, almost distance, there appeared to be in their relationship. Nicola did not reveal any insights into a close mother-daughter relationship, rather her comments were peppered with how difficult she felt it was to get her mothers’ attention as the extract below illustrates:

Extract 2
If you had a problem who would you go to?
My Nan.
Before your mum?
Yes.
Why is that?
Because I trust my Nan because my Nan is more understanding and caring. Well she seems like it but my mum is a less understanding kind of
In what way?
When you try to tell her something she just blanks you, yes 'guess what mum I am pregnant' and then she listens to you. But my Nan she will listen to me and she will go 'oh all right' and then start talking again.  
(Nicola, second interview)

Nicola constructed the qualities of listening, understanding and caring as the most important qualities for a confidante to have. She presented her mother to me as either unwilling or unable to listen to her as she illustrated above and the only way to get her mum’s attention would be to say something dramatic. Nicola constructed her Nan as much more willing to talk and listen to her. Nicola and Jenni were two of the few girls who made any detailed reference to grandparents. This may have been because the other interviewees did not have easy access to extended familial networks with their potentially associated support and reciprocity. The reasons for this may have been distance, both emotional and geographical.

The ambivalent nature of Nicola’s relationship with her mother is highlighted in the following extract where she was keen to show how well her mum managed on very little money.

Extract 3
I look up to my mum but I actually – my mum yes. She has got six kids and she can manage. But she has twenty quid to spend on shopping and there was six of us and we have got three cats and there was eight of us altogether and then my Nan comes over for every Sunday. So I look up to my mum for doing all that.  
(Nicola, first interview)

It was clear from Nicola’s account that because of the number of people in her family her Mum had to manage scarce resources in order to ensure that everybody was fed. Lack of money was frequently referred to by my interviewees. Indeed, having a large number of siblings often added to the strain on family resources and in most cases this meant that any possessions the girls did have were highly valued.
At the time of the interviews many of my interviewees’ mothers were quite young, mainly in their early thirties, having been teenagers when they started their families. Nicola’s mum had been 17 when she had Nicola’s elder brother, 19 when she had her sister and 20 when she had Nicola, after which she had three further children. Her mother had not been in any sustained work since having her first child and although she had several relationships the family were mainly dependent on benefits, as support from her ex-partners was minimal. Although Nicola’s mother had recently married the father of her two youngest children the family, like many of my other interviewees’ families, were either reliant on low paid work or living on benefits. Nicola clearly respected her mother for managing to feed her family on very little money.

I was interested to find out how relationships with fathers and step-fathers worked in Nicola’s household. Nicola informed me that the majority of her siblings’ fathers (and her own father) did not maintain regular contact with their children, but I felt that these relationships impinged on Nicola’s life through their absence:

Extract 4
We don’t see our dads. My dad - I just don’t go there. Emma [half-sister] has seen her dad about twice now and she was 15 but she don’t go round there. Aaron [half-brother] never sees his dad. When he was little he used to but last time he seen him was when he was little and Alan [half-brother] has never seen his dad either.
(Nicola, first interview)

Nicola very matter-of-factly told me that she did not see her father. There was no emotion in her somewhat dismissive comment about her father. Nicola inclusively referred to her half-brothers and half-sisters throughout as brothers and sisters and it was clear that she did not distinguish between ‘full’ siblings and half-siblings. As will be seen, other interviewees presented a much more exclusive account of their family relationships as they made distinctions between their full and half-siblings.
Referring back to extract 3 it is notable that Nicola did not include her step-dad in the summary of her family which she gave to me. Billig (1991) asserts that the analyst can 'attempt to be sensitive to what is not written because the absence of references to certain events or relationships may be significant'. Although this may lead to the criticism that this may be going beyond the data, it can be revealing to look at 'how one realm of entities is constituted ... while another is avoided' (Potter, 1997: 184). Throughout her interviews Nicola only referred to her step-dad once or twice whereas she referred to her other family members often. Indeed, I felt that there was a noticeable lack of affection when she did speak about her step-father:

**Extract 5**

*And do you get on well with your step-dad?*

No.

*Why not?*

We always argue with my step-dad

*What about?*

Everything. The smallest thing and I yell at him and he will yell back.

*And was he the same with your other sisters and brothers?*

Yes. Except for his two. They get spoilt.

*But do you think that was because they are his two or because they are the youngest?*

I think it was because they are his two. But my mum sticks up for all of us. And then there was always arguments between my step-dad and my mum. But it didn't used to be like it before they got married.

*So do you think that is getting worse?*

Yes. Once my mum and step-dad was having an argument and before that argument was over my little sister was really bad and she started crying because he lobbed something at her.

*(Nicola, first interview)*

In common with many of my interviewees Nicola cited problems in her relationship with her step-father. In the extract above she recounted to me the arguments which were a regular feature in her household and which she attributed to the unfair treatment of the children by her step-father. Nicola's reflections on her relationship with her step-father did not indicate a great deal of affection on either side. She
appeared to be resentful of the preferential treatment which she perceived her two youngest siblings received. By inferring that all her siblings within the family argued with her present step-father, Nicola created the impression of a tense and conflictual home environment. However, I did not gain any sense that Nicola was trying to evoke my sympathy over her situation. I was left with the impression that Nicola was not close to either her mother or her step-father.

The interviewees' accounts of their relationships with brothers and sisters tended to be mixed as some said they got on well whilst others asserted that they did not. Nicola normally presented a tough, strong notion of femininity, for example, she referred to instances where she was not prepared to quietly accept perceived injustices but would stand up for herself both verbally and physically. Nicola gave the following graphic accounts of her relationships with two of her sisters:

**Extract 6**
Just like – I went upstairs with my sister, and because she was bigger than me, I am scared in case she slaps me. Anyway she tried to grab hold of me once and there was a wardrobe there. She got on top of my bed and she was trying to claw me, I grabbed her hand and I pushed her and as she was trying to get out the way I let go and broke her arm.

*And what did your mum say?*
Nothing. She started screaming at me. I shouldn’t have done that and then I wanted to go to hospital with her. But it was funny at the time because I was laughing.

*(Nicola, first interview)*

**Extract 7**
I am closer to my little sister [half-sister] than the others. She has got asthma so she has to have the doctors every time because she had an asthma attack and she had to go in hospital for a couple of months because she had asthma. So I used to go and visit her all the time, so I got a lot closer to her, but now she still sleeps in bed with me because she will cry if she was not.

*(Nicola, first interview)*
By boasting of her fighting prowess Nicola successfully presented herself to me as performing a tough and wilful femininity and as being able to take care of herself, even against someone who was physically bigger than her. Although she seemed to show concern for her sister by wanting to accompany her to the hospital, Nicola immediately covered up this caring attitude by laughing at her sister’s broken arm. Extract 7, again taken from Nicola’s first interview, is very different and is characterised by the caring attributes she presented to me, which are reminiscent of more conventional (see chapter 3) notions of femininity. In this extract Nicola emphasised the loyalty and responsibility she felt towards her family as she recounted the close relationship she had with one of her younger siblings. However, Nicola did justify this closeness in terms of the child’s illness. Nicola, in common with many of the young women I interviewed, took every opportunity to emphasise to me her tough, strong and assertive performance of femininity. To have a softer, caring side may not have added in her performance of being tough but referring to her sister’s illness may have enabled her to act in this manner without appearing ‘soft’. Day et al (2001) highlight the importance of appearing tough to the performance of working-class femininities. Very few of my interviewees were willing to show a softer side or give any indication of attributes which could be construed as weak in their interviews, except when talking about babies and young children as is explored further in chapter 8.

In her interviews and her photo elicitation exercise Nicola hinted at her lived experiences of social exclusion (MacDonald et al, 2005). She cited many instances of how lack of money had curtailed her ability to partake in normal teenage girl activities such as buying make-up, clothes and CDs. The photos she took of her home highlighted her lack of personal space and privacy and her lack of personal possessions.
Photograph 2

Extract 8

This is my room. My bed.

And who sleeps in the other bed?

That is my little sister’s. That is my big sister’s, there is my bed and my other little sister is underneath. They designed the groovy chick and I wanted the blue. My bed.

(Nicola, second interview)

I have included this photo here to illustrate the day-to-day constraints Nicola faced because she had a large number of siblings. Many of the girls I spoke to had to share a bedroom with their siblings however, Nicola’s situation of sharing her bedroom with three other siblings was unusual. In her description above and the discussion that followed she hinted at some of the compromises she had made due to being the third eldest of six children. However, Nicola tried to emphasise to me how she had influenced the design of the room by choosing the colour of the paint. Nicola took a photograph of her living room as a space where she could ‘chill out’:
Perhaps to compensate for her lack of bedroom space Nicola was keen to emphasise her use of the front room. She was one of the few girls to indicate enjoying time spent in the ‘family area’ of the house – the living room. As can be seen above, the caption which accompanied this photo was positive and indicated how relaxed Nicola felt she could be in the hub of her busy house. I think it is important to note that not all of the girls took photos of their bedrooms, or even of their homes.

Nicola’s situation of sharing her bedroom with her siblings highlighted a commonality which I found amongst my sample which curtailed their ability to have a ‘bedroom culture’ as described by McRobbie (1978) and Lincoln (2004). For many of my interviewees, the girls’ experiences of ‘living social exclusion’ prevented them from joining the teenage consumer worlds enjoyed by most young women today.

**Kandice: boundaries and closeness**

I have chosen to include Kandice in these case studies because although she shared many of the features of the excluded young women’s lives she was representative of a significant minority of my interviewees in the type of relationship she had with her
mother. A quick reading of Kandice’s narratives would give the impression that her relationship with her mother was very close but a closer inspection revealed to me a lack of boundaries which normally exist between a parent and child.

Kandice was a few weeks away from her sixteenth birthday at the time of her second interview. She had been attending her PRU for over a year having previously been ‘out of school’ after her exclusion for some months. In her interviews Kandice presented herself to me as very confident and as someone who knew her own mind. She was more than able to hold her own in the banter which I witnessed between her and her peers at the PRU. Kandice invested time in maintaining a hyper-feminine appearance, as she ensured her hair and make-up always enhanced her glamorous appearance.

When explaining to me the events she had listed on her timeline, Kandice recounted her ‘serious boyfriend’ who she had dated between the ages of 13 to 15. She attributed her involvement in drugs to him as she firmly stated, ‘he got me drugs’. Since coming to the PRU she had been seeing a drugs counsellor and had been off drugs for six months. She insisted to me that she was trying to keep away from drugs because ‘she didn’t want to end up as before’. At the time of the interviews Kandice lived with her mum, sister, brother and step-dad. Kandice presented her relationship with her mother to me as one which seemed to be more of a friendship, between people of a similar age.

Extract 9

Like at first when my mum was pregnant with my little brother, she wasn’t one hundred per cent sure whether to keep it or not. Because her and her boyfriend weren’t having such a good time. They have been together five years now and they weren’t having such a good time then and I said to mum, ‘look mum, keep it, you will regret it after if you don’t’. And she kept it

(Kandice, first interview)

At the time that Kandice’s mum was pregnant with her brother Kandice was 13 years old. Kandice presented herself to me as an advisor to her mum therefore altering the
power dynamics of a 'normal' parent-young teenager relationship. I felt a tension between the way in which Kandice had portrayed her involvement in the decision to 'keep it' and my own understanding of the weight given to young teenage girls' opinions within families – indeed whether such knowledge would have been shared with one so young. However, I was mindful that Kandice was involved in a serious relationship herself at the time. Many things about the way in which Kandice presented herself to me reinforced her identification with notions of strong, tough femininities. The lack of boundaries between adult and child would have afforded Kandice a certain amount of power and status, which may have made it hard for her to adopt a less powerful position in other situations, such as school.

Similar to a small number of my interviewees Kandice, as well as the frequent examples of conflict in her narratives, occasionally provided displays of tenderness within the same 'field'. 
Photograph 4

I took this because my mum and little brother are the two people in my family I mostly care about!

Extract 10

The reason I took that picture actually was because I thought 'oh I need to get a picture of my mum and little brother' so I did. And then here is my whole family, well these are the people, this is going to sound really horrible, here are the people I care about out of my whole family – that is my mum and my little brother. Because me and my sister don’t get on so - that one was when my mum was ill because she was going ‘don’t take a picture of me. Don’t take a picture of me. I am ill’. And I said ‘I don’t care I am going to take a picture of you any way’. And she was like ‘no’. And she was looking at the telly and I took a picture and she was like ‘you bitch’. I only took it because she told me not to take a picture so - you can tell she looks really – oh she looks pale in both these pictures actually.

(Kandice, second interview)
The unusual dynamics of their mother-daughter relationship is again highlighted in the banter between the two women which has more in common with what might be expected to pass between friends. Throughout most of her two interviews Kandice emphasised the tough, active femininities which she performed, for example at school or with friends. Here Kandice presented a different version of femininity to me. She conveyed a notion of a caring femininity by emphasising the concern she felt for her mother as she talked about her health (at the time the photograph above was taken she stated that her mother was suffering from anaemia). Kandice’s usual presentation of tough, ‘able to take care of herself’ femininities were only very occasionally interspersed by displays of empathic, caring femininities, noticeably when talking about her mum and her younger brother. These differing femininities could be taken to be opposing, but I prefer to view them as resting at different points along a heteronormative continuum.

As hinted at in the above quote, Kandice’s relationship with her sister was somewhat volatile, which in part seemed to arise from jealously over who was related by blood to their ‘dad’.

Extract 11
Because what it goes it goes like there was me with my dad, but he and mum — no she was six months pregnant when he left her so she had me and she brought me up until I was two and then her [half-sister’s] dad came along and brought me up as his own.

Right.
Yes so he was not my biological but he was my dad. Like my biological dad he was this side. And then his [Kandice’s half-brother’s] dad came along and he is the one that my mum was with now.

(Kandice, first interview)

As mentioned previously only a small number of my interviewees lived with both their biological parents. With the exception of Jenni, few of my interviewees had any regular contact with their biological fathers. Similar to Nicola and many of my interviewees, Kandice appeared unemotional to me as she recounted the story of her
biological father leaving. Kandice had not had any real contact with her father at all during her life and the man she called ‘dad’ was in fact the man who had been in a relationship with her mother until a few years ago. Even though the relationship had ended and her mother was in a new relationship Kandice still regarded this man as ‘dad’. This is perhaps surprising as she had witnessed him acting violently towards her mum (as is discussed in chapter 9). It seems that for Kandice biological ties were not as strong as the ties that came with the day-to-day contact and commitment that she had experienced with this man over a period of time. Kandice’s presentation of her mother’s relationships was fairly common amongst my group of interviewees and the girls often reported a ‘relationship cycle’ of relationship to single-parenthood to relationship. Such relationships often resulted in more siblings for the girls. As Maclean (1991) has noted such relationships can create both financial and emotional insecurity. Kandice did not overtly display emotional insecurity. However, she was sensitive about the man she called ‘dad’ which is highlighted in this incident of sibling rivalry which she recounted to me:

**Extract 12**

She [Kandice’s sister] knows that dad was not my real dad she kind of likes to put it in my face kind of. Because my dad is having a set of twins in August. He has a new girlfriend and he is having twins in August and she says kind of stuff like ‘I can’t wait until my new sister and brother gets here. Then I will have four sisters and two mothers’ kind of thing. I said ‘yes, so’. And she said ‘you are not going to because they are not your own family’.

*(Kandice, first interview)*

In detailing her sister’s delight at emphasising how her ‘dad’ was not her real dad I got a sense that Kandice was not as untouched by family circumstances as she perhaps wanted me to believe. This extract serves to illustrate the complicated network of relationships which resulted from re-ordering of families which was common for many of my interviewees. Sense of belonging and well-being are often based on small-scale, interpersonal networks (Morrow, 2001). Like many of my interviewees, the
fragmentation of Kandice's family networks may have weakened her sense of support and trust. For Kandice this was perhaps exacerbated by her younger sister's taunts.

**Jenni: hostile relations**
The previous case studies highlighted a 'distant' relationship (Nicola) and a close, almost boundary-less relationship (Kandice) between two of my interviewees and their mothers. I have chosen to include Jenni's case study to illustrate the hostile and sometimes violent nature of some of the girls' relationships with their mothers. Jenni's case study revealed a mother and daughter relationship which I felt had almost irretrievably broken. Jenni was 15 at the time of her interviews. Like many of my interviewees she had little interest in her GCSE studies at her PRU and was not predicted to achieve any A to C grades. In her interviews with me Jenni said that she had very few friends at the PRU. Indeed her aggressive manner appeared to be a barrier to her cultivation of friendships. Jenni attributed many of the problems which she experienced to one particular violent altercation she had with her mother.

**Extract 13**
Well when I was 11 me and my mum had a full blown fight, punch up, the lot. And she hit me in the face and I went downstairs, grabbed a knife and I was going to kill her.
*And what stopped you?*
What stopped me? My Dad. He pulled me off of her. Because I was literally held her throat like that and went like that with the knife ready to slit her throat.
*What made you do that?*
Something just triggered. I was listening to my music full blast and she came up and said turn it down. I turned it down like two little volume things and she went schizo. So I went schizo back at her. And she didn't like it, she has hated me since. That was nearly five years ago, but she sent me to a psychiatrist. She thinks I am insane. I am not.
*(Jenni, first interview)*

I was aware that Jenni only referred to her 'mum' once throughout this account, choosing mainly to refer to her mother as 'she' and 'her', possibly in order to distance herself from her mother. The violence that Jenni asserted her mother used against her
seemed excessive to me but Jenni’s response of getting a knife and being on the point of slitting her mother’s throat was something that I found quite shocking. This seemed to be the reaction that Jenni had come to expect when recounting this event as she paused several times as if she were waiting to see my response. Jenni seemed to realise that by telling me this story she had unsettled me somewhat and the power dynamics between us seemed to shift as she became more confident in telling her narratives. By presenting herself as willing to engage in violent or threatening behaviour (rather than fleeing the scene) Jenni strongly conveyed to me the tough, ‘not to be messed with’ femininities which she valued. Jenni made it clear that she did not initiate the violent incident, but made it equally clear that she was not afraid to fight back, or to take things even further.

Jenni went on to describe the significance the events recalled in the extract above had on her life. She described how she had been referred to a succession of psychiatrists in an attempt to curb her behaviour. She also reported that arguments had developed between her parents about how to handle her behaviour and they had subsequently divorced. Jenni had spent some time in local authority care after this incident and now had very little contact with her mother. At the time of her interviews Jenni was living with her father.

Jenni’s narratives were peppered with comments about how resentful she felt towards her mother. For most of my interviewees the most enduring relationship that they experienced was with their mothers. Many interviewees reported that their relationships with their mothers did not always run smoothly and some related serious arguments that had occurred between them. Jenni was one of only three of my interviewees who reported that such problems were so serious that contact with their mothers was almost impossible. These three girls, together with two other girls who reported difficulties in their relationships with their fathers / step fathers, were not living in the family home with their biological mothers. Jenni also hinted at continuing problems with her mother and possible difficulties in her relationship with her father:
Extract 14
My parents don't like me.
What makes you say they don't like you?
Because my mum tried putting me in care last year again because my dad just went on holiday and my mum - he was only in the Isle of Man and I live next door to my Nan and Granddad and she tried putting me in care again. Just because my dad had left me.
(Jenni, first interview)

Jenni was unusual amongst my interviewees in that she had contact with her biological father. However, he was in a new relationship which seemed to exclude Jenni to some extent. In the extract above she emphasised to me 'just because my dad had left me' and I felt that she was conveying to me that she had experienced a sense of abandonment. This was perhaps the only time I sensed any vulnerability in Jenni’s construction of her biographical accounts.

Like many of my interviewees Jenni also recounted stories of violent incidences between herself and a sibling:

Extract 15
Me and my brother were having an argument, and then he tried strangling me, so I went up to my boyfriend at the time, I went to his house. And he saw the red mark around my neck even though I tried hiding it. And then brought his baseball bat down and hit him.
(Jenni, first interview)

A feature of many of Jenni’s accounts was the speed with which arguments turned to violent incidents. Again the ferocity of the attack was shocking to me. Jenni distanced herself from instigating the retaliatory attack but again I was taken aback by the nature of the attack. The value she placed on aggressive, tough femininities was made very clear to me by the number of stories Jenni related detailing violent events either instigated by herself or others.
Many of the stories Jenni related seemed to be characterised by a lack of parental involvement in controlling her aggression. This resonated with many of my interviewees as will be seen when stories of aggression and violence are examined at length in chapter 9. In the situation Jenni described in the extract above there is a noticeable lack of ‘adults’ or parents who might be expected to control sibling arguments. Jenni did have frequent contact with her grandparents and it is notable that these were the only family members who featured in her photographs:

Photograph 6

Jenni My grandad. Tries to help out. Pushes me too far sometimes, annoying

Jenni revealed to me that the closest relationship she had with any relative was with her granddad. However, I felt that problems existed in this relationship as Jenni spoke about the anger she felt when she was told what to do by her grandparents. She appeared to resist the control her grandparents, particularly her granddad, tried to exercise over her and spoke about storming out of their house back to her dad’s. As can just be discerned under the anonymisation circle Jenni’s granddad was pulling an exaggerated miserable face at the camera possibly to make Jenni, who was taking the photo, laugh.
The three case studies illustrate the girls' complicated and often conflictual family relationships. Many of the girls experienced the effects of their mothers changing partners. All the girls were quite unemotional when talking about separation from their fathers. For many girls past or present step-fathers had more significance in the girls' lives most usually because of the conflictual nature of their relationship. In addition the case studies serve to highlight the somewhat non-conventional nature of the relationships which most of my interviewees experienced with their mothers. Lack of boundaries, distance, conflict and aggression were features which were evident in many of the girls' accounts of their relationships with their mothers. Some of the girls' relationships with their mothers and their wider familial relationships seemed to be without boundaries which can be seen in Jenni and Kandice's accounts. The closeness of Kandice's relationship with her mother was something I discovered amongst a minority of my interviewees as others reported a distant relationship, as in Nicola's case, or a conflictual relationship, the extreme manifestation of which is reflected in Jenni's case. The family can be viewed as a site or field where performances of femininities can be developed, perfected and enhanced. The young women can be viewed as agentically using the resources available to them (their assertive, strong femininities) in order to jostle within their complex, busy home lives for scarce resources such as emotional capital or attention (particularly from their mothers). However, such displays of aggression are antithetical to heteronormative femininities and therefore it is possible that the deployment of such femininities in some spheres outside of the home may work to the girls' disadvantage (for example as was explored in the field of school in chapter 7). Some researchers have found that girls' mothers and aunts take young women who challenge heteronormative femininity 'under their wing' and 'teach them her how to 'do' femininity' (Archer et al, 2007a: 563). I did not find evidence of this in my research, but what I did find to be notable was the way in which girls could simultaneously engage in several seemingly opposing femininities at once, most notably glamorous-hyper-femininities at the same time as tough femininities and caring, emphatic femininities.
7.2 Transience

A common element to emerge from my interview data was the frequency with which the girls reported moving home. Moving home is not an uncommon experience in contemporary Britain but the young people I interviewed seemed to have moved homes and locales more frequently than most. This contrasts to MacDonald and Marsh’s (2005) study of youth in a town in the North East of England where they found that the majority of their sample remained within a small local area even if they moved house.

Analysis of my interview data revealed a wide range of reasons given by the girls for their families to move home ranging from a lack of space as family structures changed, to the threatening behaviour of neighbours. Several young women had left the ‘security’ of their homes due to family disputes or threats of abuse or violence from family members. Several of the young women had experienced living in care and a minority had for various reasons been homeless at some stages in their lives. What was perhaps remarkable about my interviewees was the stoicism with which the girls’ related, what must have been for many for them, very difficult living arrangements. I felt that the stresses and strains of the day-to-day living arrangements for many of the girls helped to develop the production of the tough femininities which the girls presented to the world.

Moving home and particularly moving areas may bring disruptions to social networks for individuals and their families, but it may also bring the possibility of forging new networks. It is surprising that many of my interviewees were able to maintain friendships forged before moving locales. I have chosen the following extracts to illustrate the variety of ‘transient’ experiences which were a feature of the girls’ narratives. The girls were acutely aware of good and bad areas.

**Extract 16**

*When did you move house?*
Two years ago.

And where did you prefer living?

In my old one because there weren't as much trouble. No one egged us or anything. It was pretty good actually. It was horrible though because I had to share a room with my little brother but I would rather be there.

(Lucy, second interview)

Lucy’s family had moved in order to gain extra space because of the overcrowded nature of her previous home. Lucy was keen to relate this story to me because the incident had happened the previous evening. Some boys had also maliciously ordered pizzas to be delivered to her home. She had been troubled by these events and attributed them to harassment by an ex-boyfriend from the new area who she had recently broken up with. For Lucy the positive aspects of her new home such as more space and being close to her best friend were outweighed by the negative aspect of living in a bad area. As previously mentioned lack of space in the home was often mentioned by the young women.

Shemeila cited family disputes and difficulties with landlords as reasons for her family’s frequent house moves.

Extract 17

Because my grandparents and them and my mum and that like they had family problems and they used to say to us because we were really naughty when we were little and used to mess about and she used to start like going mad and so my mum moved out and then my dad moved out. My dad didn’t want to move out. We started out in a rented house and then got our own house so that was all right.

