

**TITLE:** Does Peer Influence Have An Impact On Young People's Drinking Patterns?

**AUTHOR:** Lisa Marie Neary BA.Theol.

**QUALIFICATION:** MA in Sociology (Modernity in Ireland).

**INSTITUTE OF SUBMISSION:** National University of Ireland  
Maynooth.

**FACULTY:** Department of Sociology,  
St Anne's building,  
National University of Ireland Maynooth.

**DATE OF SUBMISSION:** August 2003.

**HEAD OF DEPARTMENT:** Michel Peillon.

**SUPERVISOR:** Dr Deirdre Kirke.

**DOES PEER INFLUENCE HAVE AN IMPACT ON  
YOUNG PEOPLE'S DRINKING PATTERNS?**

## **CONTENTS.**

(1) INTRODUCTION	PG 1.
(2) LITERATURE REVIEW	PG 4.
(3) THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	PG 17.
(4) METHODOLOGY	PG 22.
(5) PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION	PG 29.
(6) PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION FINDINGS	PG 65.
(7) DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	PG 72.
(8) BIBLIOGRAPHY	PG 76.

## INTRODUCTION

A healthy part of every young person's development is involvement with their peers. This is really evident during adolescence as teenagers develop a sense of independence from their families. As they grow older they are inclined to be rewarded by the recognition and acceptance of their peers than their parents and other adults. Young people would regard this recognition and acceptance by their peers as being very important and it is this type of recognition and acceptance that will be the strongest reward that they can get. Members of a peer group usually have the same dress sense, share the same taste of music, talk about similar things and share the same jokes and secrets. Friends do supply young people with a sounding board to test their ideas and a standard by which to judge their behaviour away from home. Whether they are at pubs, clubs or friends' houses, a major source of young people's security is usually found in the approval of their network of friends. A lot of young people behave in a particular way as they believe that their friends expect this behaviour from them. For young people social drinking with their peers is a form of pleasure. For them, going to a friends house party, the pub or even a nightclub is one of the most popular sources of entertainment. "*Social drinking can be an enjoyable and relaxing activity*" (Mc Conville, 1983, Pg 30). It gives them opportunity to unwind and really talk to their friends. In a good session they discuss various different things that may otherwise not be talked about. "*It brings you closer to people, creates a greater understanding and intimacy with friends which is tremendously valuable*" ( Mc Conville, 1983, Pg 30). Usually the more that they see their friends drink, the more they want to carry on drinking as well. They get a good buzz, laugh at the silliest things that their friends say or do. They see it as a harmless social activity and derive a lot of enjoyment from it.

*“We like alcohols mellowing, relaxing effect, we like the convivial social ritual of drinking with friends”* (Mc Conville, 1983, Pg 30). Although there are several factors which contribute to drinking behaviour of young people, one of the most obvious and popular ones is peer influence. As adolescents are growing up they feel that they don't need as much protection or as much information from their parents. It is at this time that they are receiving, seeking, advice, support from and choosing more interaction with their peers. Some young people are parent oriented while others are youth oriented and choices made in connection with alcohol will differ. Young people whose parents are not in favour of alcohol and who have peers who are in favour of alcohol will more than likely drink. The company that a young person keeps can obviously have a profound influence on their drinking behaviour. Drinking with friends is a lot more tempting than studying and feeling stressed out. This is really evident in the student culture as it is their first time away from home and a lot of young people see it as the quickest easiest way to meet new people and make friends. *“Research has shown that peers are important in how when and where drinking is integrated into the lifestyle of the individual”* (O Connor, 1978, Pg 117). Young people would either have a friend or a group of friends to go drinking with. A of the Irish young people would in general receive a lot of social support from their friends. Usually when friends get together they are inclined to do a lot of heavy drinking. When they are socialising with a particular group, they decide whom they want to socialise with and whom they don't want to spend time with. It's through the peers that they associate with, that other people judge who they are. Some of them would literally do anything to be accepted and may feel isolated if they are left out, so if it means that they have to drink and are easily influenced by their peers they will do so. This is not

necessarily the in your face type of pressure. It would usually involve “O come on with us to a party, it will be great. Everyone is going to be there”. When they arrive at the party, it’s regularly an environment where