And you said there were problems with the rented house?

It was not good to live in a rented house you know, when you are little and that. The people who owned it were retards and that and my mum never used to have money and that and they started threatening her, like give you a warning if you don’t pay and this and that and now we have got our own house and it is better.

(Shemeila, first interview)
Shemeila’s family had a Pakistani background and it is traditional in such families for grandparents to be close to their son’s family (Shain, 2003). However, this did not appear to be so in the case of Shemeila’s family. She hinted at the lack of contact which her mother and her siblings had with her father’s parents which undoubtedly reduced their social networks and support. A common feature of my interviewees’ accounts was the unsatisfactory nature of living in privately rented accommodation. Shemeila presented living in privately rented accommodation as a threatening experience.

Smith et al (2002: 193) argue that through the participatory approach they adopted to generating data with young people they were able to discover: ‘the extent to which there appears to be a “peripatetic” group of young people, who move around from “parents to grandparents to aunts and uncles to older siblings or family friends and neighbours and then on to partner’s parents” and that “no one or body appears to be taking responsibility for these vulnerable young people”. I discovered a similar situation existed for some of the young women in my research.

Alexi is an example of a young woman who had experienced a particularly turbulent housing career, much of which she attributed to the anti-social behaviour of her neighbours and her mother’s erratic behaviour. As the following extracts reveal, she had experienced a range of different living arrangements, many of which were far from satisfactory and in fact appeared to be detrimental to her well being.

**Extract 18**

We moved so much and we moved out of one place because my brother was sleep walking because the downstairs people were terrorising our dog throwing stones and things and then my brother started sleepwalking saying he wanted to beat them up so we just moved from there and at one time we all had a fight and my mum got hit by a lady and she had a big massive bruise there from a cricket bat and everything.

*So did the council move you or did you move yourself?*

We made ourselves homeless. And we got put in B & B for two years.
And what was that like?
I was ill like all the time because of like the dirt and things. We had dead pigeons outside our windows. And one time they put us in the manager’s room because we kicked up a fuss and you would like go out in the garden and the kids would have used it as a toilet.
(Alexi, first & only interview)

In her interview Alexi let me see the genuine disgust she felt about the conditions her family had to endure in the bed and breakfast accommodation. Families are normally placed in temporary accommodation because of antisocial behaviour, harassment experienced at the hands of other people or failure to pay rent. The exact reason for Alexi’s family losing their home is unclear but Alexi firmly stated that they made themselves ‘homeless’. Alexi and her family remained in temporary accommodation for two years. However, even when the family was re-housed by the council, Alexi told me that her mother’s behaviour made it difficult for her to remain in the family home.

Extract 19
My mum basically – she has got schizo… no my mum is just like one of these people – like she never let us do anything, she used to hit us, everything and like I moved out when I was 14 and basically that was the way it has been with [sister] and [brother] and like, so Social Services got involved and everything and that was why I don’t like my mum. I don’t live at home. I live with my uncle.

So how long have you lived with your uncle?
The last couple of weeks. Because I lived at my friend’s house for six months and then my friend just moved so I have been at my uncles for about three weeks. No because I am quite like – we are close to my uncle as well – like he is not my real uncle, but I am really close to my uncle. Because he sees things a lot differently. I mean because he used to be like the way my brother was and I was when I was like 14. I know it was only a year. But he sees things totally different to what my mum and what my dad see and – but the thing was the only reason I don’t like staying there was because sometimes he puts pressure on me saying when are you going to move back to your mums and he knows full well that I don’t want to go back to my mums. And that was the only reason I don’t like living there but other than that it is fine.
(Alexi, first & only interview)
Other interviewees such as Sarah and Markeata recounted living with friends in informal arrangements once family relationships had broken down. Alexi did not make it clear whether social services had sanctioned her living with her uncle ‘who was not my real uncle’. At the time of the interviews Alexi told me that she no longer had any contact with her mother although she still did have some contact with her step-dad and his family. During her interview I was very aware that Alexi felt a strong sense of insecurity about her living arrangements and was apprehensive about the possibility of having to go back to live with her mother. Alexi can be seen to have taken an active, agentic stance in removing herself from an unsatisfactory housing arrangement (with her mother) and placing herself first with her friend and then with her uncle. Again, I felt Alexi’s strong determination to control her own destiny as she emphatically stated that she did not want to go back to her mum’s.

Carrie was also in a vulnerable position not least because of her housing situation. Difficulties had emerged in her relationship with her father after she had intervened in a fight between her mother and father.

**Extract 20**

I was sleeping in different places every night. Sometimes I would be in my Auntie’s house, crash there and stay at my mum’s for one night, go and stay at the hostel for one night, or my friends’. I was getting worried about it. I was on the road all the time. Because usually when I was on road I had somewhere to come back to. I was with my auntie I was living there, when I was at my Nan’s I was coming back there and then me and my sister had these arguments and then she started taking my keys from me and I was just like constantly, and I never have credit on my phone. I could never phone no-one. They thought they had to do something. So in the end I ended up going back to my Mum’s. Because as well it was for me starting year eleven I knew I had to be somewhere where I know I am secure.

*(Carrie, first interview)*

**Extract 21**

*So what was it like now that you have sort of moved back with your mum?*
Well at the moment I am kind of back at my sister's. It was such a crazy situation. Like basically my dad had a bit of a hoo haa with my sister because she was pregnant. I am not too sure how long I will stay with her. I am not too sure. It was more convenient to here because it was in Townham basically. It was convenient for her because she hasn't got anyone there with her and she was due in two weeks so... And I want to be there with her as well so I want to be there for her. Because last night we had a bit of a heart to heart. Her baby's dad has left her, so I want to be there with her.

(Carrie, second interview)

Carrie revealed to me that she was unable to stay at her mother’s home when her father came out of prison (he had been in prison for an offensive unrelated to the attack on her mother). However, as with many of my interviewees Carrie’s living arrangements were still not stable. She had unofficially joined her sister in a hostel meant specifically for pregnant teenagers. Carrie had talked about her stormy relationship with her sister earlier in the interview. Consequently there was a strong possibility that the sisters would fall out again and Carrie would have to find somewhere else to live. Although Carrie’s housing career appeared vulnerable to me, she was keen to show me that she had taken care of herself and had coped with moving between friends and family members. Carrie notably highlighted the positive aspect of her current housing situation in that she ‘wanted to be there’ for her sister and therefore, similar to Alexi, can be seen to have emphasised her own agency in her situation.

Other interviewees such as Kandice and Emily mentioned friends who had made formal arrangements with social services to either live with them and their families or other friends and their parents. Several of my interviewees had experienced fostering personally.

Extract 22

*How long were you in foster care for then?*

Nine months, I came out of foster care about October or September, my Nan fostered me, we went to court so my Nan could foster me, the court tells you were you have to stay, whether
you have to go in foster care, go and live with your Nan or go back to your mum, or go wherever, and they sent my Nan this massive letter and then she started fostering me (Tiffany, first & only interview)

Tiffany was only twelve at the time of the interview – the youngest of my interviewees. She had moved three times in the last two years from living with her mum, into foster care and then to her Nan, all in different areas. Tiffany, unlike many of the older girls, appeared to me not only upset when talking about her housing situation but also genuinely exasperated by her lack of agency and control as she felt she was in the hands of social services. Such moves had caused her to lose contact with her siblings and she later stated that she had made few friends whilst in foster care or at her PRU. Moving home had served to close down Tiffany’s social networks. This resonates with Morrow’s (2001a) research where she identified the loss of support which often accompanies moving home. From the accounts given by my interviewees social services seemed to be more proactive when dealing with the younger girls in finding them foster homes as many of the older girls felt that social services lost interest in them as they approached the age of sixteen.

Sarah also experienced intervention from social services. She had suffered a turbulent housing career and felt very strongly that involvement from social services had only served to make matters worse for her. Sarah recounted the violence and abuse that she had encountered in her family home which lead to her stating that she was ‘living from mates to mates’ house, ‘sometimes I was even on the streets’. Eventually she was referred to social services who placed her with family members some distance away in Scotland. She was able to maintain contact with her old friends and returned to her local area to stay with a male friend. Social services became involved again and placed her in foster care once more some distance from family and friends. Sarah commented that:
Extract 23
I told social services that I wasn’t going to stay there any longer [with foster parent]. I wanted to live with my mum, so at this point I hadn’t seen here for months and months so I didn’t know anything about her anymore, I mean she had always been a heavy drinker when I was little, but I never really, I thought it was normal, then they checked on my mum and everything, thought it was safe for me to go home so I did. I went home. Biggest mistake of my life, she was a full on alcoholic by this time, she still is
(Sarah, first & only interview)

Sarah went on to describe her present living arrangements. She was ‘crashing’ on the living room floor of a flat rented by a group of young men in their twenties who she knew. I asked Sarah why social services had stopped taking an interest in her life.

Extract 24
They are off my back now and literally, I am living each day as it comes,
Why have they stopped taking an interest now?
Because a) they could never keep up with my life, and b) my parents were too much hassle, c) I never wanted to be in foster care, and anywhere I was happy with places they took me away from, absolutely anywhere, social services, are supposed to be there to make you happy, they are supposed to sort your life out, but all they ever did was fuck mine up completely
(Sarah, first & only interview)

Sarah’s narrative describing how she had moved between family, friends and foster care resonated with several of my interviewees. Often bonding ties with family members and friends were broken leaving the girls feeling isolated. Few of my interviewees seemed to form or maintain strong bonds with their foster careers or friends when they were outside of their locales. Those who were fostered in their local areas were more successful in maintaining bonds with their friends and family members. Sarah echoed Alexi’s misgivings about how helpful social services had been in providing stability and support in what appeared to be very difficult times for the girls. Sarah did try to exert her agency by asking to be moved back with her mum, but the outcome left her feeling totally let down by social services. Her answer was to
agentically take matters into her own hands. Sarah’s living arrangements with a group of young men, who she reported she regularly sat up with until the early hours of the morning smoking cannabis, undoubtedly put her in a vulnerable position and made her attendance at her PRU very erratic. She expressed concern to me over her lack of money and joked that she must smell as she did not have enough money to wash her clothes.

Fostering, either informally or formally with the intervention of social services, was familiar to the young women I interviewed. Examples are provided in the two extracts below when Kandice and Emily were discussing their photos.

**Photograph 7**

Kandice  Carly in the pub. Shes my foster sister & used to be 1 of my best m8’s till she slept wiv my ex

**Extract 25**

What happened was her mum and her dad went into a mental home and then my mum kind of fostered her for three months I think it was.

*Was that an official thing or …*
Yes. It was between her mum and Social Services and my mum yes.

And was that because …

Because she was like one of my best mates and that and my mum knew her. And I said yes. But she slept with my ex-boyfriend. Because I split up with my boyfriend a week later because she slept with him and ever since we haven’t got on

(Kandice, second interview)

Photograph 8

Emily [Kerry and Kay – my best 2 mates]

Extract 26

Kay’s mum died recently and I knew her mum as well, I had been round there a little bit, so …

What did her mum die from?

Overdose. Because she had a dodgy liver and she used to drink and take loads of tablets. I have known Kay for ages as well because my other friend, her mum adopted her so I go around with her.

(Emily, second interview)

Throughout all the interviews I was surprised by the way turbulent and diverse family backgrounds were treated in an often accepting and understanding manner by my interviewees. Kandice’s story of her friend Carly becoming her foster sister was
recounted almost as an aside to her narrative about her ex-boyfriend. Kandice was clear that the fostering arrangement was to be temporary but it appeared not to be out of the ordinary to her. Amongst my interviewees five girls had been in foster care themselves and one had been adopted but kept in contact with her birth mum. Emily very matter-of-factly described the circumstances surrounding the death of her friend’s mum. The extract above resonated with several of my interviewees who recounted that their family had fostered other family members or friends.

Many of the girls’ turbulent and diverse family backgrounds resulted in them frequently moving homes and schools. In some cases the girls, with or without their families, moved to completely new areas. For some girls domestic troubles meant that they ended up fending for themselves and taking responsibility for their own living arrangements. This seemed to be common amongst the older girls as they asserted that social services lost interest in them as they approached sixteen. It is apparent that in such circumstances it would be hard for the excluded young women to maintain social networks, but often it appeared that friendships were the most stable relationships in the girls’ lives and they invested heavily in their maintenance as will be seen in chapter 8.

7.3 Community
As discussed in chapter 5, the areas from which my sample of interviewees were drawn can be divided into three: a large city in the Midlands, South London and semi-rural working class estates in the South of England. These areas can be described as suffering from: ‘a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown’ (SEU, 1998). MacDonald et al (2005) noted that for the informants in their research the majority preferred to remain in wards that suffered from extreme problems of social exclusion. They explained this phenomenon by uncovering the embeddiness of these individuals in close, locally concentrated family and social networks which extended beyond family. Unlike MacDonald et al’s informants only a
minority of my excluded young women's families' housing careers were marked by their localisation. As referred to in chapter 2 Bourdieu's conceptualisation of social capital is relevant to examining the girls' sense of community and wider social networks. For some of my young women the quality of social relations with neighbours was important as they had the potential to offer help and support, as exemplified by the following extracts.

**Extract 27**
One boy beat up my sister and my next door neighbour went round to his house.

*And what did he do, did he beat up the boy?*
No he was going to but he run away.

(Ashanti, second interview)

**Extract 28**

*What is the area like where you live?*
I know everyone on my estate. My area was one of the areas where people won't come if they don't live there kind of thing because you get mugged or something happens to you.

*And do you find it was a good community? You say you know every one.*
If something happens to one person you have everyone there to back you up. That was how we are. We stick together. But people complain because there are lots of young people really.

(Keisha, first & only interview)

In the extracts above both girls were keen to emphasise to me the positive aspects of their locales. Ashanti lived in a back-to-back house in a run down area of a Midlands city with a well-known local reputation for violence and gangs. It shared many of the characteristics of socially excluded areas. Ashanti proudly recounted the way in which her neighbour was willing to stand up for her sister. Keisha who lived on a housing estate in South London was aware of its reputation for being tough and proudly presented herself as part of it and as sharing her reputation with her area. Similarly to the majority of people who lived on her estate, Keisha was from an African-Caribbean background. She attached great importance to being part of the neighbourhood and community where people looked out for each other. By identifying so strongly with
her estate Keisha conveyed to me the strong sense of loyalty she felt towards her neighbourhood.

However, a contradiction existed in Keisha’s account as she referred to hostility the young people on the estate encountered from adults. This is similar to Morrow’s (2001) findings as in her study she asserted that young people developed their own ‘communities’ in the face of negative perceptions from adults in their neighbourhoods. Building their own ‘communities’ was a protective mechanism for the young people where they could shed the negative identities placed on them from the local adult populace (Morrow, 2001).

In the above extract Keisha identified strongly with her community even though she acknowledged that it may be constructed as a negative place by ‘outsiders’. From her interview data it is possible to speculate that her networks within her community may have operated as bonding social capital which may constrain her future opportunities.

Two of the locales inhabited by my young women, the Midlands city and the South London location were characterised by diverse ethnic populations and this diversity was referred to by interviewees when describing their communities.

**Extract 29**

*Tell me about your neighbours?*

[Pointing at a map of her road that she had sketched] That was Ricky and that was — I can’t remember that one. Sharon there and then on this side of the road and then there was these are Asians they have just moved. I know them but I don’t know their names. And there was another one like Black Muslims named Abdul and then down the road there was a garage then all the way down there was one more house here where there are some Black Muslims don’t know their names but I know them to say hello to them. And then on this side of the road, there was like the end of the road yes and then there was like a big massive house that takes up four of these houses right. Some Asians who are really nice live there.

*Do you get on with everyone?*
Yes. They gave my mum £10 yesterday because it was like their Christmas. So they celebrate early.

*Ramadan?*

Yes. Whatever. Whatever it was called. And there was like these black people who live here like next to them. There are these white people kind of like [...] and like these black people, and then the Chinese people. Chinese and then a big primary school.

*(Jade, second interview)*

**Extract 30**

The man next door you know he beats his wife. He beats his wife because you can hear her screaming and the other way was an elderly couple and when we wanted to do a loft conversion he said he wanted us to pay for his wall. And we were going to pay, but my mum was like just pay him. But it was £200 or something, so we could get it and they were like how can we do the loft conversion how do you lot get all this money and now we still can't do it because we haven't got a lot of money. They are spiteful.

*And what about your other neighbours further along?*

Don't talk to them, no. Like did you hear on the news that the house on [Street] was a brothel where someone got shot.

*No?*

That was two doors away from me someone got shot.

*(Ameile, first & only interview)*

Jade was from an African-Caribbean background and resident in an inner city area of the Midlands city. At the time of this interview a tense situation existed in the community between some Asian and African-Caribbean groups over an alleged attack on a young woman. Jade was aware of this incident and commented on the media coverage it had received. This may have contributed to her presentation to me of her street as being characterised by individuals belonging to different ethnic groups. However, her earlier largely disparaging comments relating to the way certain groups had embellished accounts of the alleged attack were somewhat forgotten when Jade presented her opinions to me of ‘some Asian people who are really nice’. However, I did get the impression from Jade that she felt part of a larger social network of people who she could call upon to offer help and support. Similarly Ameile who lived on an
estate in South London (although not the same one as Keisha) portrayed her street as disparate households having little to do with each other, interrupted by occasional disagreements between neighbours. As in many of the girls' narratives Ameile introduced elements of violence and criminality into her account in a quite matter-of-fact manner, as if they were everyday occurrences. The content of such accounts and the ways in which they were presented to me when talking about communities reinforced to me the potential hazards and difficulties the girls had to negotiate in their everyday lives. The girls' acceptance of these events and the matter of fact ways they presented them served to enhance their presentation of tough femininities to me.

7.4 Summary
In selecting three case studies I was able to illustrate the main features which the young women referred to in their narratives regarding their families: the complexity of their families and discourses surrounding how such diverse structures impacted on the girls' relationships with their family members. The most enduring relationship which the young women experienced (with the exception of Jenni) was with their mothers. Many of these relationships can be described as non-conventional. Several young women, as in Nicola's case, reported having an almost distant relationship with their mothers. In the case of Kandice and a significant minority of my interviewees I found that an almost boundary-less relationship existed between the young women and their mothers. A small minority of young women related that their relationships with their mothers had broken down and contact between them was minimal. I would argue although each of these mother / daughter relationships is different, they had similar outcomes for my group of interviewees. By exercising their agency in their relationships with their mothers, I was aware that the girls became accustomed to relying on their own resourcefulness. The girls were willing to stand up for themselves and to use their agency within their home environments with family members.

The majority of my interviewees reported having little or no contact with their fathers or step-fathers after breakdowns in their mothers' relationships. Indeed, many of the
girls experienced emotional distance from their mothers' current partners. The girls' changing family situations possibly added to their experiences of living social exclusion as scarce resources were divided amongst additional family members such as their mother's new partners and new siblings. Living with a lone mother is identified with a drop in living standards (Maclean, 1991) while multiple changes and/or the introduction of multiple step-partners has been associated with emotional distress (Flowerdew and Neale, 2003). Some of my interviewees had inclusive narratives of their relationships with step and half siblings but more referred to these siblings in an exclusive manner. Such exclusive accounts were often characterised by frequent reference to acts of verbal and physical aggression.

When discussing their family structures, little if any reference was made by the girls to feelings of sadness or unhappiness which may have been brought about by family breakdowns and subsequent reconstitution(s). Rather in circumstances where I might have expected the girls to allude to such feelings, their narratives were frequently characterised by expressions of resentment and anger often followed by examples of verbal and physical aggression. I would argue that the evidence presented here depicts the excluded girls' family environments as sites where the girls developed and practised their tough femininities. I would argue further that the deployment of tough femininities in their often difficult family circumstances could be seen as a coping or survival strategy for the girls. It may have been understandable for the girls to have crumpled under such circumstances but instead the girls presented tough, strong femininities in order to 'get by'.

Transience was a feature in many of the young women's lives. Family breakdown and reconstitution of families lead to frequent moves for the girls and their families which often resulted in moving to different locales and schools. Perhaps more significantly for a small group of young women disturbances within the family meant that they felt their only option was to leave the family home. This frequently resulted in a nomadic housing career which could entail living with friends, other family members or going
Flowerdew and Neale (2003) assert that children's ability to cope with multiple changes or transitions is the quality of relationship that exists between parents and children, in particular that between parents and biological child. In their research they found that where lines of communication (between parents and child) were generally easy and open children and young people appeared able to integrate a range of challenges and transitions comfortably into their biographies. However, for a significant number of my interviewees, it is apparent that at times they did feel isolated and without adult support and this was particularly true of the girls who experienced transient lives.

Many of the young women were critical of the role that social services had played in their lives, particularly in their management of their housing needs. Even when housing arrangements were unsettled many of the young women demonstrated a remarkable resilience and determination to take matters into their own hands to sort out their own problems. Many of the girls reported a sense of identifying and belonging to their communities and hinted at examples of bonding capital. Several girls talked about racial tension which they felt existed in their areas. They characterised their communities as inhabited by separate racial groups rather than as a cohesive whole. Little evidence emerged from the data to suggest the existence in the girls' lives of access to wider social networks, beyond their immediate locales. When the girls referred to the 'tough' nature of their locales, or the existence of social problems (such as domestic violence) it is notable that none of the girls' voiced any fears about where they lived. As Watt and Stenson (1998) have highlighted, spaces can be perceived as safer or more welcoming when the occupants share common identities, and the performance of tough femininities may have enabled the girls to feel a sense of belonging with their locales.
Chapter 8: ‘I am one of those people’ - Friends and leisure

In this third analysis chapter I examine another area which was important to the young women, their use of leisure time. As already discussed many of my interviewees had periods of non school attendance, particularly if they were excluded from school and were waiting for the outcomes of appeals and/or placement in PRUs. In addition the girls spent a limited amount of time in the PRUs each day which meant that they had plenty of free time particularly as few reported being required to do family chores or homework. None of my interviewees made use of organised leisure activities and few accessed commercially run leisure facilities on a regular basis, partly through choice but also because of monetary constraints. As is discussed below, few, if any, of the young women took part in bedroom culture as described by McRobbie (1977). Therefore most of the young women in this study spent their leisure time with friends, often hanging out in open spaces, away from parental and adult supervision. Indeed, the most popular subject area covered in the photo elicitation tasks was use of leisure time. The photos taken by the fifteen participants in this task enabled me to visualise more clearly the way in which the young women spent their time free of school and family commitments and constraints.

Much of the girls' behaviour and the social contacts and networks they forged may be viewed as resisting or transgressing heteronormative femininities. The data presented here will reveal that the excluded young women invested heavily in the production and maintenance of tough femininities, inevitably at odds with the production of heteronormative femininity. They did this by exhibiting aggressive behaviour both verbally and physically and taking part in risky behaviours such as smoking, drinking, drug taking and utilising outside spaces late at night. I will argue that the girls' behaviour often shared features with McRobbie’s (2006) third luminosity of the ‘phallic girl’. In this way even though the excluded young women thought they were subverting accepted norms, I will show that they were simply acting to confound and
maintain hierarchal normative gender / sexual power relations (Renold, 2005) and thereby sustaining and revitalising what Butler calls the heterosexual matrix.

A notable feature of the girls’ narratives was not only the way in which they deployed the tough repertoire, but also the seemingly contrasting repertoire of hyper-femininity. The girls more usually presented tough femininities but these were frequently supplemented with, and apparently contrasting, elements of hyper-femininity such as their desire to follow a career in beauty therapy and their romanticisation of babies. It can be argued that for young women ‘being tough’ within the dominant hegemony of the heterosexual matrix implies things about the actor’s sexuality and therefore in order to perhaps rescue or compensate for this, the repertoire of hyper-femininity was deployed, for example in the romanticisation of babies. I will be addressing this more fully in the third section of this chapter.

In the first section of this analysis chapter I will examine how the girls’ used their home environments during their leisure time. It is arguable that the girls’ lack of available private spaces in their homes necessitated their use of outdoor spaces. Therefore as will be shown, the girls rarely used their homes for socialising. For the majority of the girls, hanging out with friends usually in open spaces seemed to consume the majority of their time. For some of the older girls hanging out in open spaces was superseded by hanging out with friends in pubs and clubs which became focal parts of their lives.

8.1 Private spaces?
Most of the girls who undertook the photo elicitation task took pictures of their home environments which often featured individual family members. There was little evidence in the photos of family members interacting with each other, although younger brothers and sisters often featured as they were ‘baby-sat’ by the girls. Shemeila was an exception as her photos showed her engaged in activities such as shopping with her parents and younger siblings. The photo below shows Shemeila proudly displaying her cookery skills.
Shemeila’s picture of herself complying to her cultural mandate of immersing herself in domestic duties is in strong contrast to the loud and disruptive behaviour she reported that she engaged in during her school career. Her behaviour record and exclusion from school may have been considered as somewhat abnormal for a girl amongst her family and community, but she appeared keen to illustrate at least in this photo that she did uphold certain aspects of her community’s traditional feminine values. Shemeila reported that her mum was teaching her to cook and she helped prepare the family meal most evenings. Shemeila’s portrayal of herself in her home environment is in strong contrast to all the other girls in this study as no others took photos of themselves helping with domestic tasks. Indeed no other girl reported any involvement in household tasks.

Several of the girls took photos of their bedroom and I was interested to explore with them how they utilised such private spaces. The girls’ photos often revealed to me a lack of material possessions in their homes and this was frequently reflected in the girls’ own bedrooms. Research has documented the way teenage girls personalise their
bedrooms to use them as sanctuaries away from other family members and to create comfortable meeting places to hangout with friends (Lincoln, 2005; McRobbie, 1991; Steele and Brown, 1995). As will be illustrated below, the excluded young women in this study did not use their bedrooms in these ways. As discussed in chapter 3, Lincoln (2004) in her recent study described how the girls in her research ‘zoned’ their bedrooms to accommodate music, make up, college books etc. Many of the excluded girls’ bedrooms did demonstrate their attempts to personalise their space but the starkness of many of the rooms perhaps served to highlight their lack of material possessions. Unlike the girls in Lincoln’s study, my participants did not have a vast array of electronic equipment and no concession was made in any of the rooms to a study area for doing homework. Often the excluded girls had to share their bedrooms as was the case for Nicola (discussed in chapter 7) thereby limiting their personal space.

Photograph 2

Shemeila My bedroom where I sleep at night
Like many of the photos the girls took Shemeila’s and Lucy’s photos of their bedrooms illustrated their lack of personal possessions. Most of the girls’ bedrooms lacked the adornments usually found in teenage girls’ bedrooms such as beauty products and ornaments. In her photo elicitation task, Lucy explained to me that, like many of my interviewees, she had very little in the way of pocket money and any money she did have she spent on cigarettes. Although most of the girls’ bedrooms were sparingly furnished, most did have a music system of some sort, but again, Shemeila was a notable exception. As can be seen below Lucy gave pride of place to her music system in her bedroom.
Lucy emphasised to me the importance that rap music held in her life, indeed this was a subject which resonated with many of my young women. For example Alisha reported that ‘rap is the music that I am into’ and Amelie stated that ‘I couldn’t live without my music’ when talking about her rap CDs.

Hip hop and rap music has often been termed ‘gangsta rap’ by sections of the media. Gangsta rap is notable for its supposed links with crime and guns which is often emphasised in rappers lyrics and music videos. The tough image which many rappers espouse, getting by in a tough world, is an aspect which many of my interviewees identified with. For example Lucy contended that the rappers she listened to ‘know what life is like – y’know it’s a hard knock life’. ‘Hard knock life’ is the title of a Jay-z single, and Lucy listed Jay-z as one of her favourite rappers. Lucy went on to explain to me that she had two CDs, which her dad had bought for her from an internet auction website. By emphasising her identification with hip hop I could see that Lucy wanted me to view her as being part of the tough culture espoused by the rappers in their lyrics. Lucy’s overall tough presentation to me in this conversation was somewhat softened by the display of her cuddly toys and cartoon characters on her
bedroom wall. As can be seen in the photos taken by Lady Sovereign and Kandice, prominence is given to their hip hop posters and as emerged in their narratives these represented almost masculinised, misogynistic symbols. Contrastingly more feminised subjects were portrayed in close proximity to these symbols for example in Kandice’s case, her PlayBoy poster, and in Lady Sovereign’s case, photos of her nephew and her pink TV. At one level PlayBoy represents glamour and hyper-femininity in a similar manner to ‘glamour’ modelling. In the commentary which accompanied Kandice’s photos she enthused about her passion for hip hop and her love of everything that PlayBoy symbolised.

**Photograph 5**

![Photograph 5](image)

**Extract 1**

I absolutely love Eminem like his music and that and I have so much of his music and I just love the whole playboy thing. And that poster – you can see it all with little pictures. Little Playboy magazines and I saw it one day and I just loved that thing so …

*So what appeals so much about Playboy?*

Oh I am not sure. I don’t know its just – I suppose it is just the money isn’t it. I mean I would love to be a Playgirl and visit the Playboy mansion I would love to do that. I have seen it on telly and it is really big, with swimming pools and everything. It is amazing. I would love to go to an Eminem’s house but that is for a completely different reason. Eminem is good looking but I like his music. Because I can relate to
most of his music. Like I can relate to every song that he sings, I can relate to. It says bits about like my life and bits about me in that. And everything. But like I couldn’t sit in a room with no music on. Like it would drive me round the bend. I hate being in a room with no music on. But yes. But like when I go to bed. I can’t go to bed if there is no music on. I have to put it on. But not loud because then I can’t sleep but I have to have it on just a little bit.
(Kandice, second interview)

Photograph 6

Lady sovereign

My Westwood pictures and pink TV
One of the walls in my room

Extract 2
The poster is my rapper poster, we have got Snoop Dog, we have got Ice Cube in the corner, we have got Eminem, we have got Exhibit, Tupac, we have got Biggie down in the corner. We have got where has he gone LL cool J, JaRule, Jazzie, what is his face I have forgotten his name.
(Lady Sovereign, second interview)
The posters displayed in Kandice and Lady Sovereign’s bedroom further exemplify what most of the girls in this study espoused, their enjoyment and almost idealisation of rap stars and hip hop music. In the above photo Lady Sovereign can be seen to be proudly displaying her Sovereign ring which aided in her presentation of herself as the white, North London young female rapper whose name she chose to use as a pseudonym. Lincoln (2005) asserts that music is so embedded in the complexities of teenage culture that it is therefore essential to examine the ways in which musical choices are used to contribute to a young person’s cultural biography. The majority of my interviewees referred only to what can be classified as mainstream hip hop and rap such as Eminen and P Diddy. Lady Sovereign very proudly displayed her love of rap in her photos of her bedroom giving her Westwood posters prominence - he is a DJ on radio 1 who hosts the hip hop show and has achieved media notoriety for allegedly encouraging gun violence. She also talked at length about her rapper poster which included many of the more socially conscious American rappers who vocalise social inequalities in America.

Hip hop and rap music have recently undergone transformations away from their traditional concerns with voicing social inequalities and now display an increasing
preoccupation with ‘bling’\(^3\). Kandice’s views on rap were those most commonly held by my group of interviewees. Rather than the political expression voiced in some hip hop artists’ work, the collective expression which emerged in the girls narratives was the importance of presenting tough, ‘not to be messed with’ femininities with opulent displays of jewellery, more often associated with bling culture. I felt that the importance the young women placed on presenting themselves to me as tough was aided by their identification with hip hop and rap.

Both Lady Sovereign and Kandice had positioned items which may be considered to be hyper-feminine next to their display of tougher images, such as rap posters. For example, as can be seen in photograph 6, alongside her rap posters in her bedroom lady Sovereign gave prominence to her ultra feminine pink TV. The violent and misogynistic content of much of the hip hop that the girls spoke about is noteworthy, particularly when considered alongside many of the girls’ performances of hyper-femininity which tied in with the majority of their aspirations to be beauty therapists. Kandice spoke of her wish to be a PlayGirl and related her love of Playboy images to her own aspirations for money. The ways in which the young women presented themselves to me can be seen as somewhat contradictory. On the one hand the young women emphasised active, tough femininities as exemplified by their love of rap music and rappers. On the other hand this sense of self empowerment appeared lost as they seemed willing to be positioned as disempowered in a similar manner to the women in rap music videos and women who are involved in PlayBoy. Similar to the young women McRobbie (2006) refers to when discussing the third luminosity, that of the ‘phallic girl’, Kandice had accepted the masculinised world of Playboy. As McRobbie (2006: 10-11) states:

---

\(^3\) Many of the other girls also referred to a love of hip hop and rap. For example, Ice Cube, a socially conscious rapper who rose to prominence with NWA in the late 1980s, recently asserted that ‘Political rap has been pushed into the background, and rap has turned into bling party music. Groups like Public Enemy and KRS-1 have no stage anymore ... rap is full of bravado now’ (Sullivan, 2006). This therefore questions the notion of hip hop providing ‘young people with a series of templates for social action’ as conceptualised by Bennett (1999: 21). Ice Cube draws a line between older hip hop and newer politicised underground hip hop and the more mainstream elements of hip hop who are only concerned with conspicuous consumption.
The phallic girl gives the impression of having won equality with men by becoming like her male counterparts. But in this adoption of the phallus, there is no critique of masculine hegemony ... the lad’s magazines and also downmarket or trashy television all encourage young women, as though in the name of sexual equality, to overturn the old double standard and emulate the assertive and hedonistic styles of sexuality associated with young men ... [however] by endorsing norms of male conduct in the field of sexuality she removes any obligation on the part of men to reflect on their own behaviour and their treatment of women.

For Kandice, Playboy represented an unproblematic pursuit of glamour and money. She had uncritically bought into the ‘female phallicism’ which, McRobbie asserts, acts to ‘re-stabilise gender relations’ within the heterosexual matrix. The hyper-feminised route of becoming a PlayGirl, or at least Kandice’s aspirations to be one, can be seen to be acceptable only for low academic achieving working-class girls (Hey, 1997; Renold, 2005). Although embracing of all things ‘feminine’, the hyper-femininity associated with being a ‘Playmate’ can be seen to over-do femininity without containing any allied respectability which Skeggs (1997: 100) found was so key to her research participants in order to avoid being labelled ‘vulgar, pathological, tasteless and sexual’.

As has been shown music was extremely important in the lives of many of the young women in this study, and many of them did use their own bedrooms to listen to their music. However, similar to the girls in Skelton’s (2000) study of teenage girls in the Rhondda Valleys, none of the girls I interviewed referred to using their rooms to socialise as reported by McRobbie (1977) and Lincoln (2004). In some cases this may have been because the young women did not have the luxury of a bedroom to themselves or it may have been that the young women wished to have more freedom from parental control and to escape interference from siblings. The lack of value that bedrooms had in the girls’ lives may also be explained by the transience some of the girls experienced which was discussed in the last chapter. Some of the young women did report going to friends’ houses, particularly when adults were not present.
As can be seen below, Alisha and Carrie had photos of themselves taken smoking at friends’ houses. The majority of the girls interviewed reported that they regularly smoked and indeed, smoking breaks were often informally given at the PRUs. Carrie, in common with many of my interviewees, reported spending a lot of her leisure time smoking cannabis with her friends. In Carrie’s first photo she can be seen to take a defiant pose with her right hand on her hip and a spliff in her left hand.

Photograph 9

Alisha Me smoking!
Carrie
Me - with a spliff in my hand!

Photograph 11

Carrie
Chris, Emma and Jhordan chilling at Lee's house. Jhordan is one of my closest boys, like a big brother to me.
Extract 3
This is in Chris's house. That is him there. I tried to get the PlayStation. We were just playing PlayStations.

Do the lads let you on the Play Station?
Yes. I beat them. But I can't take the football. They play Pro on it and I can't take that game. I will beat them at the fighting games. I wanted to take this because it was like the world where you look in. So it was like a natural picture.

(Carrie, second interview)

The scene depicted above is unusual amongst the photos the girls took as it was the only one that showed a group of friends gathering in a bedroom. By presenting this as a 'natural picture' Carrie was keen to explain that it was not staged but a reflection of what normally happened when she met up with her friends. The question that I asked Carrie about the PlayStation related to my gendered experience of computer games as being something that are owned by male friends with limited access being granted to females. Carrie insisted to me that this was not how she was treated by her group of male friends, even though the individuals using the PlayStation in this photo were both male. Carrie was clearly trying to make the case to me that she was accepted by her male friends as an equal and had successfully negotiated one area traditionally thought of as a male preserve. Her comment about Jhordan being 'one of my closest boys, like a big brother to me' is interesting as it resonates with several of my interviewees, for example Keisha, Shola, Amelie, Markeata, and Nicola, who counted boys amongst their closest friends. In most cases the girls stated that they did not want these boys as boyfriends, but valued their friendships in terms of the closeness, advice and in some cases the protection that they could enjoy from such associations particularly in what might be considered risky environments.

8.2 Friends
One feature of the interview texts that became apparent during the early informal stages of analysis was that accounts of the young women's friendships figured prominently in the interviews, often embedded in rich narratives about why their friends were so important to them. Friendships often seemed to be crucial to the girls'
own sense of worth and of being part of the wider community. All the girls who spoke about their best friend conveyed to me a deep sense of the reciprocal loyalty which existed between them. I was also made aware that 'having a similar outlook' was a prerequisite for a strong friendship between a girl and her best friend. Many of the young women in this study had difficult relationships with parents and siblings and unsettled living arrangements resulting in frequent home moves. It is perhaps notable that many of my interviewees had formed and maintained relationships with their best friends despite the fluidity of their living arrangements and exclusions from school.

Extract 4

And what do you think makes her your best mate?

We are always there for each other when we need each other

(Ashanti, second interview)

Extract 5

I think like she was my closest, closest friend. I don't think I have ever had anybody as close as what she has. But apart from her I don't really have any close friends. Apart from her.

Why do you think she was such a good friend?

She is so like me I think that was all it was, everything I do was just she just does exactly the same. It was not like purposefully but it is just she listens. She is just great.

(Alexi, first & only interview)

Extract 6

Because we are exactly the same. We are exactly.... We come from exactly the same background, exactly the same way we have been brought up like and we just like – we were separated at birth I am sure we were. It was just like it is really weird. She was exactly – we always think the same, like we finish off... I don't know we just finish off each other's sentences. But we are exactly the same so

(Kandice, second interview)

Extract 7

I don't know. It was just that we are alike. We like the same things and do everything together.

(June, second interview)

Extract 8

I don't know she has never like lied to me or nothing, and she was like never done anything wrong. We have never argued. I don't know. It was well weird because when you are with someone all the time, you
argue with them don't you. No matter who it was and I have never actually argued with her the whole time I have known her. Not one argument. She is just quality.

(Gemma, second interview)

In her interviews Gemma presented many elements of her life to be characterised by conflict with almost constant arguing with various people which contrasted very strikingly to her description of her relationship with her best friend. The girls expressed the importance of having a similar outlook to their friends (‘she was so like me’). The sentiments expressed by the young women can be seen to emphasise their loyalty to their friends. Indeed, loyalty between friends was a factor often emphasised to me as being extremely important to the girls (as was demonstrated in chapter 6). As stated before, the majority of my interviewees performed the two extremes along the femininity continuum, hyper-femininities and tough, strong femininities. Both these types of femininity could be viewed as subverting heteronormative femininities which are associated with the middle-class values of passivity and restraint. Rejecting heteronormative femininities and instead opting to present either extreme of the femininity continuum, both of which seem to be in tension with each other, could be viewed as a juggling act which was hard for the interviewees to successfully achieve.

One way of sustaining this seemed to be through strong friendships, particularly best friend dyads. Here, ‘differences could be diffused as each friend reflected and to some extent confirmed the others’ behaviour as normal, acceptable and legitimate’ (Renold, 2005: 162). As will be shown in the photos below, these differences were not only diffused by the girls sharing similar values, but also visually as they adopted similar dress and mannerisms to each other.
Lucy  Me and Becky, I got this taken because me and Becky are really close.

Ashanti  Me and Lucy
Extract 9
Me and Lucy. We were waiting for the 66 and that is my house from hers. And that is where the bus stop is.

Who did you get to take the photo?
A girl who was walking down the road.
(Ashanti, second interview)

The photos of the girls with their best friends are remarkable in the similarities displayed by each pair. In many respects such as style of clothes, hairstyles, jewellery, body type and even body language the interviewees and their best friends mirrored each other. Hey has claimed that 'a girl’s best friend is her best friend because here girls can find the reflection of a self-confirmed as 'normal’ since the face that smiles back is our friend/our-self' (Hey, 1997: 136). In a similar manner to the young women in Archer et al’s (2007a) research, the girls in my study combined elements of black, urban US styles with ‘unisex’ (although often coded as ‘male’) items of sportswear (such as tracksuits) and hyper-feminine ‘sexy’ clothes, make-up and hairstyles. As Archer et al (2007a: 169) note:

These performances—while constituting an identifiable heterosexual working-class feminine appearance—were also grounded within a disruption of binaries of Black/White and masculine/feminine styles (e.g. teaming tracksuit trousers with high heels; trainers with ‘sexy’/‘glamorous’ tops, and so on).

Pertinently for my study, I assert that this visual display of the mixture of the masculine (or tough) with the hyper-feminine symbolized what the young women tried to achieve in every aspect of their lives and was embodied not only by their dress, but also by their mannerisms and behaviour.

Having a boyfriend is perhaps the most prominent sign of heterosexuality and therefore boyfriends can be viewed as heteronormative femininity successfully performed. Archer et al’s (2007b) research noted the importance for their research participants of investing in heterosexual relationships with boyfriends as a form of
capital and resistance against middle-class notions of academic success. However, these relationships tended to be linked to a lowering of participants’ future aspirations as passive and submissive forms of femininity were privileged as more feminine and attractive. In my research I found that boyfriends were particularly important for those girls who did not have many friends, particularly a best friend:

**Extract 10**

*Have you got people you hang about with after school?*

I am not that kind of person to hang about with people. I don't keep friends, I just talk with my boyfriend.  
(Markeata, first & only interview)

Markeata was unusual because she did not have many friends and her boyfriend was therefore the key person in her life.

**Extract 11**

*So how did you meet your boyfriend?*

He lived next door to me. He lived at number one and I live at number two. And he was coming round and helping like. Because it was like new places that were built and like him and his mum was helping like coming round and cleaning our floor and just doing some stuff and then after that he would come round and play computers with my brother. I know he was a bit young like but he would come round and like play computers and like he would go and sleep over his house and stuff like that. And then I would just be there. And then my brother dared him to ask me out. So my brother was playing Cupid.  
(Kosie, first & only interview)

Both Kosie and Markeata had very few female friends and seemed to invest more time in their relationships with their boyfriends than other interviewees. For both girls, their days seemed to revolve around their boyfriends and plans were made to spend most evenings together. Most of the interviewees did refer to having boyfriends either at the time of the interviews or in the past but few of their relationships were as long lasting as those of Markeata or Kosie.

Archer et al (2007a) found much of the behaviour of her group of working-class young women revolved around acquiring and maintaining relationships with boyfriends. She
went on to assert that such heteronormative conduct had the effect of closing down girls' friendship ties with other girls and changed girls' outlooks as it made them more concerned with getting married, having babies and living locally. I argue that for the majority of the excluded young women in my study, boyfriends and the production and maintenance of the associated heteronormative femininities were not the pivotal feature of their lives. By refusing to engage fully in heteronormative femininities, the excluded girls were able to maintain their belief that they were exerting their own agency in directing their own behaviour and lives without the constraining features associated with such performances.

8.3 Hanging Out

As has been discussed most of the young women did have a best friend but they were also keen to emphasise that they each had a group of friends who were an important part in their lives. 'Hanging out' with friends was the most frequently mentioned leisure activity by my group of young women and indeed the photos taken by my sub-sample reflected this. As can be seen in the following extracts and photos many of the interviewees participated in a strong street culture, possibly because of the crowded and cramped domestic conditions that existed at home (Thomson et al, 2003) or to avoid any possible restrictions imposed by adults in the home or interference from siblings. As discussed in chapter 3, outside spaces, particularly at night, have long been viewed as a male arena. Other studies (Burman et al, 2003; Räthzel, 2000; Skelton, 2000) suggest that girls are spending a significant amount of time in public places. The self report data from Burman et al's extensive study revealed that approximately three-quarters of the 800 girls sampled spent their time hanging out with friends mostly on streets, in parks and on shopping centres. Most of the young women in this study spent a great deal of their leisure time away from home often in the dark hanging around in parks, housing estates, outside fast food outlets, or outside supermarkets. As will be shown, included incidentally in the girls' narratives about hanging out were accounts of drug-taking, drinking and in the words of Shola 'making trouble'. No mention was made by any of my interviewees about any notions of risk they may have
associated with using outside spaces. However, this may be because the girls usually met up with their groups of friends who they felt afforded them some kind of protection. Non-feminine conduct such as hard drinking, swearing, fighting and being loud and rude has been described as laddish or 'ladette' (Francis, 1999; Jackson, 2006; Archer et al, 2007a). Archer et al (2007: 177a) suggest that ‘other’ forms of femininity, while they offer a space for young women to perform ‘loud’ and socially/sexually assertive femininities, are positioned in opposition to hetero-normative femininity and are thus subject to intense pressures to ‘change’. I argue that the girls in this study, by exercising their agency to behave in a masculinised manner, were actively engaged in resisting the performance of heteronormative femininity. Rather than change in order to display more heteronormative femininities the girls tempered their displays of masculinised, ‘tough’ behaviours with occasional displays of hyper-femininity such as the romanticisation of babies, as will be seen later in this chapter.

The girls in this study were often proud of their ability to negotiate outside spaces and were aware that they were different to girls who engaged in home based activities or attended local clubs. In the extract below Amelie draws such a distinction as she ‘othered’ herself.

**Extract 12**

*And what do you do in the evenings?*

Have you seen the people who just stand outside of MacDonalds? I am one of those people from five to eleven. I would go every day to the shops and MacDonalds.

*(Amelie, first & only interview)*

By presenting herself to me as ‘one of those people’ Amelie made me aware that she considered herself to belong to a particular group of people, perhaps separated from other young people in her area, as she and her friends chose to spend a great deal of their time hanging out on the streets. In their research Seabrook and Green (2004) identified a group of girls who they had recruited from a local club who ‘othered’ another group of girls in their community who hung around on the streets. The street
girls were deemed unrespectable and thus risky by the very fact that they occupied spaces that were perceived to be dangerous. In the above quote it can be argued that Amelie is 'othering' herself as she draws a line between her friends and herself and others in her community. As someone who inhabited the risky spaces of the streets at night Amelie reinforced to me the value she placed on tough, strong femininities. As I have made clear throughout the analysis all the young women emphasised their own notions of strong, active, visible and loud femininities in their interviews, and these femininities were particularly evident when they spoke about their use of outside spaces.

The girls I interviewed in this study came from three broad areas: greater London, the Midlands and South East England. The many strikingly common features in the girls' narratives were never as clearly highlighted as when they each described the way in which they chose to use outside spaces to hang out with friends. Lupton (1999) has asserted that 'risky' behaviour and risk-taking can be a source of pleasure, excitement and enjoyment and leisure is one such space where risk-taking can occur. Indeed, I would assert that this is how the young women in my study constructed their use of outside spaces. Hanging out afforded the girls opportunities to create excitement by meeting up with friends and raising the possibility of meeting new friends, particularly boyfriends. By emphasising their participation in 'street' culture to me the girls were able to create the impression that they were able to take care of themselves and not at all 'girly girls' (Renold, 1997).

Groups of young people can often appear challenging or threatening particularly to older people. Lady Sovereign took the photo below of her group of friends outside the toilets of a local supermarket. The defiant finger gestures adopted by her friends (three girls and two boys) can be seen to add to the presentation of themselves as tough and not to be messed with. As can be seen from the photo the girls in the group can be viewed to be transgressing gender norms as the stance they adopt is non-feminine, almost masculinised, and they act in unison with the boys in the group.
Extract 13

And how long have you known these friends for?

Since year 8. There is more of us but that is just a few of them. I don’t really have a best friend because I like all my mates the same. So – but I get on with Christine like proper well. I get on with all of them.

(Lady Sovereign, second interview)
Jenni I go to Tesco's about 5 times a night.

Extract 14

Tesco sign. I made [friend] take that one because the main road through [town] goes down there. And I said 'I want a picture of that sign but I am not taking it' and she says 'give me the camera'. 'So here you go'. And the amount of people that were looking at us. I even got a squaddie vehicle in there, I think. Do you reckon they can enhance this photo? Possibly.

I go to Tesco's about five times a night.

Why do you go so often?

Because it is something to do. Because we see who is about and we just walk up the main road down to [town] down to the school and that and then we walk up the hill. And then we just decide which way we are going to walk. Towards the squaddie camps or away from the squaddie camps and ninety per cent we walk that way so they are walking that way so we walk with them.

(Jenni, second interview)

Jenni explained to me that she had taken the above photo in order to show her local area which she and her best friend frequented several times each evening. She presented herself to me as being at ease with walking around her town at night, hoping to bump into ‘squaddies’. Many of the girls viewed the streets as places where they were likely to meet people or as places where things were likely to happen. It was
noticeable that in their descriptions of their use of outside spaces none of the girls mentioned anything to do with a sense of risk, possible damage to reputation or of being afraid. This is in contrast to Skeggs' (1997) research which found the concepts of respectability and reputation to be of central importance to working-class girls' identities and therefore the performance of heteronormative femininity. I argue that making use of outside spaces, particularly in the dark, in areas that experience a combination of problems such as poor housing and unemployment, required a certain level of 'toughness'. Therefore Jenni, in a similar manner to many of the young women interviewed, through her references to her utilisation of outside spaces was able to reinforce her tough version of femininity. However, in the narrative which corresponded with this photo, Jenni showed a reticent side (more normally associated with heteronormative femininity) as she indicated that she was worried about passerby's reactions to her taking the photo. It appears paradoxical that Jenni worried about what people might think of her taking photos, but not about spending a great deal of her time on the streets late at night.

Quiet, more secluded areas were often chosen, particularly by the younger girls, as places to meet their friends, principally when drinking or drug taking was involved. For the excluded young women in the semi-rural areas in the South East of England, these places could be disused buildings and land and for the city girls, secluded parts of housing estates were used. Parks were also popular meeting places in all locations. The vast majority of my interviewees reported that they drank heavily and a large proportion also admitted to drug use. Many of the girls recounted that they had first started drinking at a young age and when interviewed they reported that drinking was a regular feature in their lives. Coleman and Carter (2003) have noted that more young people are drinking on a regular or weekly basis, and that alcohol is being consumed by them in greater quantities, especially during single 'binge' sessions. It is not uncommon in contemporary Britain for teenagers to engage in surreptitious, underage drinking and is perhaps viewed by many as a rite of passage. Some of my interviewees reported progressing from alcohol to cannabis to ecstasy and in some
cases to cocaine with 17 of the 25 girls asserting that they regularly took drugs. Smoking cannabis was the most common form of drug taking that the girls discussed however, 8 of them also referred to taking ecstasy and / or cocaine. The stories of drinking and drug taking described to me by the girls would certainly appear to be similar to the behaviour described as ‘laddish’ by Francis (1999), Jackson (2006) and Archer et al (2007a).

In the extracts below Lady Sovereign and Carrie gave me an insight into the outside spaces they inhabited with their friends.

**Extract 15**

On a Friday, everyone goes up to a place in [town] called Top of the World, and just like gets drunk and that

*Is that like a big hill?*

Yeah, there was a big old building up there too. Its quite good actually, although its quite dark.

On Saturday nights, everyone just like, we would drink

(Lady Sovereign, first interview)

**Photograph 16**

Carrie  
*The estate I'm always in! Where some of my closest friends live*
Extract 16

Jhordan's house is here. Like you see how this house is. It is just here and basically everyone just congregates there. And there is stairs that go down.

And how long do you stay there for?

Depends. Sometimes if it is cold and nobody ain't got no puff everyone goes like to someone's house. Sometimes we can actually stand out there yes from like five and just be there until eight or late – for ages the other night I was there until about one.

(Carrie, second interview)

The above extracts exemplify the manner in which my group of young women drank and took drugs. The outside spaces they described may be viewed as uninviting and risky, but both girls framed their accounts in terms of the social nature of these gatherings, and the almost expected drinking and drug taking that would take place. Carrie’s assertion that she could spend up to 9 hours per night outside, in risky spaces (such as housing estates’ stairways) again helped to reinforce the tough image she presented to me throughout her interviews. In the extract below Lucy recounted meeting her boyfriend in a park while he was pilling.

Photograph 17
Lucy: Back of Hill Park. I took this because it shows where I met my ex and used to walk my dog.

Extract 17

One night we ended up in the Park and we met Sammy, we met loads of people there actually. That’s the night I met my ex boyfriend while he was pilling as well.

How old is he?

He was 17 I think.

Was everyone just out in the open then?

Yeah we were just sitting on some trees and stuff, and then Becky met her boyfriend that night, Sammy split up with her boyfriend a couple of nights ago, but they are seeing each other instead now.

(Lucy, second interview)

Lucy explained that pilling in this context meant experiencing the effects of ecstasy. Lucy’s active decision to choose a boyfriend who indulged in drug taking can be seen as a subversion of heteronormative values. Lucy told me that her relationship with this boyfriend was not long lasting, and as with many of the young women interviewed she expressed a dislike of being told what to do by the boys she went out with. Again as with Lady Sovereign and Carrie, Lucy emphasised to me the social aspects of drug taking and presented it as something to do when meeting up with friends. Nicola shared this view:
Extract 18

*Why did you take that picture?*
Because that is where we hang around and I called it the banger field because there are loads of cars all burned out and that. We call it the banger field.

*How close is it to your house?*
Just along the road.

*So how often do you go there?*
Every day.

*And what do you do when you are there?*
We drink and hang around and smoke and other stuff.

*(Nicola, second interview)*

It is too dark to discern anything expect a shrub in Nicola’s photo but her use of the term ‘banger field’ and her explanation of it as having ‘loads’ of ‘burned out’ cars provided me with a stark image of this dark, isolated, and perhaps risky and dangerous, place. Even though Nicola had earlier related an incident where she had been assaulted whilst hanging out with her friends, rather than adopting a more cautionary heteronormative approach to her use of outside spaces, she continued to use potentially hazardous spaces to hang out with her friends. Engaging in such non-
heteronormative behaviour served to enhance her tough presentation to me. There is abundant evidence to show that substance abuse in adolescence is strongly associated with an increased risk of antisocial behaviour and criminal activity (for example see McCrystal et al 2005). Many of my interviewees in their narratives referred to antisocial and criminal behaviours they indulged in, usually entwined with accounts of their drinking and drug taking.

In the account below Shola explained how she spent her time hanging out with friends.

**Extract 19**

And we just used to sit around in the tower blocks around smoking weed, making trouble, stealing from pizza men and stuff like that.

*(Shola, first and only interview)*

Shola explained to me that by making trouble she meant that she and her group of friends often acted in loud and silly ways, frequently annoying neighbours. Shola emphatically insisted that she took as big a part as her male friends in these activities, asserting that she would do anything they would do. In the photo below and in her narrative, Beany explained how she had come to graffiti the walls of her old school.
The graffiti on the wall is supposed to say [name] the Beaner — that is my nickname from when I used to pop pills (beans) and I sprayed it on the wall at my old school.

Beany was the only girl to experience problems with the disposable camera, hence the poor quality of the photo. She confided in me that she used to take lots of Pills or Beans more commonly known as ecstasy. Indeed, her nickname indicated that she appeared to be well known for her drug taking. During her time at the PRU Beany had been seeing a drugs counsellor and asserted that she had tried to cut down her intake of drugs. However, her choice of pseudonym, together with her decision to take a photo of her graffiti, showed me the significance this non-conformist aspect of her identity had and perhaps still has in her life.

Stealing was a commonly mentioned activity that the girls engaged in. In some cases it was carried out merely to alleviate boredom, or in order to provide items such as make-up which the girls could not afford for themselves. In many instances that the girls related, stealing was connected to drinking or drug taking. The following extracts
from Beany, Sarah and Lady Sovereign exemplify many of the girls’ experiences of shoplifting.

Extract 20
I don’t think I am allowed in Superdrugs any more. Because I got caught touring the other day.

You got caught what?
Touring.

What does that mean?
Nicking - and I had £25 worth of make up. And I have got to go to court on the 12th May.

So why did you do that?
I needed some make up. I wasn’t doing it for money at the time.

Did you get sort of properly arrested and taken...
Yes. To [town] Police Station.

How many times have you been arrested before?
God knows.

Were they all for shop lifting?
Only a few for shop lifting. The rest are like ABH. Things like that. I have got about 13 counts in the cells.

(Lady Sovereign, second interview)

Extract 21
We always used to like would get in gangs down Somerfield and just sit there and do nothing really, sit there and smoke and drink. Me and Kandice used to go in the shop all the time and just steal loads of alcohol. In the six week holiday we must have got drunk nearly every single day.

(Beany, first interview)

Extract 22
I have been done for shoplifting a couple of times, but I don’t do it anymore, I did it when I was about 13, I did it to pay for the coke and E when I took that.

(Sarah, first & only interview)

Half of my interviewees reported that they regularly indulged in shoplifting. Indeed, one girl Samantha, reported that she had been sent by the court on a six week course designed to prevent shoplifters from re-offending after she had been caught several
times. Lady Sovereign reported stealing in order to acquire goods for herself. In her account above she presented her arrest, almost as a slight inconvenience that she was not particularly bothered about (‘God knows’), but she proudly related the number of times she had been held by the police, almost in the style of a rapper (‘thirteen counts in the cells’). Beany’s and Sarah’s accounts of stealing were tied more directly to their consumption of drugs. Throughout her interviews Beany often couched her behaviour in innocuous terms, for example she presented hanging around Sommerfield as harmless (she would ‘do nothing really’). However, she went on to admit that she had stolen from the shop, presenting this crime almost as a social activity to me, as she was part of a gang and the act of stealing was carried out with her best friend. However, the seriousness of her offences became clear as Beany went on to describe that she had received an ASBO, which banned her from being in the area near the shop she described. In a different manner, some of the girls spoke of carrying out criminal activities on their own. Sarah had previously mentioned her drug use and she presented her reasons for stealing very much in terms of having to feed her addictions. Drinking and drug taking often fuelled more serious altercations with the police and criminal behaviour.

Extract 23

Okay [reading from timeline] so you got arrested for swearing at the police when you were drunk. Where did that happen?

In [town]. I had just come from [another town]. And then I went to the kebab shop on my own, it was about midnight and then on the way back I see the police and because I was drunk I started swearing at them and they come over and said ‘what is your name’ and I said ‘I am not telling you’ being mouthy and that and then they said ‘right we are going to arrest you’ and it was ‘oh go on you fat slags’ and then they like pinned me down on the floor and pulled my arms around and put really tight handcuffs on me. I have still got scars there now. My mum basically left me in the police cell for two hours to sober up, mum came in first and she said ‘I have bought you a can of Coke’. She just said ‘do you think you have got an alcohol problem now’. I said ‘no’.

(Kate, first & only interview)
Kate’s description of her drunk and disorderly behaviour was unusual amongst my group of young women as she had been involved in this incident on her own. Her willingness to be out on her own late at night in a drunken state and antagonise two police officers by swearing at them, has all the hallmarks of Jackson (2006) and Francis’s (1999) description of ladette behaviour. However, perhaps equally notable is the concern voiced by Kate’s mum as she challenge’s Kate to recognize that she has an alcohol problem. Coleman and Cater (2005) have commented that binge drinking can often lead young people to compromise their personal safety, the most commonly reported safety risk was walking home alone. Getting drunk and using drugs were often portrayed by my interviewees as being associated with an image of being older and harder than others, perhaps because of their ‘prohibited’ status.

Extract 24

*When did you do the joy riding then?*

When I started on drugs because it was just excitement.

*Who did you do that with?*

People in [city] like. All my mates. And I just loved it. So...

*And did you used to drive?*

Yes that was the best bit. Because at first they were like ‘you can't drive if you were a woman’. I said ‘don't be so sexist let me drive’. And then I drove and that and they said ‘well you are quite a good driver for a woman. Is this your first time’? And I was like ‘yes’. And then I started getting into driving when I used to hang out with them and it was ‘no I am driving you lot sit in the back kind of thing’ so. And I used to do stupid things like I used to break into people’s houses and that to find - like if no one had the money to get me drugs I had to go and break into someone’s house to find the money to supply myself kind of thing. So yes I did do stupid things.

*(Kandice, first interview)*

Several of my interviewees mentioned being involved in breaking into and entering properties, ostensibly with the aim of finding money or stealing goods to sell on in order to buy drugs and alcohol. However, only one girl, Kandice, mentioned being involved in joyriding. In the extract above she presented her exploits to me in terms of achieving equality with her male counterparts as she proudly related the comments
made by the boys about her driving ability. There is much evidence which links higher levels of delinquency with higher levels of drug use (For example, McCrystal et al, 2005). However, much of this research has focused particularly on boys, whereas my research suggests that girls too do take part in risky, and risk seeking, criminal activities such as joyriding and breaking into houses. Kandice presented her breaking and entering and joyriding trajectory to being heavily influenced by the drugs she was taking. Similar to many other interviewees, Kandice related to me that she had been seeing a drugs counsellor in sessions at her PRU and had now considerably reduced her drug intake and criminal activity.

Even though the oldest girls I interviewed were only 16, many of my interviewees reported progressing from hanging around on the streets to hanging around in pubs and clubs. Inside spaces may be considered safer than some of the outside spaces described earlier, however, the girls' narratives relating to pubs and clubs demonstrated that risk factors, although not acknowledge by the girls, were still present. Some of the excluded girls reported that their alcohol consumption and drug taking increased with their use of pubs and clubs. As has been mentioned money was often a problem for the girls. Gemma's caption associated with her first photo below indicated how she and some of her friends relied on subsidies from acquaintances to pay for drinks and in her second photograph her friends' use of pubs as sites for the consumption of drugs is evident.
Photograph 20

Gemma  My friend Carly – and a man called Jim. Jim’s always in the pub. He is kind with his money.

Photograph 21

Gemma  Lee – I LOVE HIM. I’ve know him since I was born. We grew up together! If anyone hurts him I’ll hurt them. Hes rolling a joint in the middle of town.
Extract 25
Baby Lee. I love him. I could never do nothing with him or go out with him. He is just, I love him to pieces. This is him skinning up in the middle of town. He doesn't care.
*Does he smoke a lot then?*
Yes he is a dealer now as well.
*(Gemma, second interview)*

The activity of ‘skinning up’ seemed to be normalised in Gemma’s life and she also casually referred to her friend’s drug dealing activities. Having friends who deal drugs could be seen to afford Gemma a certain amount of street credibility. Even though it could be argued that a certain level of toughness was required by Lee to act in this way in a public place, Gemma can be seen to show her loyalty to, and equality with him, through her protestations of being willing to defend him. Other interviewees reported going to the pub already ‘cained’:

Extract 26
I go to the pub one or two nights a week, we go to the pub a few nights actually. It will start like, I’ll go back to [town1], and spend an hour with my mates there, and then ride back to the [town2], then get cained, have dinner, if someone wants to go down the pub, we all have to go down the pub, so we’ll go down the pub, play pool, have two joints, and then get drunk, go back play worms, get stoned, go to bed about 2 or 3 in the morning some days its even quarter past 6, Saturdays its quarter past seven
*(Sarah, first & only interview)*

At the time of her interview Sarah lived with four older friends (as described in chapter 7) and presented her social life to me as revolving around alcohol and cannabis. Sarah reported that her friends bought her drinks and gave her spliffs as she had very little money of her own. She went on to say that her attendance at her PRU was very erratic and she attributed this to the amount of time she spent with her friends smoking cannabis. I would argue that in these examples the girls thought they were behaving in an agentic manner, choosing to drink, smoke and take drugs, and therefore acting at one end of the heteronormative continuum. However, they were often subsidised in these activities by their male friends, who were encouraging their behaviour.
Therefore the excluded girls’ conduct can again be seen to be in accordance with McRobbie’s (2006) third luminosity as their behaviour seemingly contributed to reinforcing both heternormative femininity and the heterosexual matrix.

8.4 Babies

As was seen in the previous two sections the girls effectively portrayed themselves to me as streetwise and showed little concern for their own personal safety as they used risky outside spaces. The girls deployed many of the aspects which I felt contributed to their performance of tough femininities, such as rule breaking and acting unyieldingly, often indicating that exercising their own agency in the way they lived their lives was important to them. These attributes can be seen as resistant of heternormative femininity. However, the seemingly contrasting repertoire of hyper-femininity was also displayed on occasions by many of the excluded young women. The romanticisation of babies was one area where this hyper-femininity manifested itself as the young women displayed an almost collective fascination with babies and young children. Although the romanticisation of babies is obviously different to the glamorous performance of hyper-femininities which have been referred to thus far, I argue that the girls’ attitudes were a form of hyper-femininity as they were so visible and prominent. These ‘motherly’ and caring aspects of the girls’ performance of femininities were graphically highlighted by the number of photos the girls took of their pregnant friends, babies and toddlers. Showing such a strong interest in babies and young children may be considered unusual for 12-16 year olds. I would argue that the young women’s almost idolisation of babies and young children and the seriousness with which they discussed them contributed towards their performances of hyper-femininities. This is exemplified by the photo Gemma took in a pub of her pregnant friend and the discussion of this picture which follows between Gemma and Kandice.
In this context the term Pikey can be taken to be a reference to travellers or caravan dwellers. This picture was taken by Gemma, but Kandice sat in on the discussion of Gemma’s photos. They both agreed that Simone looked a ‘state’ in this photo, and asserted that:
G: Yeah and she had like, that tops actually see through, she's got a black bra on underneath though.
K: She looks like a state don't she there though. That's bad.
G: When you look at the picture then you can imagine like if someone else, if I didn't know her and someone showed me that picture I'd think you typical pregnant Pikey slag. That's what I'd think if I looked at that.

(Gemma & Kandice, joint third interview)

Gemma's comments can be seen to reflect on the transgressive nature of Simone's display of her body. By exposing her pregnant body in the pub Simone was perhaps exceeding the boundaries of social acceptability for Gemma and Kandice. Notably neither girl levelled criticisms at any other friends during their interviews for their physical appearance or in connection with their drinking and smoking. Gemma and Kandice went on to comment that unlike Simone, they would alter their behaviour if they were pregnant:

Extract 29
G: Simone gets stoned all the time. Like actually all the time. Its not funny, I shouldn't be laughing. Its bad, its fucking harsh on the baby. I wouldn't, if I was pregnant. I would try and cut smoking out.
K: Karen managed to, didn't she. She's stopped smoking. That was for the baby.

(Gemma & Kandice, joint third interview)

Gemma and Kandice showed me that they were aware of health promotion messages in regard to unborn children’s health. They drew a distinction between their friends who they thought were behaving like a prospective parent ought to behave, and those friends who were not abiding by social conventions. Gemma applied the situation of her pregnant friend to herself ('if I was pregnant') and by doing so perhaps indicated to me that such a thought was not completely unrealistic. Whilst condemning their friend's smoking and drinking Gemma and Kandice were, at the same time, accepting of her pregnancy. Phoenix (1991) found amongst her sample that early motherhood
was common in the social networks inhabited by the mothers, was more supported than censured, and that most had expected early motherhood in a few years anyway, like their friends, their own mothers, and relatives. All my interviewees referred in positive terms about their friends who were pregnant or had babies and some provided examples of the beneficial changes that having babies would provide to their friends’ lives:

*Photograph 23*

That is his girlfriend, Chris’s girlfriend. She is three months pregnant she is.

*How old is she?*

She is 16. She is my lovely friend.

*How long have you known her for?*

I have known her since – I have known her about three years. She got put into a hostel and now that she is three months pregnant she has to go out and then she is getting put into a child’s unit and then she will be put into a flat.

*(Nicola, second interview)*

In common with all my interviewees who had pregnant friends, Nicola was very accepting and positive about her friend’s situation and she seemed pleased that her
friend would soon be moving out of the hostel. Many of the girls’ photographed babies and small children who they saw frequently:

**Photograph 24**

![Image of Jade and a child](image)

Jade  **This is my nephew**

**Photograph 25**

![Image of Alisha, Kimarli, and Tiae](image)

Alisha  **Me and Kimarli & Tiae - my neighbours kids**
Extract 31
That is me next door neighbour. I always babysit for them. I always do.
Do you get paid for it?
Not always but sometimes.
Are they good for you?
Yes. But they are mostly good but they can be naughty too
(Alisha, second interview)

Photograph 26

June Mackie on his bike

The above three photos are just a small sample of those taken of babies and children by the girls who undertook the photo elicitation task. The interviewees referred to them as being ‘cute’, ‘cuddly’, ‘sweet’ and ‘lovely’. Many girls reported being involved in the care of young children, for example Alisha frequently babysat her neighbour’s
children. The children June photographed were not related to her and as they were the children of friends’ relatives they might be viewed as rather distant to her life. However, she nevertheless presented herself as doting on them. Some of my interviewees presented themselves as making public displays of their affection for young children:

**Photograph 27**

Gemma  
**Me looking like the devil. Waynes baby who I love to pieces. Shes sooooo cute. She always smiles and laughs with me.**

**Extract 32**

Here is a picture of Wayne [pointing at a different photo] and that is his baby so... I will just put Wayne's baby. She is gorgeous isn't she?

*(Gemma, second interview)*
Gemma had red eyes in the photo, hence the devil remark. She explained that the photo was taken in the pub where Wayne was a regular. In a similar manner to all the girls who spoke about babies, Gemma can be seen to be portraying herself in this particular photo and in her narrative which accompanied it, in almost complete opposition to the way in which she presented herself throughout her interviews (predominately in a tough manner) as she cooed to me over the picture of Wayne’s daughter in a motherly, hyper-feminine manner. Gemma was in the presence of her friends, both male and female in the pub when the photo was taken, and it is possible that she wanted to be seen to be acting as a ‘suitable’ mother, someone who could competently take care of young children. By taking photos of young children and making a fuss of them in social spheres, such as the pub, Gemma publicly performed being a ‘mother’, in order to demonstrate caring, empathetic femininities. By presenting themselves as hyper-feminine in this manner the excluded young women could easily fend off any criticism that might be engendered by acting in a laddish manner for example, when intoxicated. Therefore to present themselves in this manner enabled them to an extent to ‘rescue’ their (heteronormative) femininities which had been challenged by the constant displays of tough femininities. Many of the girls seemed to take easily to the notion that they should care and look after children.

8.5 Summary
In this chapter I have explored how the young women choose to use their leisure time. The focus of the analysis in this chapter has been how the girls used their home environments for leisure, the importance of friends to the young women, particularly best friends, hanging out and the romanisation of babies. The evidence from the girls’ narratives indicated that a bedroom culture did not exist as none of my interviewees used their bedrooms for socialising as described by McRobbie (1977) and Lincoln (2004). What was evident from the girls’ narratives was their almost universally stated love of, and emersion in, rap and hip hop music. Rather than interest in the politicised forms of rap, most of interviewees stated preference for the more commercialised forms of rap, often associated with masculinity and bling culture. Rap music provided
a visual display, for example the posters and the jewellery, as well as an audible display of toughness which the girls were keen to present to me. Although some of the girls did equate rap and hip hop with their own personal experiences other connotations of this genre of music such as conspicuous consumption and glamorous lifestyles were also evoked by the girls' narratives.

The evidence presented here suggests that friends in particular the girls' best friends, were very important to them. Similar interests and reciprocal loyalties in these relationships helped to alleviate the stresses and conflict described elsewhere with regard to relationships in the girls' narratives, such as families and school. Best friends helped to support and maintain each others' agentic resistance of heteronormative forms of femininity and in the production of their tough femininities. Although the majority of my interviewees did report having boyfriends only Kosie and Markeata reported their lives being effectively organised around their boyfriends, as characterised by the heteronormative girls in Archer et al's (2007a; 2007b) study. For most of the girls romantic relationships were not usually long lasting. They did not let boyfriends 'disengage' them from their peer group as the girls in Archer et al's (2007: 172a) study did.

The young women in my study used outside spaces as places to hang out with friends. Previous research has pointed to the 'deeply gendered' nature of leisure 'both in terms of the spaces and places that young women occupy and their behaviour within such spaces' (Green and Singleton, 2006: 854). It has been asserted that public space in Western society has long been claimed by white, heterosexual men who have dominated, controlled and excluded other groups through the exertion of aggressive behaviour or violence (Green et al, 1990; Lupton, 1999; Pain, 2001). These traditional 'gendered' notions of space do not seem to apply to my interviewees as they reported inhabiting outside spaces almost 'fearlessly'. For example none of my interviewees reported avoiding certain risky areas at night time to avoid harm. This may be because
of the group nature of their hanging around activities and male friends were often part of these 'groups'.

The data presented in this chapter demonstrated the almost universal rejection by the young women of a heteronormative approach to the use of outside spaces, as referred to by Green and Singleton (2006). In their (2006: 862) study girls who used the risky spaces of the streets, especially after dark, were labelled 'tarts' or 'slappers' by girls who utilised a local club and were thought to generally represent non-respectable bodies. The girls' use of risky spaces and their excessive indulgence in activities such as drinking, drug taking and antisocial behaviour and in some cases criminally activities can be seen as subverting heteronormative femininities and male hegemony.

Issues of reputation and respectability are noticeably missing in my interviewees' accounts of their use of outside spaces. Lupton (1999) noted that risky behaviour and risk taking can be a source of pleasure, excitement and enjoyment. The use, of what may be perceived as risky spaces, such as streets and parks at night, by my interviewees reinforced their tough performances. The girls' reported trying to find exciting things to do with their time and this often entailed drinking and taking drugs. Shildrick (2002: 50) found in her study that one group of young people with low educational achievement who lived in disadvantaged areas, the 'trackers', tended to describe drug consumption as a much more accepted, regular and common place part of their cultural lives. In a similar manner to my interviewees, Shildrick reported that the trackers used drugs alongside alcohol and simply hanging around the streets and doing nothing. Shildrick (2002: 53) noted that for the trackers, their drug use was sometimes problematic for them and 'it was not difficult to imagine that more of them could in the future progress from the use of recreational drugs to the use of other more addictive drugs use as heroin'. Some of my interviewees reported regularly taking ecstasy and cocaine, and it could be argued that cocaine is a step-up from 'recreational' drug use.
The data generated in this chapter could be viewed as the girls’ resistance of heteronormative femininities as they aped what could be deemed as ‘laddish’ (Jackson, 2006) conduct, such as ‘hard drinking’, swearing, fighting and being loud and rude. However, I maintain that the young women exhibited an extreme form of this behaviour in order to maintain and reinforce their tough femininities. It was important for some of the excluded young women to justify their behaviour to me in terms of gender equality, for example Carrie asserted that she was as good at playing PlayStation games as any boy, and Kandice argued that girls could joyride too. It has been asserted that ‘symbolic violence’ is enacted on ‘other’ working-class femininities (those which do not accord with heteronormative femininity), ‘particularly those that seek to disrupt gender norms and provide (albeit problematically) young women with greater agency and power to ‘be otherwise’ (Archer et al, 2007a: 176). McRobbie (2006) has argued that by giving the impression of having won equality with men by becoming like her male counterparts women adopt the phallus, but in doing so there is no critique of masculine hegemony. The impression is conveyed that young women are now able to emerge unhindered and are able to make choices about how they wish to live their lives, and the luminosities make it look as though young women are indeed empowered. However, ‘there is gender re-stabilisation in this orchestration of luminosities, young women can come forward on condition that feminist politics fades away, and the illusion of movement and success masks the subtle and the not so subtle re-instatement of sexual hierarchies’ (McRobbie, 2006: 14).

The toughness which the excluded young women displayed was intermittently mediated by an extreme, but somewhat paradoxical display of hyper-femininity. I would argue that for young women ‘being tough’ within the dominant hegemony of the heterosexual matrix implies things about the actor’s sexuality and therefore in order to rescue or compensate for this, the repertoire of hyper-femininity was deployed as a compensatory tool, for example in the romanticisation of babies. In the final analysis chapter an extreme display of the excluded girls’ tough femininities will be examined: violence.
Chapter 9: Aggression and violence

My three previous analysis chapters have depicted aspects of the girls' lives which they portrayed as being significant to them such as school, families, and friends and community. However, a theme that permeated all the girls' accounts and was obviously highly significant in their lives was that of aggression and violence. As the reader will be aware reference has been made to aggression and violence in the previous chapters. However, I felt that the emphasis that the girls placed on aggression and violence in their interviews warranted further consideration and I have therefore devoted this final analysis chapter to this task.

In chapter 3 I noted that femininity has traditionally been characterised by reference to traits such as passivity and reticence. Aggression and violence are predominantly portrayed as male or masculine traits thereby reinforcing women as the non-aggressive sex. However, recently the notion that women, particularly working-class women, do 'do' violence has been forwarded (Day et al, 2003). Throughout the interviews passivity and reticence were traits not easily identifiable in the girls' accounts. Following the moral panic which grew in the 1990s about increasing female violence and girl gangs featured in newspapers (Thompson, 1998) both academic and media accounts have frequently portrayed girls' violence as more grave and disquieting than boys' violence, and as presenting more of a problem (Burman et al, 2003). However, although there is some evidence to suggest that girls are increasingly being drawn into the criminal justice system for violent offences when compared to young men the number of young women who commit violent offences remains low (Batchelor et al, 2001). Researchers often still unproblematically embrace the notion of the non-violent women, for example in a recent work emphasising violent behaviour in the night time economy, Winlow and Hall (2006: 103) found that the majority of the women they encountered 'expressed distaste for violence'.
As I have already elucidated the young women in my study presented two opposing accounts of femininity, toughness, which can be seen in many ways to challenge heteronormative femininity (Renold, 2007), and hyper-femininity which can be seen to reinforce heteronormative femininity but also to challenge it. Many of the young women made reference to hyper-femininity as they showed a great deal of concern for their physical appearance, dress and grooming. This concern with physical aspects of femininity appeared to be in stark contrast to the fighting stories the girls recounted. As referred to in chapter 3, for Skeggs women are not feminine by default but femininity is rather ‘a carefully constructed appearance and / or form of conduct that can be displayed. It is a knowing construction, publicly performed’ (Skeggs, 1997: 107). The deployment of the interpretative repertoires of toughness and hyper-femininity enabled the girls to an extent to compartmentalise two extreme forms of femininity.

Violence and aggression were topics that all the girls raised and they readily gave examples of their involvement in, both as perpetrators and as victims. It was notable that accompanying the young women’s accounts of aggression and violence were similar motivational feelings as identified by Burman (2004) such as frustration, disaffection, anger and humiliation. Day et al (2003) argue that women’s aggression (although often very damaging) can be taken as evidence of women’s ability to exercise control and power. Willis (1977) highlights that the lads in his study, exercised their power and control in order to resist the dominant hegemony exemplified by the authority their teachers tried to exercise over them. However he has been criticised for being too deterministic in his analysis and for not taking factors outside of class conflict into account. Foucault asserts that an understanding of relations of power might be better achieved through analysis of resistance and struggle (Smart, 2002: 135). Foucault believes that a series of oppositions have emerged in modern Western societies that cannot be ascribed to the dynamo of class struggle, namely concerning the power of ‘men over women, of parents over children, of psychiatry over the mentally ill, ... of administration over the ways people live’ (Foucault, 1982: 211 ). For Foucault resistance is written into the exercise of power and therefore resistance to oppression is
much more frequent than one would imagine (Mills, 2004). However, the agency that resistance demands of individuals, often at great physical cost to themselves, should not be underestimated (Mills, 2004). Many of the young women in my study used aggression and violence as ways of empowering themselves and resisting the differing structures of society, such as school, family and the expectations associated with heteronormative femininity. The girls’ stories in this chapter revealed the conflictual, often aggressive and violent, nature of their day-to-day lives. In order to facilitate the analysis of the data in this chapter I have arranged the data under the following headings: Bitching, fighting, and domestic violence.

9.1 Bitching
Aggression and violence in the form of verbal and physical assaults were encountered by all my group of young women almost on a daily basis. ‘Bitching’ was the term most frequently used by my group of excluded young women to describe various forms of verbal abuse dealt out to them by other girls. In her study of female violence, Burman (2004) found that her group of young women used the term ‘slagging’ in a similar way. For my group of interviewees ‘bitching’ covered a range of verbal abuses such as name calling, talking about someone behind their back, insulting someone’s appearance or insulting a family member. My interviewees reported the everyday nature of these onslaughts in a similar manner to other studies (for example Burman, 2004). Reports of such behaviour by my interviewees were frequently accompanied by protestations of the unpleasant and hurtful nature of these incidents. Comparable to other studies (for example Owens et al, 2000) my interviewees frequently reported examples of ‘bitching’ that they had experienced at the hands of other girls.

Extract 1
But it is a thing whereby you are being nice to someone and they are just betraying you behind your back. And they will look at you in your face and like be horrible to you while you are being nice to them, because they are spreading rumours about me, and everything.
(Markeata, first & only interview)
Extract 2
If I had of went to a mixed school I would have been better off because there was too much bitching because it was a girls' school. Like say Tanesha, I wouldn't actually do it to Tanesha, but I would be like 'oh I hate Tanesha' and she will come up behind me and I will go and I will hug her and I will be like 'oh my God Tanesha' and that is how they all are. Bitchy.
(Amelie, first & only interview)

Extract 3
The majority of my mates are lads they always have been, girls are too bitchy, they are, they are the biggest bitches out there, all they ever do is back stab you in the back, literally I only have about a handful of female mates, that is it
(Sarah, first & only interview)

As is expressed in the above extracts the interviewees seemed to agree that bitching was an act performed by girls. A reoccurring notion throughout the interviews was the unpleasant feelings bitching could arouse in those at the receiving end of such behaviour. Many of the girls reported how hurt and isolated they had felt as the victims of such behaviour. As can be seen in extract 3, Sarah believed that it was only by having male friends that she could rid herself of the troubles of bitchiness. Markeata, Amelie and Sarah suggested that bitchiness often occurred surreptitiously, at least initially and that bitchy behaviour often betrayed a network of trust amongst pre-existing groups of friends. Other researchers have tried to locate young women's experiences of 'bitchiness' within the heteronormative status quo. Artz (2004) suggests that violent schoolgirls struggle with sexual objectification, mistrust and misogyny and experience relationships with other girls and even other boys, not so much as bonds of friendship but as alliances of power. Artz (2004) highlighted Tanenbaum's (1999) argument that when:

Girls are confronted with someone who does not fit their idea of the ways girls should act or look, they grasp for a sexually insulting label. This reflects the extent to which the systematic devaluation and sexual objectification of women and girls is culturally embedded (Artz, 2004: 161).
Consequently girls who are perceived to be 'slags' are labelled such because they threaten other girls' relationships with males. Indeed when my interviewees used the term 'slag' it was in the specific context of being insulted because of alleged sexual misdemeanours. For example in the extract below Shemeila spoke of the problems she encountered due to going against her cultural mandate (she was a Muslim girl who attended a predominantly Muslim school) and in extract 5 Alexi also referred to the problems of being labelled a 'slag':

**Extract 4**
The other girls didn't like me hanging around with a boyfriend. They call you a slag because if you are going out with one guy and you don't think about your own sisters and that.

*(Shemeila, first interview)*

**Extract 5**
I got accused - some girl called Nicole came to the school and went to Acorn Grove and basically said that I had slept with one of the teachers here in the staff room and that the girls then started slagging me off saying that I am a slag 'blah blah this blah blah that' and so I just thought I just can't be bothered with it any more. So there is no point of me going to school if I am not going to learn. Do you know what I mean? If they are just like slagging me off so I just never used to go to school.

*(Alexi, first & only interview)*

Alexi asserted that this rumour had been initiated by one girl but it soon became a collective issue. She managed to convey to me how upsetting and isolating she had found this collective behaviour against her to be. Many of the young women I interviewed reported similar instances of a group directing name calling and rumour spreading towards one girl. Even though Alexi described other instances in her interview where she had resorted to fighting, it is notable that she did not fight in this situation. Instead she exercised her agency in a different way by choosing not to attend school and thereby distanced herself from the other girls who were abusing her. As
was discussed in chapter 8, the interviewees commonly described their friends as extremely important to them and hanging out with their friends was their main social activity. Bitchiness and in particular spreading rumours or being at the receiving end of hurtful comments were the main reasons the girls gave for falling out with friends. Such fall outs could lead to powerful reactions from the girls and indeed bitching was frequently cited as the precursor to physical violence.

Extract 6
But in my old school I was like the proper bad person like, girls would be scared because I would always get angry and like threaten people if they - I don't know if they said things about me I would say something again basically that I would 'kick the shit out of you'. So everyone was scared because like they had seen me get in fights before at school. I had had about six or seven before but no one knew about it, like I say 'don't even tell no one because otherwise you will get a lot else'. I was a proper bitch. But I don't know I was going freestyle. With my dad and everything and I just took it out on every one else.

(Gemma, first interview)

In the above extract Gemma successfully conveyed to me the anger she felt when people said 'something about me'. She left me in no doubt that she was not only prepared to answer verbal abuse with verbal abuse, but she was also prepared to fight in order to resist any bitching directed towards her. Gemma's sense of agency was evident as she conveyed to me that others knew her reputation for fighting and would therefore be wary of directing bitching behaviour towards her in future. Indeed, Gemma gave me the impression that she had graduated from being a victim of bitching to being the perpetrator of threatening and violent behaviour herself. Here, as at other times in her interview, Gemma cited her family problems as an excuse for her behaviour and this interpretation by some of the girls for their own behaviour is something which I will return to later in the chapter.
9.2 Fighting

The majority of the young women in this study referred to instances in their interviews where they had witnessed fights or more frequently where they were involved in fights themselves. Fighting to the girls, as in Gemma’s case above, appeared to be a visual demonstration to others that they were prepared to stand up for themselves and not to be messed with. In some examples that the girls gave, fighting could be seen to successfully deflect the hurtful and harmful effects of bitching. In other instances cited by the girls acting aggressively and fighting could be viewed as a survival strategy in the oppressive environments of the homes, schools and estates which the young women inhabited. To be seen in any way other than tough and able to take care of themselves would have left the young women weak and open to attack. It is notable that few of the young women mentioned that they belonged to gangs and it could be argued that the two who did were part of small friendship groups rather than actual gangs. Most of these fighting stories related to individual girls fighting or fighting alongside friends.

The strategy of adopting highly visible, tough femininities may be viewed as a challenge to performances of hetero-normative femininity which may have led the girls to be excluded by peers (and this will be reflected on in chapter 10). Other studies have shown that girls tend to use violence as a last resort. For example in her research with ‘fearless girls’ (a sample of self-confessed violent young women) in Germany, Räthzel (2006) found that her sample of girls only engaged in violent behaviour when it was unavoidable and they then employed sets of rules and strategies in order to avoid violence. What appeared to differentiate the girls in my research from previous studies was the speed with which they reported they became involved in violent action, either to defend their positions or to demonstrate their dominance over others.

The young women gave a variety of reasons for becoming involved in fights themselves. These ranged from receiving a dirty look to a perceived insult directed at a family member. At other times the young women recounted complex reasons for
fighting. Sometimes the girls themselves were unclear about their reasons for fighting and notions such as releasing pent up feelings or the rush gained from fighting were cited as grounds for fighting. Therefore I have not attempted in the following analysis to present a highly categorised account of the reasons the girls gave for fighting. Rather I have arranged the data to facilitate the reader's understanding of the everyday occurrence of violence in the girls' lives, the way in which the girls used violence to resist and empower them in certain situations, and the heightened emotions which the girls reported as experiencing, prior, during and after fighting. Another feature of these stories which emerged was the nature of the fights themselves. They were often extremely brutal and on occasions resulted in serious injuries.

In the photo sequence below, and the accompanying narrative which June provided, the everyday, ordinary nature of fighting in the young women's lives is highlighted. June took a series of three photographs depicting a fight between two of her friends.

**Photograph 1**

June  Maya and Suemay fighting over a comb.
My friend video recording the fight.

Suemay biting Maya's finger.

What were they fighting about?
Oh it was a comb.

Was it like a proper fight?

It was a proper fight. It was Maya's comb and Suemay stole it and said that she couldn't have her comb back until she fights her. Someone is biting someone. She got bitten and her finger got bitten and her eyes got dug in.

(June, second interview)

These photos show June's two friends, Maya and Suemay, fighting firstly on a tarmaced area, then in a bundle on the grass. As can be seen in the photo above a friend appeared to be videoing them on a mobile phone, and of course June took photos with her disposable camera which I had given to her. At first I thought this fight might have been a 'play' fight, however, June asserted that it was a 'proper' fight. Indeed, June's reference to the injuries that both her friends endured in the fight served to make the fight appear more real to me. What is perhaps significant is the reason given for the fight as one girl is clearly trying to exert dominance over another girl by claiming her possession. This perhaps reflected the everyday occurrence of such behaviour and the ease to which the young women in this study and their peers reported resorting to fighting. Elsewhere in her interview June had said that she was good friends with Maya but had fallen out with Suemay sometime after this photo had been taken. Suemay's lack of fighting skills were stressed by June as she hypothesised that it would be easy for her to 'batter her' if they were to fight in the future. This series of photographs is striking in that it illuminates the two opposing elements present in many of the girls' lives: hyper-femininity and toughness. Hyper-femininity is embodied by the actors in the photos through their feminine dress (particularly Suemay's off-the shoulder top) and the fact that the fight took place over a comb - an object associated with grooming and femininity. This display of hyper-femininity is in stark contrast to the display of toughness exemplified by the girls in their willingness to fight.

Most of the young women related stories where they had been involved in a serious fight, usually with other girls. The girls' reasons for fighting were undoubtedly
complex but perhaps were not always immediately explicable to the young women themselves. In extracts 8, 9 and 10 below contrasting emphasises are given by Markeata and Gemma for their involvement in the fights they described. However, as can be seen in the extract below, Markeata did not make her reasons for fighting explicitly clear to me.

Extract 8
So you got into fights?
Yes. I got into fights but they were not my fault ... I was on a bus after school. I was waiting for some girl that I called my friend and then because I couldn't wait for her I had to be on the 4.30 so I just took the bus going home and I saw three other girls that used to be my friends, they were just sort of like an acquaintance thing. So they got on the bus and I said to one of them 'how come you are taking this route. You don't usually come', in a friendly kind of way. We just started speaking. We were just talking. She was eating something and she squashed the paper and she threw it at me and it hit me on my head. So I got up like I was just friendly, I didn't take that to heart or anything. I said 'what are you doing, what are you doing'. And she grabbed my hair. 'Okay let go of my hair'. She didn't let go. So I started digging her skin like that, because I have got sharp nails, doing that. So the more she pulled the more I dig. And I still telling her 'get your hands off my hair'. I was just playing even though she should be the one apologising to me. Next minute two of her friends came and they all started pulling my hair and there were just three of us, four of us on the bus. So they all started pulling my hair so I just started to fight and we started fighting and we fought and fought and fought until Barr Hill. And then after that all the girls started saying 'watch out on Monday, I am going to get my mum' and stuff like that. So I am not aware that they were injured but I was not injured like physically but I was like aching you know, there was three of them, I was aching but I don't know why I hardly get scars.
(Markeata, first & only interview)

I have cut Markeata's account short as she continued to talk uninterrupted about this incident for another few minutes. Similar to many of the girls' accounts regarding violence, Markeata strongly protested to me that the fight was not her fault. Noticeably she very quickly skirted over the details of what had lead up to the fight, implying that she had been provoked when one of the girls threw a paper wrapper at
her. In the account that Markeata presented to me she emphasised her ability to defend herself as she proudly went on to describe how she had fought three girls and managed to inflict injuries on them and yet managed to walk away with no physical signs of injuries herself. As well as pride I felt that by exerting her agency in standing up for herself Markeata derived a sense of achievement from her actions. In the extract below Gemma gave a graphic description of the fight which she had at school. Throughout her interviews she made references to a complex set of reasons for initiating fights.

Extract 9
But this girl got beaten up which was the main reason why I got expelled because this is why I feel guilty she is like blind in that eye and deaf in that ear. All on her left side and she was bruised up and that because we were in the toilets and I just went absolutely crazy at her. I swear I just took everything out on her. Everything like not even - it was to do with her. Like a lot of what she done as well. Everything else I just took it out on her. I just went mad and like hit her head against the sink and everything. I just went crazy. She was screaming and that and my best mate was in the toilet, Aishsa, and she was like 'Gemma that is enough now' like she was 'Gemma stop it'. First of all she was 'yes it was funny you two arguing and whatever', then she was like 'stop it now', because I wouldn't stop. And this girl liked pulled me off and that and I was like 'don't you fucking touch me'.

(Gemma first interview)

In the extract above Gemma initially used a passive voice ('this girl got beaten up') perhaps in order to distance herself from the violence that she described. Indeed, Gemma’s description conveyed to me the ferocity of this attack in no uncertain terms. In common with many of the interviewees Gemma talked about losing control (going 'absolutely crazy' – this is something I will return to later) and she left me in no doubt that at the time she was fighting and inflicting serious injuries on this girl she was not in total control of her actions. Indeed, she reported that even her best friend was unable to stop her when she felt the fight had gone far enough. Using such terms as 'going mad' and 'going crazy' and 'flipped' were common phenomena in my
interviewees’ narratives and is something I will return to later. The heightened emotions Gemma presented to me as experiencing during the fight were palpable throughout her account, as she portrayed herself as still ready to attack the girl who eventually broke up the fight. She again referred to the notion that much of her behaviour could be attributed to her acting out how she felt about her parents splitting up and her belief that her dad still blamed her for it.

It is difficult to ascertain whether Gemma had related her anger issues back to her family problems herself or whether this had been suggested to her later in the counselling sessions in which she participated. In the above account Gemma was presenting her actions to me almost as understandable in the light of her past, rather than as a random act of violence on her part. Gemma’s narrative echoes the therapeutic approach to deviant behaviour, namely the identification of a cause which explains the behaviour rather than it just being a random act. Some of my interviewees had been through a process of therapy and so framed their accounts partially in this way however, this could be more reflective of a recent cultural shift towards locating unacceptable behaviour in psycho-logical reasons. When I probed Gemma further about why she had initiated the fight, she explained that she had reacted to rumours surrounding the girl and her own sister’s boyfriend.

Extract 10

And I just went mad at her. I called her a slag. I said ‘you are slag, you are a proper slut’. ‘Why do you want to’, I said you are just - I just went mad at her basically and she looked at and she is like ‘oh I am the slag am I’. So I said ‘look at you’ and all this. And then I just thought that is it and just flipped and went mad.

(Gemma first interview)

In contrast to Markeata, Gemma introduced many reasons into the two extracts above to explain why she had attacked the girl. In the second extract she appeared to present herself to me in a way as acting to police the unacceptable forms of femininity which she perceived the girl had adopted. She also presented to me another reason for
initiating the fight, namely to defend a family member. In Gemma's story above, as in other fighting stories that the girls related to me in their interviews, several reasons seemed to have sparked a violent reaction within the girls as their emotions overwhelmed them. However, deep feelings of wanting to defend their positions and to demonstrate dominance over others were also present. For Gemma the inevitable culmination of such feelings was the adrenaline release bought about by fighting. Sometimes the reasons presented to me by the girls for fighting were more obscure. However, the violence described often served to reinforce to me the emotional upset the girls' experienced prior to fighting.

Extract 11
I got into a fight with a student from Acorn Grove she done whatever she had done with my brother and of course me and my brother was really close at this time. Me and my brother used to be unseparable like – that kind of thing the word unseparable and like she knew how close I was with my brother and she done it out of spite and then basically we had a fight outside my house.
A bad fight?
Yes it was a bad fight. We both had to go to hospital because I smacked her head off – like because we have got a – it isn't really funny but it is – we have got like a concrete bin thing I smacked her head off of that – because I have got a really fragile back she punched me in my back and she bruised all like the tissue and things like that in my back and I smacked me head off the floor too. So we both went to hospital. Then she went to the school and said that she had put me in hospital for three months and I had internal bleeding. So it was like – but she used to be my best friend so ...
(Alexi, first & only interview)

In a similar manner to many of my interviewees Alexi's account above featured fighting with a girl who used to be her 'best friend'. In her presentation to me Alexi appeared to be acting to defend her own relationship with her brother, as she resented her best friend, coming between herself and her brother. Again as with Gemma, Alexi can be seen to be policing the femininity of her friend by punishing what she considered to be her unacceptable behaviour. In a similar manner to most of my
interviewees fighting stories, Alexi made no mention of any attempt to talk to the other parties involved about the situation. Fighting appeared to be her only answer in a situation she found deeply upsetting. Apart from Keisha who I discuss later, Alexi is the only girl I interviewed who related serious injuries from fighting, although she qualified the admission that she was injured with 'I have a really fragile back' therefore indicating that it was not solely the strength of her adversary that had caused her injuries. Markeata's assertion in extract 8 that she 'hardly ever got injured' was more typical amongst the girls interviewed. Appearing uninjured can be seen to relate to the production and maintenance of tough femininities which many of my interviewees invested in heavily. It is noticeable that Alexi did not detail the other girls' injuries as, in common with many of the girls' narratives, her part in the fight took centre stage in the presentation of this story. However, she did show concern that her ex-friend went on to present herself to others as having won the fight and Alexi seemed aware that her reputation had suffered as a result.

The topic of families raised in different contexts could arouse strong feelings amongst my group of interviewees. In some instances as described in chapter 7, the girls could show strong emotional distain for family members. On other occasions demonstrating loyalty to and support for family members took precedence over all other issues. Insults directed at family members were frequently given by the girls as reasons for fighting.

Extract 12

What do you get angry about?
Like when people mouth off my family
Does that happen often?
It used to, because as soon as anyone says anything, like at my school if anyone said anything, like not my mates, anyone I didn't like or get on with said anything, then I would beat them up, it's one of the main reasons I got chucked out
Did your parents get upset by you doing that?
My dad has always told me, he has always told me that if that if anyone hits you, hit them back (Lady Sovereign, first interview)
Lady Sovereign can be seen to have highlighted an important issue here as many of the girls reported that their parents were almost supportive of their fights because they believed that ‘if anyone hits you, hit them back’. This is traditionally advice which one might expect to hear parents give to boys rather than girls. Lady Sovereign’s father can be seen to have actively encouraged her to stick up for herself.

Some interviewees reported that fights were entered into alongside family members, as in the extracts below from Alisha and Gemma. Earlier in her interview Alisha had told me of an incident where a girl had stolen her sister’s necklace. The sisters had then been on the lookout for the other girl in order to retrieve the necklace.

**Extract 13**

I was in the car going to my auntie’s and I seen this girl and my sister said get out the car and she got out the car and the girl got my sister and she threw her on the floor so I started fighting her and I was punching her and kicking her and anyway all her face was bleeding down here and then my cousin picked her up by the hair and just dragged her down the floor and that

(Alisha, first interview)

**Extract 14**

We were going out for a meal, me and my sister and my mum and Steve and Carly were in the back and I was in the front as usual. And we stopped in the middle of town because my mum wanted to go in a shop and get something. I don’t know what it was. Fags I think. This girl was across the road and I went ‘oh shit’ like that because I saw her. And my sister heard me and was like ‘what, what, what?’ and she saw her over the road and she was like ‘why am I putting up with it, why am I putting up with it?’. So she shouted across the road. ‘Oi slag come here’ and this girl started walking over and she was going to see this girl – my sister was, well this other was girl pointing at her and going ‘she is a slag, she shags people’s boyfriends and passes on her dirty Chlamydia’ she was going and then she goes to this girl that Steve slept with she was going ‘stop spreading your Chlamydia around the whole of fucking Westbury’ like this and made this girl look like a proper dickhead in the middle of town. And I was like ‘you go for her’ and she never sticks up for herself at all and she just went mad at this girl and then this girl was like mouthing my sister back and went for her. So I was out of the car anyway by then
because I was like just standing near because my sister is a sop, although she is bigger then me, she is like the soppy one and I am like I don't know, I will just go for anyone I don't care how big they are I just go for them. And she went for my sister and I just like went mad at her and it was like me, my mum and my sister and this girl and her sister were all scrapping in the middle of town and then three blokes started to get involved like holding us and I was like 'get the fuck off me' and punching him I was like 'get out of the way'. And I punched this girl that Steve slept with and she wears glasses and they went on the floor and I trod on them and they are like 200 quids worth. So that is all right.

(Gemma second interview)

In presenting these stories, Alisha and Gemma, related to me the loyalty they felt towards their family members in the situations they described. Fighting to them was a way to publicly display support for their sisters who they thought had been wronged. I found it surprising that in Gemma’s account Steve was not apportioned any blame about his part in creating this situation. Instead Gemma presented Steve alongside her sister, almost as a family member who had been slighted and therefore the honour of both of them needed to be defended. Even though other family members had been involved, Alisha and Gemma gave me the impression that they had been the driving forces in the fights depicted above. Gemma’s description of her mum’s involvement served to show me just how seriously the whole family had taken this incident. Indeed, the family seemed to be loyally united in defending its honour in what might be considered to be quite a personal matter between Carly and Steve. A reoccurring theme in the interviewees was the way in which different family members were called upon to offer support against outside adversaries and as such fighting could be seen to be a common occurrence in the lives of the girls and their families. It is noticeable in these extracts that it was just women fighting. No mention was made by the girls in their accounts of the embarrassment which I would have expected such public spectacles to cause the participants, although Gemma did emphasise that the fight took place in the centre of town. I felt the important aspects the girls were conveying to me in these stories concerned the wrong that they felt their families had experienced and that those family members involved in the fights were prepared to take matters into
their own hands with the aim of showing loyalty to their family members. Making public displays as described in the two extracts above seemed to enhance each family’s sense of validation in their cause.

Extract 15
I remember it was Red Nose Day and we were all – it was own clothes day and we had all had our Timberland boots on and everyone was just high balling. So many of us and then we saw her walk past us and we saw this girl that we just didn’t like anyway and then we just started – at first we weren’t going to do nothing to her. Like we all passed her and equally she don’t like us. So she gave my friend a dirty look and my friend started staying to her – she started arguing with her and got up in her face and then and then I tried to get in between them but because I knew my friend was going to switch, that I can tell, but the girl Stephanie who it was, she obviously thought I was stepping on behalf of my friend and then her instant reaction was she kicked me in my stomach and I was trying to stop it each time and then when she did that I just flipped and I was punching her up and all the girls jumped in.

And did Stephanie come out badly?
Yes. She did. There was like clumps of her hair and blood on the floor and apparently she had fractured ribs and a broken nose. But I don’t know. It could have been possible actually.

(Carrie, first interview)

In the above extract Carrie admitted that she and her group of friends did not like Stephanie. Similar to many of my interviewees (for example see Nicola below), Carrie cited a dirty look as a reason for initiating the fight. Owens et al (2000) found that the girls in their study believed that victims of aggression tended to bring the wrath of others on themselves as they had done something annoying or aggravating or had been indiscreet in some way or had started the conflict and so deserved the reprisal. In Carrie’s presentation of this story, no actual words were passed between herself and the girl who was beaten up, and no other reason is cited for the fight. The crucial point here is that Carrie referred to her friend as ‘switching’. Carrie made it clear to me that this meant that she could see that her friend had lost her self control and could not be reasoned with. Her explanation allowed me to see that she did not consider herself responsible for her actions. Carrie went on to say that she tried to intervene in the fight
and was then attacked herself. This is when Carrie referred to herself in the same manner using the term ‘flipped’ to describe her loss of self control. Many of my interviewees recounted similar stories where they used the terms ‘funny look’ to explain why they had initiated fights. And equally common was their use of the term ‘flip’ to describe their out of control behaviour during fights.

Extract 16

What did you get into fights over?

Somebody walking up to me or walking past me and looking the other way, looking at me in a funny way. I just flipped straight away.

How come?

I don't know. I don't like people looking at me. I'll go mad if they look at me. But I have got a short fuse. I was sent to anger management but it didn't work.

So is fighting like a normal part of your day almost?

Normal – it is a way of calming me down I think but then I get more angry at the end because then I know they are looking at me and I just start fighting and then it is like a pain relief.

What happens after you have fought generally?

If teachers were around they would start having a go at me. But it is like such a rush when you have a fight because you are kind of proud that you did that.

So I mean do you fight girls as well as boys?

Boys and girls. If someone looks at me enough I will hit them. It does my head in and I just get more frustrated and then when they fight back I get a rush of adrenaline like when you smoke.

How often do you fight?

Well I had to calm down because I got a caution for beating up a girl.

(Nicola, first interview)

Often in the accounts the girls presented to me, being looked at 'in a funny way' was interpreted as being an insult or threat without the need for words to be spoken. Such looks frequently provoked strong emotional responses from the girls and therefore as in Nicola's case above her reaction was presented to me as being a perfectly logical next step as she fought to defend herself. As with Carrie, Nicola left me in no doubt that by describing herself as 'flipping' she had lost control and her only thoughts were to inflict harm on the person who had offended her.
Nicola realised that such a reaction had something to do with the way in which she handled her anger, but she did not appear to use any techniques to calm herself down. Instead she presented to me a form of tension within the act of fighting, the notion that it initially calmed her down, but ultimately made her more uptight because, if people had not been looking at her before, then they really would be looking at her by the end of a fight. Nicola reinforced the serious nature of her fights to me by referring to the caution she had received for beating up a girl. Eight of the girls I interviewed referred to either having received cautions or being charged by the police for violent behaviour. Nicola very interestingly constructed the notion that fighting gave her a rush in a similar manner to a rush of adrenaline. This almost euphoric feeling derived from fighting was frequently mentioned by my interviewees and was often accompanied by feelings of pride in their achievement of defeating their perceived enemies.

Very few of my interviewees made reference to any fears they may have had about being seriously injured themselves or the possibility that they might cause serious injuries to others by fighting. Initially during her interview, Markeata had spoken with a great deal of pride about her fighting exploits. However, when I questioned her about this further she changed the direction of her narrative by emphasising to me the concerns she felt about fighting.

Extract 17

*Some people I have spoken to say they enjoy fighting and it makes them feel proud*

That is true. Me too. But sometimes when I am fighting – I have got a conscience. I think to myself what if I do something, what if something bad happens to me. I just think of my life in that way. What if something bad – when I am in a fight I think if something bad happen to me that is all this gone. But if something bad happens to the person it is gone. I think about news – when I hear in the news that someone has stabbed someone. I just kind of drift away from that. Because I have been in a fight where like even this last fight I was at – this girl pulling my hair, just pulling it badly, down my neck and down like this. I was thinking ‘oh my God something is going to happen one day’.

(Markeata, first & only interview)
Markeata agreed that fighting created a sense of pride within her. What is more significant is that unlike most of my interviewees Markeata let her guard down at this point as she allowed me to see the concerns that she had about getting seriously injured herself, or indeed, inflicting injury on others. Although the majority of my interviewees presented graphic injuries suffered by their adversaries Alexi and Keisha were the only two girls to report they had received hospital treatment for injuries sustained in fights. In the extract below Keisha described how she had been attacked by a youth with a knife. The initial reason for her attack is somewhat obscure, but it is apparent that Keisha did not realise that she was about to experience such a brutal attack.

Extract 18
Me and one of my friends were walking, and we saw these people, and they were up round the shop and somebody was talking to them. So we went over there to see what he was saying and my friend Leslie goes what is he saying to you. And he was like well what is it to you. And he was like I will show you so he went round the corner and he came back here and my friend was there and he started pushing her and she pushed back and then he dropped his [...] and she kicked him and then he started chasing her.

Why didn't you all run?
Well I don't know. Thinking back now I should have run and got help. I was not scared. It wasn't that I wasn't scared. It was like – it might have been the shock of him coming towards me and then ...

And then what?
Then he got me, he dragged me down and I kept moving on and I was on the floor and he was on the floor on top of me and I was moving him around so he couldn't get me and then he, then I kicked him off and my friends came and they chased him down the road and one of my friends pushed him over a bank, my other friend following him and she jumped him while she was running and he ran, and the ambulance came and he escaped. I got up and I didn't even know he had stabbed me. I got up and I was running. And I looked down and I saw red blood and he had stabbed me in my leg and my shoulder.

Were they deep stab wounds?
One of them was fourteen cms and the other one was seven.

(Keisha, first & only interview)
Keisha recounted this story with an air of uncertainty and hesitation which seemed to underline how traumatised she had been by the event. Keisha had written this event down on her timeline so I was aware of how this story would end. This made me uneasy and as can be seen in the above extract I kept interrupting her as she was relating the story. Her use of the word scared even though she asserted that she was 'not scared' did serve to show me that she had in fact been very frightened by her experience. Indeed Keisha’s account notably lacked the sense of bravado that permeated many of the girls’ fighting stories. In fact, Markeata and Keisha were the only two girls to mention any negative aspects of fighting. Keisha went on to relate that her stabbing had made her consider carrying a knife:

Extract 19
Yes. I do that anyway sometimes. Not all the time. I don’t really need a knife sometimes people get wary of you but I wouldn’t go out and stab someone kind of thing, that is something I wouldn’t do, but if they have got a knife and they are trying to stab me and I have got a knife I probably would draw it. I wouldn’t actually go out to stab someone. I wouldn’t do that. Sometimes I do threaten people. But I am not going to do it. It is just me if I am angry I say a lot of things.
(Keisha, first & only interview)

Keisha revealed to me that she did carry a knife on some occasions but attempted to justify how she would use it. It seemed to me that Keisha felt that she needed the knife to make people wary of her, whereas for other interviewees acting in a tough manner and showing a willingness to engage in physical fights was enough to signal a warning to others. Keisha revealed that she would be willing to draw a knife however, she insisted that she would not set out to stab someone. After listening to the girls’ stories about flipping and loosing control, I was concerned that having knives involved in fights could lead to more serious incidents. Keisha appeared to draw a clear distinction between making threats and actually carrying them out. However she had made it very clear in her interview that she was prepared to take care of herself.
Many researchers, for example Phillips (2003), assert that it is rare for girls to use physical violence on a regular basis, although verbal aggression and intimidation amongst girls is common place. However, as can be seen from the above extracts, my interviewees recounted frequently using violence. My data revealed a distinction between my group of young women and working-class young women as discussed in previous research, in that they readily demonstrated their willingness to use violence and in some cases inflict serious injury in the resolution of conflicts.

9.3 Domestic violence

Burman et al (2003) note that girls who use violence have frequently been physically, sexually and emotionally abused. However in their research with a large sample of young girls in Scotland they found that very few of their respondents reported domestic violence. Instead their respondents associated male violence towards women within the public sphere and stranger danger as being a more real threat to their young women. As was highlighted in chapter 8 in particular, my interviewees did not voice any fears of using public spaces at night and in a way made certain public areas their 'own'. Conversely, many of my interviewees were aware of the dangers that could exist within the home. What emerged from the interviews was the frequency with which many of the girls reported that they had witnessed acts of domestic violence. Most commonly the girls reported instances of their mothers' partners' physically abusing family members, with their mothers the main object of abuse. Recounting such stories to me was often upsetting for the girls and I felt this was particularly so when the girls themselves felt helpless in the situations which they described as with Kandice below.

Extract 20

*How did you find out about your dad hitting your mum?*

Well I remember because I had just moved to a new school because we had just moved to a new house and I was moving to a new primary school and I was getting ready in the morning...
and my mum was doing my shirt and I can't remember if they were having an argument but he picked up the phone and just hit her on the jaw and he broke all her jaw there so, that is how I remember it. I can't even remember where my little sister was at that point. Somewhere round the house.

*What happened afterwards?*

I didn't go to school that day. I can't remember me and my mum went out somewhere but I can't remember where.

*And how did that affect the household after that?*

Nothing because it went back exactly the same. He came back and said sorry and it went back just the same like always when it always used to happen he used to come back and say sorry and it just used to go back to normal so, but I remember one time because when we had just moved into the house in Amersham Road in [town] it was about three months or so we lived there and he kind of - I don't know I was only coming half upstairs and I just saw him fling her across the room and she had a big bruise up all her leg and that and she was terribly bleeding and that, but I only saw half of it and he was just kind of like 'oh she slipped, she slipped'. I thought 'oh right'. But I didn't actually kind of believe it.

*(Kandice, first interview)*

Kandice was quite young when she witnessed these events. The ‘dad’ she referred to was actually her step-dad (as mentioned in chapter 7) who had moved out of the family home when she was 12, two years after the first incident which is recounted in the extract above. It is therefore perhaps understandable that some of the details in her account are a little confused, as she asserted that on the same day that her dad broke her mum’s jaw she was able to go out with her mum. However, I was very aware whilst Kandice was telling me these stories, just how upsetting she had found her dad’s violent behaviour. It is notable as in many other instances mentioned by my interviewees, Kandice’s dad was taken back by her mum. Gorin (2004) asserts that children and young people’s accounts of domestic violence often show that they are more aware of what is happening than their parents think. I was left with the impression that witnessing these attacks had deeply affected Kandice. At other times in her accounts Kandice had spoken about how quickly she had exerted her agency. However in the account above it was very clear that Kandice felt she did not have any agency. Other interviewees mentioned how they had often acted to defend their mums
from their dads or step-dads. Sometimes, as in Samantha's case below, acting to intervene in domestic violence could lead to the girls being attacked themselves.

**Extract 21**

*Did you like your step dad?*

No.

*Why not?*

He used to hit my mum.

*And did that happened in front of you?*

Yes. I would try to get him off her but I couldn't and so I would try to get the phone and he hit me.

*(Samantha, first & only interview)*

Samantha's experience was common amongst those of my sample who reported domestic violence. Many young women stated that as they got older and stronger they often acted to defend their mothers but as in Samantha's case they were often assaulted themselves. Unlike Kandice, who was quite young at the time of the assaults she recounted, Samantha gave me a sense of how she had tried to take control even though on this occasion she had not been successful. Phillips (2003) demonstrates how violence can become normalised in young people's lives. However, the effects of witnessing domestic violence on young people has been less well documented. I was made aware whilst listening to my interviewees' accounts of domestic violence of how distressing witnessing such acts had been for the girls involved. I have included two longer accounts of domestic violence which were recounted to me by Carrie and Sarah. They illustrate not only how brutal the acts of domestic violence many of the girls witnessed could be, they also show the extent to which family members were involved in such events. In both stories the young women positioned themselves as having agency in their stories as they were able to intervene and stop the domestic violence from resulting in even worse outcomes.
Extract 22

He [dad] is quite violent, in fact very violent and I have seen him hit my mum numerous times. So there was one time – I think it was 2003 where it was my brother’s fifth birthday and my other brother was three months old and he just went mad. He just brutally attacked her and strangled her until she turned blue. And if it wasn’t for me she wouldn’t be here right now.

What did you do?

I tried to stop him numerous times, like ward him off, but I wasn’t strong enough. I just wasn’t strong enough. I needed – my dad’s friends was upstairs in the attic room he was playing with my brother my dad bought him three hundred pounds worth of scalextrix and just set it all up upstairs – but they couldn’t hear nothing because we were like two floors down and he was just attacking her. You know when –you think you are hitting someone, you are beating someone up, when they are unconscious you usually just stop? He didn’t. He carried on and I had a three month old baby, my youngest brother, in my hands you know and I really didn’t want to go upstairs and call him. One – I felt ashamed – oh I have to go and get my dad’s friend because my dad is beating up my mum and then my brother would have had to see it and he is five. He has seen way too much that he shouldn’t of. And then I had to end up doing it because I couldn’t hold him back for that long. I tried endlessly like and he kept flinging me across the room. Get up come back and trample him off again. And then his friend came down and he was holding him and he was still trying to go for her and I just thought you know I can’t... I phoned the ambulance and he said no she don’t need an ambulance. I said she is unconscious. I can’t wake her up. She is not waking up. She needs an ambulance like. Obviously they had phoned the police. They heard me in hysterics like on a 999 call. Two seconds later four police vans outside and they burst in, my dad went up to the attic at the top of the house and tried to hide but they found him. They asked my mum who had done it and she was just silent and I just thought do you know what I can’t see this happen and I told them everything, everything, because I was in such a state of shock. I had - at one time I had my mum’s unconscious head in my lap, my five year old brother crying next to me and a three month old baby like and the two men are just standing there and they are big men. They should be ... I don’t know ... I was like – I said to them I need something for her head. I need to put a cushion under her head and then my dad is still shouting and then his friend is asking me – well what happened. I am like I don’t need a counselling session I need a pillow for her head. And my brother had to like – he was five. It was probably one of the most disturbing nights I have ever had in my whole life. And I ended up having to take the kids and her in the ambulance to the hospital, ringing around all these family members, you know, come and look after the kids, come and ... to cut a long
story short we moved out and I think she has got that battered woman syndrome you know when they just go back re-occuringly. Yes. And then we went back and I think he has always held that against me. That I phoned the police. That I you know... and then in November last year – it wasn’t the first time but he hit me. I was concussed so my auntie stepped in and took me so that is why I was living with her at my auntie’s.

(Carrie, first interview)

In her interview Carrie was visibly upset as she described to me the brutality of the attack on her mum. I sensed her panic as she described to me the dilemma she felt in at the height of the assault about how to get her mum help, whilst weighing up the possible consequences of such intervention. She portrayed a profound sense of family loyalty as she positioned herself throughout her account as a defender of her family. She showed great concern for her mum’s well being and that her younger brother should not be involved in the violence. Although she recognised the possible negative outcome of her actions, Carrie demonstrated to me the agency she brought to the situation as she decided to phone the emergency services for help. By taking this action Carrie showed me that she was resisting the control her father was exerting over family members and demonstrating her sense of empowerment. Carrie, as with Kandice in extract 20, showed great concern for her younger sibling and reported trying to keep him away from witnessing the attack. Previous research has emphasised the increased sense of responsibility that young people often feel in situations where domestic violence exists (Gorin, 2004). A sense of family loyalties was often present in the majority of my interviewees accounts of domestic violence as protecting mums and siblings was often a key concern in these narratives. Carrie came across as perceptive throughout her interviews and asserted that she was interested in psychology. By using a term such as ‘battered woman syndrome’ Carrie can be seen to be almost positioning herself as a reflexive commentator on the scene rather than a passive performer in events.
Unusually in Sarah’s account her mum is not the target of her father’s violent behaviour. Instead she conveyed to me the notion that she and her siblings were regularly beaten up by her father.

Extract 23

Dad had been beating us all up for years and when we were little if we didn’t have our slippers on or anything like that dad used to whack us and beat us with this wooden stick they had. I remember one time, my dad beat my brother up so much, I can’t remember what it was I think it was he didn’t finish his drink or something like that at the dinner table and err, my dad beat him up very badly and we were all trying to help him and my dad wasn’t having it, my dad locked my brother in his room, took away all his clothes, and took away his bedding and everything, left the windows wide open, left a bucket in there and locked him in his room for days. We weren’t allowed anywhere near that door, and if anyone tried to go near it we’d get beaten up. After that, there was another time, I can’t remember how this one started but my dad was going off on my sister and Mark [brother] was completely you don’t hit girls, he jumped straight in between and so my dad went for him and then I don’t know what happened but it all calmed down and then Mark went for a shower, and there was something stupid like he spat in the shower or something, and I don’t even know how my dad, I can’t remember how my dad even knows, because obviously the shower door would have been shut, but we were all downstairs and we just hear loads of screaming and everything and so we all ran upstairs and dad literally, if we hadn’t done anything, it would have been seconds until Mark was dead. He was strangling him, he had him over the bath and everything. So I started running for the phone, Dad chased us, pulled the wire out, so I ran for one, and Daniel ran for the other, I told Mary and Daniel to distract dad by doing something because I knew the next step would be to cut the wires and he did, at this point I managed to get myself into my room whilst he was getting them to, I got the bed in front of the door, get in the wardrobe, locked myself in the wardrobe and then he realised where I was, he started banging on the door and I am in the wardrobe on my mobile, ringing the police, telling them to get here, I got off the phone from them and then rang my mum and told her, she shut the shop and got straight home and literally, as soon as my dad got through the bedroom door the police came up the stairs, so if there was traffic or anything, I would – we have all had so many near death experiences its unbelievable

(Sarah, first and only interview)
In the presentation of this story Sarah used the word ‘they’ (‘beat us with this wooden stick they had’) which seemed to indicate that her mum sometimes used the wooden stick too. The incidents that Carrie and Sarah describe seem to reveal a culture of siblings defending each other from violent parents.

9.4 Summary
In this chapter I have explored the significance that violence played in the lives of the excluded young women. The analysis in this chapter has focused on bitching, fighting stories, and domestic violence. The evidence presented in this chapter and elsewhere in the previous analysis chapters revealed the frequency with which acts of aggression and violence occurred the girls’ lives. Stanko (1990) argued that violence is an ordinary part of life and as such it is routinely managed by individuals, particularly through the use of safety precautions taken to enhance personal safety. The girls reported the frequency with which they encountered verbal aggression particularly in the form as they termed it ‘bitching’ from other girls. Non violent behaviours such as bitching, and gossiping are traditionally believed to be the forms of abuse that girls are most likely to engage in (Owens et al 2000). The data revealed similar findings to Batchelor et al (2001: 132) who found that amongst their group of 800 female research participants aged 13-16, falling out between friends had ‘momentous consequences for girls and is seen as a major source of anguish, not to mention a precursor to physical violence’. Indeed, in answer to the potentially hurtful and isolating effects of such behaviour, my group of excluded young women indulged in counter activities such as initiating bitching themselves and instigating fights in order to demonstrate to others that they were not to be messed with. In exercising their agency in this way to protect both their self interest and esteem the girls managed to create reputations for themselves which signalled to others to be wary of challenging them.

Day et al (2003) have argued that a consideration of the positioning of working-class women outside traditional middle-class definitions of femininity as respectable and passive can illuminate the role violence plays in the construction of working-class
femininities. They argue that working-class women are located in working-class cultural contexts that 'promote hard reputations' and 'public demonstrations of aggressive prowess' and therefore violence should be expected to be a normal part of working-class women's lives. However, many studies do not agree with this 'normalisation' of working-class female violent behaviour to this extent, for example Burman et al (2003), found that only 10% of the 800 girls (recruited from a cross-section of areas in Scotland) in their study were regularly violent. My data revealed a distinction between my group of young women and working-class young women as discussed in previous research, in that they readily demonstrated their willingness to use violence and in some cases inflict serious injury in the resolution of conflicts. These analysis chapters have documented the aggressive and violent environments the young women inhabited. Therefore it is not surprising the speed with which the young women in this study resorted to violence.

Some of the girls reported that their parents encouraged them to stand up for themselves in an aggressive manner, since it was reportedly preferable to be 'tough' than to be a push over. However somewhat surprisingly, on occasions the young women described becoming embroiled in fights alongside family members, such as their mums. In a similar manner to Burman et al's participants, interestingly the majority of my interviewees did not classify fighting with siblings as genuine examples of fights. Burman et al (2003) found that their respondents did not classify their fights with siblings as violent behaviour which led them to conclude that sibling fights therefore appear to be normalised within the context of domestic and family relationships.

In the narratives recounted by the young women many reasons were given for resorting to violence. These ranged from receiving a funny look, or defending family members, to a complex interwoven array of reasons (as in Nicola's case). Often the girls could not verbalise their initial reasons for fighting. The evidence presented here suggests that fighting for my group of young women not only served as a site of
resistance to the perceived injurious comments and behaviour of others, but also acted to enhance their own sense of well being. In other instances the girls set out to show their own dominance over others without any provocation. Fighting and aggression for my group of excluded young women helped to give them a sense of pride and recognition amongst their peers. Many referred to the rush which they gained from fighting and this was constructed as a sense of elation and a good feeling about themselves.

Many of the girls recounted long stories about fights that they had been involved in or initiated. My findings indicate that for young people who are not able to perform well either academically or in another sphere, aggression and fighting can be seen to hold great importance in the establishment and maintenance of self-worth (Leitz, 2000). Many of my interviewees attached great importance to gaining respect from peers with the associated benefits of enhancing self-esteem or a sense of self-worth. Some of my interviewees positioned themselves as the victim who acted in self-defence or as the defender of the moral high ground. By absolving themselves of blame the excluded young women were able to maintain and enhance their own feelings of well-being. Many of the girls experienced difficulties at home and some utilised these in their narratives as justification for their actions. I contend that by using devices such as the ones described above the young women avoided acknowledging responsibility for their actions which enabled them to maintain a positive self-image.

As was stated in the introduction women who commit violent crimes are often subject to considerable media attention which can lead in turn to moral panics (Heidensohn, 1998: 493). Chesney-Lind commented on moral panics in relation to girls' violence in US cities in the 1990s, especially to reports of gang and street violence by African-American and Hispanic girls (Chesney-Lind: 1997: 57). Burman et al (2003) assert that the fact that violence perpetuated by young women is considered worthy of attention at all is related to the fact that hegemonic femininity is commonly perceived as passive, non-aggressive and non-violent. They assert that 'in order to keep existing models of
femininity intact, female violence has to be portrayed as an aberration (masculinised, pathologised) or redefined as part of the natural feminine condition (adolescent girls as emotional, irrational and out of control)’ Burman et al (2003: 74). Violent girls are presented in the media as fierce and dangerous thugs who get a kick out of inflicting harm and pain, transgressors who have located themselves in opposition to conventional or appropriate femininity. Burman et al (2003) contend that:

Throughout the various discourses, girls' violence is depicted in oppositional (and highly contradictory) ways. On the one hand, it is portrayed as dangerous, irrational, stemming from a lack of control, a manifestation of individual pathology, and hence largely incomprehensible (Campbell, 1993; Motz, 2001). On the other hand, violent girls are described as coldly calculating, intentionally targeting, manipulative and scheming (Mitchell, 2000). They are depicted as ‘just as bad’ as boys but simultaneously as ‘deadlier than the male’. Their violence is either trivialised, variously presented as unthreatening, amusing, sexy and not as serious as real (male) violence (e.g. girls’ boxing), or it is constructed as particularly frightening (e.g. girl gangs randomly attacking innocent strangers) and a threat to (patriarchal) society (Batchelor, 2001) (Burman et al, 2003:75).

I argue that for my excluded group of young women their performance of femininity was tied extremely closely to their habitus which was governed by their social and cultural capital which was in turn governed by their social class positions. The role of social structure in the development of the young women’s social and cultural capital and habitus cannot be underestimated and I will return to these debates later. The young women gave accounts of times when they engaged in hyper-feminine practices, such as doting on friends’ children and having nail extensions. However, the majority of the girls’ accounts were dominated by their performances of tough femininities.

Skeggs theorises that to not invest in femininity at all is seen to jeopardize other women’s investments. She comments that the risks of challenging femininity may include ‘cultural stigmatisation in her local situation; a challenge to all her friends who collude in femininity; a sign of difference; the loss of potential future emotional and
economic security’ (Skeggs, 1997: 109). It can be argued that performing femininity in this manner can be seen as a survival strategy in the tough, conflictual environments of their homes, schools and estates which the young women inhabited. To be seen in any way other than tough and able to take care of themselves would have left the young women weak and open to attack. However, the high value attached to tough femininities may be viewed as a challenge to heteronormative femininity and thus as a strategy is a double edged sword. In particular bourgeois authority figures reacted against the girls performing ‘tough’, and tough presentations were not acceptable in the school environment. The girls’ employment of tough femininities may have exacerbated relationships already characterised by conflict. It could also have hindered new relationships which may have been productive, such as employer-employee relationships.
Chapter 10: Conclusions

As outlined in the introductory chapter, this research stemmed from an initial interest in the media’s portrayal of girls acting out of gender. Sociologically it developed into a study of the complex interactions between social exclusion, school exclusion and the performance of femininity. This evolved mainly from the nature and content of the interviewees’ accounts. Through the use of an analytic approach which focused on interpretative repertoires I was able to tie the data generated during the interview process into the girls’ overall narratives or their ‘on-going story about the self’ (Giddens, 1991: 54).

The aim of this chapter is to reflect upon the findings in relation to the literature review and methodology and to highlight the implications of this work academically and in the wider context of sociology especially in relation to the debates surrounding the relationship between social exclusion and the performances of femininity.

The chapter begins with a consideration of the three main themes which emerged from the data. The first theme is the interconnectivity of agency, resistance and the performances of different forms of femininities. The second theme is how the preceding elements inter-relate, contribute towards and maintain social exclusion. The third theme is the theoretical and methodological implications of the research findings for the concept of femininities. This chapter finishes with a consideration of methodological strengths and limitations of the study; thereby setting parameters for the substantive discussion that follows.
10.1 The interwoven nature of agency, resistance and femininities

Structuring the following discussion has proved problematic to me as I wished to separate out the main themes which were prevalent throughout the analysis of the data in order to reflect on each at length. However, as the reader will no doubt be aware from the analysis chapters, the main themes of agency, resistance and femininities were interwoven in a complex manner and I believe that to separate them would greatly weaken the discussion of them. Nevertheless, further reflection is necessary on the way I have conceptualised the use of these terms.

As mentioned in chapter 2 the concept of young people exercising agency over their lives has grown in favour in recent years. Individuals are believed to have a greater scope beyond traditional markers of class, race and gender to create complex subjectivities and lifestyles (Cieslik and Pollock, 2002). Within sociological accounts young people are no longer viewed as adults-in waiting, whose development proceeds along a series of pre-defined steps. However, approaches which have (over)emphasized agency have received criticism for example, focusing upon young people in isolation from their families (Punch, 2007). It is important not to focus upon agency at the expense of underplaying the role of structures which constrain and facilitate young people's experiences. Ruddick (2006) suggests that narrow, dominant, concepts of agency and agents, as self-cohesive and independent, are often reproduced. I argued in chapter 2 that structural constraints are still important in shaping individual's life chances and lifestyles and this was emphasised to me during the analysis of my data. Debates concerning the influence of structure will be examined more fully in the discussion of social exclusion below.

As I highlighted in the introduction I felt that further attention needed to be drawn to the concept of resistance and perhaps more importantly to identify what exactly is being resisted when the concept is applied in sociological contexts. In chapter 2 I discussed how notions of resistance have been contested. Before examining my
findings in detail I will first elaborate on the way in which I have been using this term and whether it is salient in the terms of this, and future, research.

Resistance was once seen in terms of the dynamo of class struggle. However, as Foucault has highlighted a series of oppositions have emerged in modern Western societies, namely concerning the power of 'men over women, of parents over children, of psychiatry over the mentally ill, ... of administration over the ways people live' (Foucault, 1982: 211). I would also add to this list the power of those who subscribe to heteronormative femininities over those who do not. For Foucault resistance is inherent in all relationships of power. Throughout the analysis I used the notion of resistance to describe the girls' lack of engagement with heteronormative femininities. As was evident throughout the analysis chapters I employed the term resistance in the broader sense which Foucault envisaged to highlight the resisting strategies which the girls used.

The discussion in chapter 3 highlighted the possibility of the existence of multiple femininities. For example I reflected on traditional middle-class notions of demure, passive femininity and I termed these conceptualisations heteronormative femininity. Through my deployment of interpretative repertoires I was able to identify the various and sometimes competing femininities performed by the excluded young women in this study. The use of interpretative repertoires, as has been discussed, informed my analysis and is also central to the following discussion.

The first analysis chapter concentrated on a feature which was very much to the fore in the girls' narratives, their experiences of school and their exclusions from school. From the data there emerged common elements within the girls' narratives of stories relating to their resistance and their accounts of their almost unanimous belief that they could choose to do as they wished and therefore exert their own agency. Further examination of the data highlighted to me that the deployment of such behaviours contributed to the subversion of heteronormative forms of femininity as referred to in
Evidence in the data revealed to me the ways in which the girls believed they used their agency in many different contexts. The most notable example of this was the girls' almost collective declaration that they were academically able, but chose not to work at school. The terms 'ideal pupil' and 'boffin' were used by several interviewees to describe their academic progress in the early years of secondary school.

All the young women presented themselves as choosing not to work and this seemed to me to be an overt symbol of their resistance to the control the school tried to exercise over them. The findings from the data suggest that the girls' misconduct was initially subtle as they pushed at the boundaries of dress codes and engaged in poor time keeping. As mentioned in chapter 1, in order to maintain discipline teachers must gain control over pupils' unruly bodies (Neill and Caswell, 1993). Pupils are meant to look neat and tidy, which involves wearing uniforms in an appropriate way, and to either sit or stand in a quiet, orderly manner. In this way the classroom is shown to be the site of a complicated power struggle in which the body constitutes a potent weapon. The evidence within the data reveals the ways in which the girls pushed at dress codes with the wearing of brightly coloured hairbands, make-up, jewellery and clothing. This performance of hyperfemininity enhanced the girls' social standing at school and helped to generate capital amongst their peers. As is discussed throughout the analysis chapters hyperfemininity was played out through the adoption of glamorous, sexy styles, and particularly for my group of interviewees this was interspersed with elements of 'bling' culture such as chunky jewellery and the mixing of feminine items such as low cut tops with sportswear.

Evidence within this thesis resonates with Willis's (1977) study of 'the lads'. However, much of the excluded girls' resisting behaviour was more visible and confrontational than that described in Willis's study. Willis came to the conclusion that 'the lads' in his
study were resisting the dominant social structure. I conclude that the girls' agency lead to them resisting heteronormative femininity. Hey (1997) found that girls' friendship groups do the work of hegemonic culture amongst and between themselves by positioning each other in particular places. Through normalisation and surveillance girls act as each others critics and self regulators by compliance with numerous gender and class specific versions of normality. Similar to Hey (1997) I argue that for the young women in my study school became a social activity as the importance of striving for academic success diminished. The friendship groups which the girls in my study belonged to helped to normalise their particular performances of femininity in school. In addition to their displays of hyper-femininity the girls placed value on overtly giving the appearance of being tough, something displayed in their descriptions of their conflictual and resistant behaviour in schools. Evidence of loyalty to certain friends and family members was a re-occuring theme to emerge from the data. Loyalty was woven into the girls' narratives describing that by deploying tough femininities they were able to aid friends in times of need. Indeed the performances of tough femininities and hyper-femininities which many of the girls enacted brought them into conflict with members of staff as they are antithetical to notions of the ideal pupil. The girls' assertions of 'loud', active and visible femininities can be understood as challenging the forms of submissive, passive and quiet femininity that are usually rewarded within schools. Such displays of femininities bring young women into conflict with schools because they are interpreted as deviant and undesirable aspects of femininity. Notably the girls' narratives conveyed the lack of agency they believed they had when their schools decided to exclude them and this was often evidenced in their 'final straw' moments.

The girls' agency and resistance of heteronormative femininities was also apparent in the field of the home. The evidence presented in chapter 7 showed that the girls' shared common experiences of family instability, break-ups, conflict and transience. Diverse family structures could be experienced as difficult and the resultant competition for emotional and economic capital often led to the performance of tough
femininities as a survival strategy. The case studies examined in chapter 7 represent three types of relationships with mothers which I identified in the data, a distant relationship, a boundary-less relationship, and one which had almost irretrievably broken down. Although these relationships were different they seemed to have the same outcome, as the girls' perceived they had freedom to exert their agency in their home environments. Notably, the girls did not show much, if any, emotion about difficulties they experienced in their home lives. The evidence contained within the chapter shows the extent to which the girls actively resisted their fathers' and step fathers' efforts to exert control over them. The girls' relationships with their siblings were also punctuated with evidence of their tough femininities often due to the competition that existed for the emotional capital in the home.

My findings resonate with other researchers who have worked with socially excluded young people (for example Smith et al, 2002) as I discovered that some of my interviewees were nomadic and moved around from parents to grandparents to aunts and uncles to older siblings or friends or even into foster care. Although transience impinged on the lives of the girls it is notable that the young women were able to exert their agency to maintain some semblance of normality, for example being able to maintain their relationships with their friends. Within the data evidence emerged of how interviewees were aware that their communities suffered from social problems, but many reported a strong sense of belonging and seemed connected to the life of their estates. This was particularly the case when the excluded young women encountered hostility from particular groups, such as older people who lived in the same area. As Watt and Stenson (1998) have highlighted, spaces can be perceived as safer or more welcoming when the occupants share common identities, and the performance of tough femininities may have enabled the girls to feel a sense of belonging with their locales. The areas many of the girls lived in can be said to be suffering from the problems of social exclusion and I will return to this below.
The data presented in chapter 8 illustrated the value the excluded girls attached to the performance of tough femininities. Taking rap music as an example, this genre of music provided a visual display (as evidenced in some of the photos the girls took of their bedrooms) as well as an audible display (some of the interviewees reflected on the lyrics of songs) of toughness which the girls were keen to identify with. Tough femininities were also apparent in chapter 8 in the manner in which the girls navigated outside spaces. As outlined in the analysis their use of outside spaces was notable for the way in which they confidently negotiated seemingly risky masculinised spaces such as the street at night and secluded parts of housing estates. However the evidence indicated that they did not conceptualise their behaviour as risky and notably none of the girls, reported feeling unsafe or at risk. The young women in my study left themselves vulnerable to being labelled in a similar manner to the girls who used the streets in the Seabrook and Green’s (2004) research which was referred to in chapter 3. My data suggests that the excluded young women enjoyed being different to the well behaved girls they encountered at school who did not indulge in such risk taking behaviour. Therefore, the young women in my study can be seen to have ‘othered’ themselves. Much of the girls’ behaviour outside involved excessive drinking, smoking, drug taking and anti-social behaviour. Such behaviour has been cited by Muncer et al (2001) as being associated with working-class masculinities. By partaking in such behaviour which transgressed heteronormative femininities the young women in this study can be seen to have crossed the boundaries of ‘respectability’ (Skeggs, 1997) both in terms of gender and working-class based acceptability.

The evidence in chapter 8 revealed how the girls’ agentic resistance of heteronormative femininities through their performances of tough femininities were at times seemingly contradicted by performances of hyperfemininity. As outlined above, the girls invested in glamorous hyperfemininity through spending a lot of time on their appearance and many expressed a desire to follow careers in beauty therapy. However, in other ways the girls in my study were very different to the girls in Archer et al’s (2007a; 2007b) study (which was mentioned in chapter 3) as they did not report
trying to ingratiate themselves with boys, for example by acting in a demure, heteronormative feminine manner. Skeggs's (1997) assertion that working-class women's investment in their (heterosexual) appearance constitutes one of the few available sites for the generation of symbolic capital is pertinent at this juncture. The construction of the right appearance can generate symbolic capital, but Skeggs (1997) highlights the dangers associated with 'over-doing' femininity as this can result in an associated loss of respectability. The evidence here suggests that investment in hyperfemininity could act as a limiter in terms of respectability for the girls and therefore closed down the symbolic capital available to them.

The data generated in chapter 8 could be viewed as the girls' resistance of heteronormative femininities as they aped what could be deemed as 'laddish' (Jackson, 2006) conduct, such as 'hard drinking', swearing, fighting and being loud and rude. However, I maintain that the young women exhibited an extreme form of this behaviour in order to maintain and reinforce their tough femininities. McRobbie's (2006) third luminosity resonates with many of my excluded young women's narratives. McRobbie (2006) argues that by giving the impression of having won equality with men by becoming like her male counterparts women adopt the phallus, but in doing so there is no critique of masculine hegemony. The impression is conveyed that young women are now able to emerge unhindered and are able to make choices about how they wish to live their lives in an empowered manner. However, 'there is gender re-stabilisation in this orchestration of luminosities, young women can come forward on condition that feminist politics fades away, and the illusion of movement and success masks the subtle and the not so subtle re-instatement of sexual hierarchies' (McRobbie, 2006: 14). In this way even though the excluded young women subverted accepted heteronormative codes, they were ultimately acting to confound and maintain hierarchal normative gender / sexual power relations (Renold, 2005) and thereby sustaining and revitalising what Butler calls the heterosexual matrix. I would argue that by displaying tough femininities the young women were, in a similar manner to McRobbie's notion of luminosities, momentarily empowered, but ultimately
reinforced their position in the heterosexual matrix. According to McRobbie, they have been hoodwinked by the illusion of equality and behaving as men behave. Such behaviour is acceptable for men, but not for women.

The toughness which the excluded young women displayed was intermittently mediated by an extreme, but somewhat paradoxical display of hyper-femininity. I would argue that for young women 'being tough' within the dominant hegemony of the heterosexual matrix implies things about the actor's sexuality and therefore in order to rescue or compensate for this, the repertoire of hyper-femininity was deployed as a compensatory tool. Hyper-femininity, I would argue, extended to the romanticisation of babies. Although the romanticisation of babies may be considered to be a heteronormative action, the extent to which it occurred along with the age of the girls who were doing it (all below 16) rendered it an activity outside of heteronormative confines.

The findings from this study show how the young women's behaviour often escalated beyond being loud, drunken and aggressive. The young women's resistance to, or what might be seen as rejection of, heteronormative femininities were clearly seen in the speed with which they resorted to aggression and violence in their lives. Other research, such as Räthzel (2006), has suggested that young women employ sets of rules and strategies in order to avoid violence and only act violently when unavoidable. However, as was illustrated by the data presented, this was not the case for the majority of my excluded young women. The girls' fighting stories helped to highlight how the girls gained a sense of pride and achievement from their fighting exploits. Similar to the boys in Renold's (2005) study the girls' presentations of tough femininities were framed in discourses of endurance as the body was constructed as a pain free zone. I felt that these fighting stories had, in some cases, been told many times before and the recalling of these stories was one strategy employed in the production and maintenance of tough femininities.
This reflection on the interconnectivity of agency and resistance with the performance of different types of femininities is fundamental to the lived experiences of ‘social exclusion’ which the young women experienced and their own possible independent embrace of a journey to social exclusion and it is this which I shall now reflect.

10.2 Social Exclusion

My findings from the analysis chapters led me to the understanding that the young women in my study through their use of agency, resistance and their rejection of heteronormative femininities, which they believed empowered them to choose the direction of their lives, were in fact actively contributing towards their present status of ‘socially excluded’. I have used the term social exclusion throughout this thesis as the young women in this study fall under the government’s definition of suffering ‘from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown’ (SEU, 1998). I will return to this contested notion of social exclusion below.

However, such a conclusion faces the same criticisms as underclass theory (as discussed in chapter 2) by apportioning blame to the individual. I believe that when examining the status of the young women in this study the wider familial, community and employment environments in which the girls grew up need to be considered. Many of these factors were outside of the girls’ control but proved to be very influential in shaping their rejection and subversion of heteronormative femininities.

Although the evidence presented in the data revealed the extent to which the girls believed they had agency in their lives it is perhaps pertinent to consider the influence which the girls’ social and economic environments had on their lives. As is evident from the sample and analysis chapters, many of the girls had experienced living in families which had endured periods of unemployment. Some of the girls lived in single-parent households which were reliant on benefits and where mothers and step-fathers did work they were often in low paid employment (see chapter 5). As noted in
chapter 2, for Byrne (1999:130) social exclusion is ‘inherent in a market oriented flexible post-industrial capitalism’. MacDonald and Marsh’s (2005) empirical study led them to agree with Byrne: in their view deindustrialisation (and therefore the restructuring of employment in post-industrial, flexible labour markets) has meant that unemployment, job insecurity and poor work have become common working-class experiences, rather than the preserve of an underclass stranded beneath them. MacDonald and Marsh’s research was conducted in an area characterised by the large scale demise of working-class manufacturing jobs. My interviews took place in several locations in the Midlands and in the South of England which were not characterised by large scale unemployment. However, most of the areas where the PRUs were located did have high social deprivation ratings, as evidenced in chapter 5. The excluded girls’ families shared similar characteristics to the families in MacDonald and Marsh’s (2005) study in their reliance on ‘poor’ work or benefits. Indeed Byrne (199) notes that what is missing from many accounts of the socially excluded is the significance of the combination of low wages, insecure employment and dependence on means tested benefits to supplement low incomes. As I have demonstrated the majority of the girls’ families could be seen to fall within Bryne’s (1999) conceptualisation of social exclusion.

The young women in this study were the products of their social and economic environments. They were not brought up in environments which could guarantee access to the sort of capital that could be ‘capitalized upon, that is, those forms of capital which are convertible in an institutional system, such as the cultural capital of the middle-classes, which can be converted and traded-up through education and employment into symbolic capital and economic reward’ (Skeggs, 1997:161). The girls’ use of agency and resistance to subvert heteronormative femininities enabled them to negotiate the tough environments which were part of their daily lives. The value the young women placed on tough femininities and hyperfemininities functioned as resources for negotiating difficult lives and enabled them to actively manage their lives to stop them from getting any worse. However, such forms of resistance may be viewed as detrimental to the girls’ chances of acceptance into places which could have
afforded them capital (social, cultural and symbolic) which can be viewed as a prerequisite of economic capital. I agree with Bullen and Kenway (2004) that the appropriation of such femininities allows us to see young women as trading on the capitals available to them in order to survive in difficult circumstances.

But what can be said of the future 'excluded' status of my young women? Willis's (1977) classic study of working-class counter culture demonstrated the direct and functional relationship between school and work. Kehily (2005: 207) noted in her study conducted in the West Midlands that the young women were hardly 'learning to labour' or preparing for future domesticity; 'their futures in the workplace and the home were less certain and not so clearly defined'. The same could be said of my sample of young women. It is possible to see a unique set of factors to be at work to hinder the re-engagement of the young women in this study with society from their excluded position. This is particularly pertinent to the kind of femininities which many of my interviewees embraced. The necessity the young women felt to perform tough femininities may serve to exclude them from various more traditional avenues such as paid employment (indeed many of the girls referred to work placements, mainly in beauty saloons, which they had lost because of conflicts experienced with staff and customers). Although it is impossible to predict what the future might hold for my interviewees, low paid work and early motherhood seemed distinct possibilities for many of them. Their involvement in drugs and alcohol abuse although reported by some of the girls to have been reduced was still a significant part of their lives. Such factors would greatly influence the girls' ability in the future to escape the categorisation of socially excluded.

Examination of the findings from this research has lead me to question the certainty with which theorists such as Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) assert that the contemporary era is a risk society characterised by individualisation. Bourdieu's suggestion (1997: 166 cited in Murad, 2002: 111) that agents 'are endowed with habits and continuously renewed strategies, but within the limits of the structural constraints
by which they are produced and which define them' seems to better represent the lives of the young women in this study.

The growth in the use of the concept of social exclusion has been linked to New Labour's policies in tackling poverty and their promotion of the Third Way (Giddens, 1998). However, as was discussed in chapter 2, the interpretation given to the meaning and causes of social exclusion by government agencies have attracted criticisms for moving the emphasis away from structure to individuals. Indeed, many of the criticisms levelled at Murray's underclass theory (see chapter 2) could also be levelled at the concept of social exclusion.

10.3 Re-defining research with girls

In chapters 1 and 2, I highlighted a gap which I identified in the work of Osler et al (2002; 2003) in their study of young women and school exclusion. To overcome this I endeavoured to explore as many of the aspects of the girls' lives outside of school which were important to them. My research design allowed me to identify how the young women constructed and performed femininities, through the use of interpretative repertoires, which enabled me to gain fuller insights into the 'excluded' lives of the young women. Osler et al (2002; 2003) did not use the concept of femininities to any great extent in their analysis which I feel diminished the conceptual validity of their work and gave a narrow interpretation of girls and school exclusion.

The methods I employed in this research enabled me to gain an insight into what was really important to the girls who took part in this study. The task-based interviews and co-construction of the girls' biographies enabled me to map out the girls lives. Photo elicitation enabled the generation of data which may have been otherwise unobtainable. The use of photographs helps to frame and focus the discussion, sharpen the memory, evoke rich descriptions and set the informant at ease (Alexander et al, 2005). The young women were able to construct multi-media framed identities through their own selection of what they represented back. Choosing the subject
matter of the photos and being able to discard photos gave the girls some control over the research process. I found that because the camera activity was perceived to be 'fun' (Barker and Weller, 2003; Young and Barrett, 2001) many of the girls became excited about participating and this seemed to result in them being interested and engaged in the research.

Performances of femininities have been useful in conceptualising persuasive constructs which exist in educational discourses such as the 'ideal pupil'. The ideal pupil has been coded as middle-class, sexually restrained, demure and passive, and is congruent with an idealised conception of the 'innocent school girl' (Walkerdine, 1990). Performances of the heteronormative femininity, as exemplified by the ideal pupil construct, is imbued with teacher expectations of high academic attainment. It is important to recognise the class-based origins of heteronormative femininity, for example in the ideal pupil construct, as many girls from non-middle-class backgrounds may find it hard to emulate such a middle-class notion. I feel that in their study of young women who had been excluded from school Osler et al's (2002; 2003) narrow scope meant that they missed many of the subtle nuances attached to the resistance of heteronormative femininities which would have shed greater light on their data. Conversely when analysing my data I recognised that, as well as relating the events of their lives, the young women were actively engaged in constructing their overall narratives and I identified an array of interpretative repertoires which brought to the fore presentations of different versions of femininity. It is my proposal that sociological understandings of femininity need to be more aware of women's use of agency and resistance in their production of femininities. I propose that research conducted with girls needs to take account of the value placed by them on different femininities and how these accord or conflict with heteronormative codes. It is the cumulative evidence within the analysis chapters which leads me to propose that sociological understandings of girls excluded from school and young women in general needs to be somewhat broader and more inclusive and take into account the
value that individuals’ place on differing femininities which may resist heteronormative femininities.

I also argue that future research should acknowledge the tension that necessarily exists in all qualitative interviews between the reality of the event being described and the overall self narrative which an individual is trying to build about herself. Therefore, my use of interpretative repertoires, along with my non-traditional qualitative methods enabled me to tap into the girls ‘on-going story about the self’ (Giddens, 1991: 54). I found that using interpretative repertoires enabled me to think actively about this tension. Therefore the use of such concepts, although imperfect, is worthwhile, as Nash (1999: 185) proposes (when discussing the merits of Bourdieu’s theories) just because ‘to do so forces one to think.’ Indeed, ‘without concepts—the tools of thought—we will not make much progress’ (Nash, 1999: 185).

10.4 The methodological strengths and limitations of the study
The overall research design allowed the interviewees to highlight the issues that were important to them. Enlisting the excluded young women as co-researchers would not have been practically achievable due to their transient lives and sometimes disaffected outlooks nor would it have been ethically desirable. Advocates of participatory methods may not concur with this assertion. Others, however, (for example Pole et al 1999) have noted the importance of recognising the limits of young people’s agency and acknowledging the constraints under which it is realised. The researcher is in a privileged position and should accept the responsibility of safeguarding the young people they work with. I realise that this may have limited the young women’s control over the research process but in order to counteract this I took great care to foster a reciprocal approach in the methods I did use.

My desire to draw the sample of young women from different areas of the country in order to eliminate any ‘location’ bias was central to my sampling strategy and successfully enabled me to gain a sample of girls from differing regions and ethnicities.
The first gatekeeper's request for me to do covert research could have endangered the integrity of the research. Choice of methods should be dictated by researchers' ontological and epistemological stance not by gatekeepers. It should be more widely acknowledged that it is hard for researchers to stand up to gatekeepers to ensure research is always conducted in the most desirable and appropriate manner, as they can be key to the research's success or failure. I encountered competing ethical perspectives at the PRUs. However I found the research was conducted with greatest success at units which allowed me a certain autonomy to speak to the girls in an environment without interference. I found that a quiet space could be created away from the formality of the institution which allowed for the active participation of the young women in the co-production of their biographies.

I have advocated task-based activities as a practical way of promoting socially excluded young people's active involvement in the research process. These activities were a key feature in providing a basis for the excluded young women to relate the stories of their lives. The collaborative nature of the research hopefully enabled the fusing of my agenda, as the researcher, with the agendas of the participants. The camera activity approximated a fuller participatory approach as it allowed the young women to pursue their own agenda, collect their own data and then to analytically reflect on their data in the photo sorting session. I believe that the photos enabled the girls to communicate their lived experiences and locale in a way words cannot easily express. The use of varying data generation tasks allowed the girls to construct a multi-media framed identity reflecting the way the young people live their lives; in a variety of differing contexts and locales.

I would argue for the need for the researcher to be reflexive throughout the whole research process. I believe that such an approach enabled me to react appropriately to the challenges I encountered resulting in the generation of rich data with a group of socially excluded young women. Rather than an objective process, data is produced and collected through inter-subjectivity between researcher, respondent and other
significant individuals and institutions (Pink 2001). Researchers have argued that power relations can never be overcome but must be constantly analysed and made visible through reflexive discussion (Barker and Weller 2003). It is a truism that reflexivity itself is partial as the complete impact of the researcher upon the research process can never entirely be identified, but the researcher should always endeavour to be aware of the pitfalls involved in failing to be reflexive throughout their research. As a method of reflecting the lived realities of a group of socially excluded young people I found that task-based approaches proved to be engaging and fun and facilitated the generation of a large amount of in-depth data.

An area which was raised in the introduction relates to the problem of gaining accounts of people's lives, as accounts can reflect the reality of an event, but also the way in which the individual wishes to present themselves to others. Whilst I was interviewing the young women I was conscious not only of what the young women were saying but also of how they were presenting themselves to me. In interview accounts there necessarily always exists a tension between the reality of the event being described and the overall self narrative which an individual is trying to convey about herself. I believed what the young women were telling me and I am not trying to undermine the validity of their narratives. However, in order to add a further layer of analysis and unpick how these stories contributed to the reflexive image of the self which individuals' construct through the accumulation of narratives I used the concept of interpretative repertoires. My use of the interpretative repertoires enabled me to locate the girls' resistant behaviour within the context of heteronormative femininities and I believe this has enhanced the validity of the research.

As was discussed in chapter four, the methods adopted in this study produced data which was found to be both valid and reliable. The measures employed during the research design, data generation and data analysis ensured that the respondents knew that their opinions were valid and valued, minimised transcription errors and guaranteed a consistent and rigorous analysis, which utilised all the data. Every effort
was made to ensure that the analysis and subsequent theory that emerged from the data was grounded in the constructions of the young women. Therefore, the theories drawn appear to be valid because they measure and fulfil the original objectives and also accurately reflect what the respondents highlighted were pointed to them.

A notable limitation of the study is that I was only able to interview two young women who had been excluded from school and for whom no alternative provision had been found. The rest of the sample was drawn from PRUs and therefore these girls were, to an extent, within the education system. This was a qualitative study and the possible inferences that can be made are akin to the moderatum generalisations requiring further testing as outlined by Payne and Williams (2005). Therefore the results cannot be generalised to a wider population. However, this was never the intention of the study. What the research does provide is a series of case studies located in a specific time and social context. Important questions have been raised which could be examined in further research. This study is obviously a small scale endeavour, but it seems that the discussion developed in this thesis may have wider relevance.

10.5 Implications
As was mentioned before I would recommend my methodological approach to future studies. I felt that the co-construction of the excluded girls' biographies through task based activities and the photo elicitation activity really engaged the girls' fully in the research process. The camera activity approximated a fuller participatory approach as it allowed the young women to pursue their own agenda, collect their own data and then to analytically reflect on their data in the photo sorting session. I believe that the photos enabled the girls to communicate their lived experiences and locale in a way words cannot easily express by themselves. The research approach used in this study could be fruitfully applied to further studies with socially excluded or at risk children and young people in order to successfully gain their confidence and let them have a degree of autonomy over the research.
As highlighted in the above account, I advocate using the conceptual tool of interpretative repertoires in order to gain a fuller insight into the maintenance of and resistance to heteronormative femininities in young women’s accounts. A more in-depth analysis of issues such as teenage pregnancy, crime and drug taking would particularly lend themselves to this approach.

The sample which my research was based upon consisted of a young age grouping and I obviously did not study their transitions to work (school to work careers). A longitudinal study of my sample of excluded girls would shed light on the ‘structural aspects of transitions and the policy questions that flow from this’, such as the way that the changing pre and post sixteen institutions structure opportunities for youth and influence processes of inclusion and exclusion (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005: 197). However, it could be argued that recent research with young people has been overly preoccupied with transitions to work and the benefit of my research is its concentration on the lived experiences of young people during compulsory education.

My research benefited from my desire to gather as geographically diverse sample as resources allowed. As highlighted in chapter 6, the girls I interviewed were based in varying locations in the Midlands, London and the South East of England. The similarities uncovered in the girls’ lives were surprising considering the diverse locations the sample was drawn from. I believe this enhances the validity of my findings.

In May 2008 the government announced a major overhaul of how PRUs operate. The government’s plans include: closing the poorest performing PRUs; encouraging more use of private and voluntary sector providers; publishing performance data for both alternative education providers and for local authorities for the first time; and a new emphasis on early intervention to prevent the need for exclusion (Dcsf, 2008). The impetus for the change appears to be the government’s realisation that only 1% of the 70,000 pupils who are currently taught in PRUs after being excluded from mainstream
schools get at least five C grade GCSEs (Dcsf, 2008). Ofsted said last year that the proportion of inadequate PRUs (14%, catering for around 700 pupils) was too high (Dcsf, 2008). Ofsted asserts that PRU’s lack a clear vision for their pupils and offer an uninspiring curriculum and consequently they fail to improve the pupils’ attendance or reduce days lost through exclusion. Ministers promised to invest £26.5m in piloting alternative provision for unruly pupils, including using small studio schools, in the Children's Plan (which was launched in 2007). In the white paper on alternative education issued in May 2008, the schools secretary, Ed Balls, asserted the term Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was an outdated and unhelpful label and therefore the government plans to consult on a new name. The new plans also include trials of smaller, studio schools for young people who need to be motivated to learn but in a different kind of environment. The schools will be run as groups of businesses, where young people will be workers as much as students. The first pilots are planned to start at the end of 2008 or in 2009. Ed Balls claimed that ‘we will ensure better basic standards by ensuring all young people outside mainstream schools have a plan for their education and receive a good curriculum entitlement’. It will be interesting to monitor the government’s implementation of its ‘radical overhaul’ of alternative education provision and to see how different it actually becomes from what is currently provided. Perhaps of greater significance is the reference made by Ed Balls to the need for earlier intervention to prevent young people being permanently excluded from school. Surely wide ranging measures at the familial, community and national levels needs to be undertaken to effectively reduce the number of young people excluded from school.

A more immediate intervention which would help young women at school is the possibility of teachers receiving training in order to acknowledge that different versions of femininity exist beyond heteronormative femininities. As Archer et al (2007a) note working-class femininities can be understood as occupying a paradoxical space within schools—while they can accrue capital within the field of heterosexuality
through the performance of desirable femininities, the young women are also located within a discourse of derision that positions them as 'other' and as incompatible with educational success. The notion of the ideal female pupil prevalent in educational discourse as middle-class needs to be de-stabilised in order to recognise the worth of other types of femininities.

10.6 Summary
This chapter has pulled together the various threads presented in the preceding chapters. I have elucidated the importance of examining the negotiation and resistance of heteronormative femininities in sociological understandings of girls excluded from school and young women in general, rather than maintaining a narrow focus which does not take into account the production and maintenance of various types of femininities (for example Osler et al, 2002; 2003). The empirical evidence demonstrates the potential uses of different qualitative approaches when conducting research with young people, most notably task-based activities and photo elicitation. By using such methods I was able to garner what was important to young women. My use of interpretative repertoires enabled me to tap into the girls 'on-going story about the self' (Giddens, 1991: 54) and aided in my identification of the value the girls placed on particular femininities. This thesis informs and adds to the growing literature of femininity research and research conducted with 'socially excluded' young people.

I would like to leave the reader with the vivid picture illustrated by Amelie. She seemed to encapsulate the experiences and feelings of exclusion related by many of my interviewees. The phrase 'I am one of those people' which was used by Amelie in relation to how she spent her time standing outside MacDonalds was used as the title of this thesis and chapter eight as it seemed to capture the young women's attempts at 'othering' themselves which they hinted at to me. As someone who inhabited the risky spaces of the streets at night Amelie reinforced to me the value she placed on tough, strong femininities. Amelie hit on something which was hinted at by many of the excluded girls, the feeling of living at the margins of society.
Now that some time has elapsed since the conducting of fieldwork and the subsequent ‘writing up’ of my thesis I have been able to reflect at some length on the data generated and its presentation in these pages. I found the young women’s narratives were extremely illuminating and powerful. Consistent with the analysis presented, I argue their life experiences can be understood as having been intricately linked to the production and maintenance of differing versions of femininity. However, as I endeavoured to make apparent throughout this thesis the girls’ lives were mediated by their experiences of living social exclusion which were linked to their social class positions. This claim, of course, is open to challenges and below I consider these and the extent to which possible challenges need to stand alongside my analysis.

I will begin by re-visiting my analytical framework. The analytical style of combining a more traditional qualitative analysis with aspects of discourse analysis, particularly interpretative repertories, raises points for reflection. Firstly my analytical style of drawing upon some techniques and approaches associated with grounded theory may seem incongruous when the study was obviously informed by the literature in chapters 1-3. Secondly, my use of a discursive approach may at first sight seem to sit uneasily with examining the realities of the girls’ situations. Thirdly, the interpretative repertoires of tough femininities and hyper-femininities may appear binary and may not adequately facilitate an examination of the complexities of the girls’ lives. I am also aware that the reader may view structural constraints to be somewhat neglected in the analysis. I will now try to answer these challenges below.

As mentioned on page 104 of this volume, the data generated were analysed ‘through the utilisation of some elements of a grounded theory style analysis’. By this I mean that I tried to position my rigorous coding of the data both in the data and in the social world and that my coding was a complex iterative process. My assertion that I utilised ‘some elements of a grounded theory style analysis’ is not intended to imply a strict or
holistic application of Glaser and Strauss approach (1967) or to endorse a naïve realist epistemological stance. As mentioned on page 105 of this volume I was very keen to remain sensitive ‘to the notion that data analysis is a construction that locates data in time, place, culture and context, but also reflects the researchers' own thinking’. In my methodology chapter I reflected that researchers approach the analysis of data with their own ‘sensitising concepts’ (Charmaz, 2001). A researcher cannot be neutral, or objective, or detached from the knowledge and evidence they are generating. My ‘sensitising concepts’ were derived from my lived experiences, the sociological literature I had reviewed and my previous research experiences. Therefore I came to the analysis wishing to take account of the girls' realities, views and feelings but also the 'baggage' that I may have brought to the analysis.

My approach to my analysis sought to treat the data as both an invaluable set of indicators as to the lived realities of the girls' lives and the way the girls presented themselves. The practised nature of many of the young women’s stories and my reflection on how these stories fitted into their everyday lives lead to my consideration of the ways in which the girls' presented themselves. My initial analysis suggested that the girls were employing differing femininities in differing contexts. I drew on the notion of interpretative repertoires in order to shed light on the differing femininities I felt the girls were presenting and describing to me. My identification of the girls' use of these femininities through the concept of interpretative repertories is not as contrary to approaches associated with grounded coding as it may first seem because although the presentations of these femininities may at some points have been discursive, they were also illustrated by the girls as being the realities or actions of which their lives consisted. Therefore the interpretative repertories elements of the analysis offer the potential for reinforcing the important facets of the girls lived experiences.

As mentioned in the methodology chapter in the early stages of analysing my data I became very aware of the presentations which the girls were conveying to me as the interviewer. Although I did not conduct a discourse analysis of the data I drew on
elements from this style of analysis to help me to conceptualise the complex, turbulent, violent and at times, heart breaking life stories which the girls related to me. The data revealed the ways in which the girls were formulating, practising and rejecting different forms of femininities. Other researchers have also identified how the maintenance, production and resistance of femininities are key in young girls' lives. For example Renold (2005) argues that all the girls in her study actively negotiated an increasingly compulsory, yet multiple and hierarchal, heterosexual matrix which permeates and regulates their relations with each other and boys. In her research Renold notes that girls were investing in a range of often contradictory discourses to produce their own and each others' bodies as heterosexually desirable commodities but she also encountered girls who actively constructed their femininities in opposition to sexualised girlie femininities and thus directly challenged the ways in which girls are subjects and agents of a heterosexualised male gaze. The young women in my study were older than the girls in Renold's (2005) study and I would argue that the display of femininities was an important part of their lives, as I would argue is the case in all young women's lives.

What stood out to me was the way in which the young women used different femininities both in their everyday interactions which they reported and in their presentations to me in order to empower them in different contexts. Whilst this may underplay the theoretical frameworks of class or ethnicity (issues which I will address more fully below) nonetheless femininities were present in these accounts in a way which class and ethnicity were not. The girls' biographical accounts and their presentations to me were permeated with how they appropriated and used different femininities. As referred to in the methodology chapter the young women predominately displayed 2 extreme forms of femininities, tough femininities and hyper-femininities. In most cases the manifestation of either of these femininities resulted from the accumulative utilization of traits which can be seen as the building blocks for both these femininities. Indeed depending on how the trait was used it could be reinforcing to either tough femininities or hyper-femininities. This
conceptualization is displayed on page 111 and illustrates that the traits are not exclusive to each other. Having a laugh or showing loyalty to family or friends could therefore be seen to contribute to either of these femininities. Indeed, the young women's femininities may be conceptualised as a continuum with tough femininities and hyper-femininities seen in tension with each other. This conceptualisation allows for the recognition of other forms of femininity to occur along the continuum and is actually quite all-encompassing in its ability to take into consideration a large range of differing facets. However, I would argue that the girls in my study actively sought to display the extremities of the femininity continuum which I describe. I would argue that as shocking and heart breaking as the events in the girls' lives which they related to me were, the girls were not cowered by them, rather they drew strength and empowerment from the outward display of particular forms of femininities, particularly tough and hyper-femininities. The girls' lives were undoubtedly also shaped by other elements such as issues of class and ethnicity. In my view, conceptualising the femininities which the young women drew on in order to survive the hard realities of their lives which many of them had to endure, was a particularly useful way of understanding their accounts. The matter of fact way which many of the girls related events in their lives, such as lack of money and volatile family relationships were in sharp contrast to the overwhelming desire of the girls to present agentic versions of their femininities.

Within the thesis there is a very strong focus on femininities. I realise that I may be criticised for not focusing my analysis on issues such as sexualities, class and ethnicity. These other approaches to the analysis of the data generated may be seen as equally valid. It is pertinent for me to note that the way I analysed the data was not the only way the data could have been analysed. A different researcher with different 'sensitising concepts' (Charmaz, 2001 - see chapter 4) may have analysed the data in a very different way. A given data set can be read in many equally valid ways. As noted by C. Wright Mills (1959) a 'sociological imagination' is required in order to analyse data and this process can be viewed as largely subjective.
As stated in Chapter 1 and 4, I aimed very much to stay located in the girls’ narratives and to ‘co-construct the girls’ biographies’. Therefore the data which emerged as important in the girls’ narratives was what was important to the girls themselves. For example boyfriends did not emerge very much in their narratives as they simply were not as important to the young women as the loyalties that existed in their friendships. The relevance of the femininities to the girls’ lives is strongly supported by the data and is an approach which, in my view, is faithful to the girls’ accounts.

In chapter 2 I examined Bourdieu’s (1986) conceptualisation of how structure and agency interplay. Bourdieu emphasised that social life cannot be understood as simply the aggregate of individual behaviour, nor could it be understood solely in terms of individual decision making on the one hand or as determined by a supra-structure on the other. Bourdieu’s use of habitus to mediate between structure and agency is something which resonates with my research. I believe the young women’s utilisation of particular forms of femininities arose out of, and within, their habitus.

In my analysis I was very aware that issues of class did have a bearing on the girls’ lives. However, as the reader will be aware I did not bring issues of structural constraints to the fore. As stated in chapter 5, the young women came from what can be described as working-class backgrounds and they were also conceptualised by the government as ‘socially excluded’. I believe that social class is intrinsically woven into the young women’s performance of femininities. The femininities the young women were embracing were antithetical to middle-class notions of femininities or what I termed heteronormative femininities. The young women embraced loud, active visible femininities which can be seen as closer to working-class femininities than middle-class femininities. However, the young women’s appropriation of these femininities seemed to differ from the femininities expressed by the other young working-class women who they came into contact with, for example those who attended their schools. The young women in my study went beyond the boundaries which confine others, for example in
their behaviour at school which resulted in exclusion, and in making the streets at night sites for leisure.

Other researchers may have looked to elevate the status of class in the analysis of my data, perhaps examining in more detail the casual factors in the trajectory of the excluded young women's lives. I believe that analysis of the data concentrating on structural constraints would be equally interesting and valuable. I accept the importance of structural constraints could have been emphasised more within this analysis but at the same time the excluded young women did act agentically when negotiating the tough environments of their schools and homes. Therefore it would be incorrect to presume that agency is only a preserve of the middle-classes. I identified many examples of ways in which these girls demonstrated agency in spite of their structural situations. The young women's agency in the form of differing femininities helped them to manage in difficult situations. However, ultimately their agency was constrained by their habitus which, I argue, would not help them to improve their social class locations which therefore constrained them.

By emphasising femininities and the importance that the young women placed on their perceived use of their agency I am aware that structural constraints such as the young women's class positions which led to a lack of material possessions and their exclusion from youth consumerism, their common experiences of poor and broken family relationships and the influencing factors derived from the areas in which they had lived would have been equally interesting and valuable analytical frameworks. My data would perhaps lend itself to an analytical framework derived from the work of theorists who have furthered Bourdieu's concepts of capital such as Coleman (1988) and Putman (1993). This may have allowed for a detailed examination of the interplay of structure and agency and an exploration of different forms of capital available to the young women. Other researchers may have looked to elevate the status of power relationships in the data through the work of Foucault (1980, 1982). The exercise of power through surveillance and knowledge certainly featured in the girls' stories about
violence and aggression. I believe this approach would have been a valuable undertaking.

Ethnicity is another analytical tool which I could have employed in the analysis of my data. My sample (see chapter 5) consisted of white, black, and Asian young women. What emerged from the data were the similarities in the girls' accounts of school, their families and friends and their experiences of violence. Shemeila, a young women from a Muslim background, showed some limited differences in her stories (for example the music she listened to and household tasks). However, even her account was full of examples which accorded with my other interviewees such as her utilisation of hyper-femininities and tough femininities. The two girls who mentioned racism in their accounts June and Jade, stressed the racism which existed between black and Asian pupils at their school. The interviews were conducted at a particular time of racial tension in a Midlands' city. I am aware from my own experiences of attending a city school in the Midlands and from school exclusion literature that issues of ethnicity can contribute to school exclusions (for example due to teachers' negative labelling of black pupils). Other researchers may have sought to explore issues of institutional racism within educational spheres in a similar manner to Mac an Ghaill (1988) who identified teacher's perceptions of African-Caribbean pupils as creating anti-school subcultures.

Hopefully the above reflections of the tools I used in the analysis of the young women's lives and my reflexive review of possible alternative approaches has brought into sharper focus the complexities of the data.
References


* Kellett, M., Forrest, R. and Dent, N. (2004) ‘“Just teach us the skills please, we’ll do the rest”: empowering ten-year-olds as active researchers’, *Children and Society*, 18, 329-343.


  http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/home.do


* Punch, S. (2002a) 'Research with children: the same or different from research with adults?' *Childhood*, 9 (3): 321-341.

* Punch, S. (2002b) 'Interviewing strategies with young people: The secret box, stimulus material and task-based activities', *Children and Society*, 16: 45-56.

* Punch, S. (2007) "'I felt they were ganging up on me': Interviewing siblings at home", *Children's Geographies*, 5(3): 219-234.


12th April 2005

To whom it may concern

Re: Anna Conolly – University of Surrey

This letter is to introduce Anna Conolly who has been working as a PhD research at College Hall for the past term. Her conduct has been exemplary building positive and appropriate relationships with our pupils whilst researching the lives of girls who have been excluded from mainstream schools. Anna being here has caused no interruption to the work of the staff or to the learning of the pupils. Indeed, the girls have particularly enjoyed helping Anna and the staff have been pleased to welcome her as part of the team.

Should you need any further details please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Deputy Headteacher

Education - Pupil Referral Service
Appendix 2: Bite-sized information / consent leaflet

Girls who are ‘excluded’ from school

Anna Conolly
Research Student
Department of Sociology
School of Human Sciences
University of Surrey
Guildford, GU2 7XH
Telephone: 01483 876983
Email: a.conolly@surrey.ac.uk
The Study

- You have been asked to take part in a research project which focuses on girls who have been either formally, or informally, excluded from school.
- One aim of the study is to find out how girls who have been excluded feel about exclusion from school.
- Another aim of the study is to find out about excluded girls’ lives before and after exclusion to see how much of an impact exclusion has.

Methods

- I intend to interview around 40 girls who have some experience of exclusion from school.
- During the interview I will ask you questions about your experiences of school and your family and friends.
- It is important to remember that the purpose of the interview is for you to tell me about your experiences and feelings and there will be no right or wrong answers to any of the questions that I will ask you.
- With your permission the interview will be tape recorded. This is so that I can have an accurate record of what you say without making too many notes.
- I may wish to interview you more than once.
- You can stop taking part in the research at any time.

Confidentiality

The interview will be entirely confidential. This means that no-one will know what you said apart from me and I will take steps to make sure that no-one else will know.

When I write up the results of the study I will change your name and other details in order to keep your identity secret.

Consent form (tear along this dotted line)

I agree to take part in the study and know what taking part will involve.

I know I can stop taking part at any time, and if I ask the data collected from me will not be used.

I understand and agree to the above

Signed: __________________________

Date: __________________________
Appendix 3: Interview guide and task-based activities

Interview Guide

Discuss research. Explain confidentiality. Ask permission to tape record – assure of confidentiality.

Before we talk about your exclusion from school, tell me about your family and friends

Locations, siblings, parent(s) jobs, static/moved, friends – lots of them, how long have known them for, where from.

What do you enjoy doing outside school?

What do you do with your friends? Do your friends influence the way you behave inside school / is your friends’ approval of your behaviour important to you? How often do you go out per week, what do you spend your money on, where do you get your money, what time are you allowed to stay out until, what happens when you are home late, boyfriend(s) – are they an important part of your life?

Now tell me about school?

Static/moved, did you enjoy school, relevance of curriculum, what band (stream) were you in, were you given help with any subjects?

What sort of problems did you have at school (if any) OR why were you excluded?

Difficulties, how did you cope with difficulties, truanting, previous suspensions / exclusions, does she blame the exclusion on anything or anyone?

What happened when you were excluded?

How was she informed? Which agencies were involved, appeals, length of time before alternative provision was arranged, how did she / friends, family react.
Do you think your exclusion has made a difference to your life? Do you think people view you differently now?

Education, friends, relationships with others/family

Future Aspirations

What do you hope to do / achieve in the future? (aims / aspirations)
Appendix 4: An example of a time-line:

18th October 1988 - born.
1990 - mum got new boyfriend who was my new dad.
1991 - started nursery.
1994 - started primary school.
1995 - my sister was born.
1997 - first time my dad ever hit my mum.
1999 - mum & dad split up.
1999 - mum met dad.
2000 - started secondary school.
2002 - moved to another secondary school because of sum trouble.
2004 - March - got kicked out of college.
2004 - move to education centre.
30th June - went to education centre.
Appendix 5: An example of a family tree:
Appendix 6: An example of a sentence completion:

**Sentence completion**

When I am with my friends we spend our time ...
  getting stoned, watching T.V., going to the skate park, raving, going into town, bowling.

When I am at home I feel ...
  relaxed if in stoned, sometimes I cry if I think about my family, and stuff that happened.

I think I was excluded from school because of ...
  my temper, problems, and need to smoke cigarettes.

When I leave school I want to ...
  move away and hopefully get an apprenticeship as an administrative marketer.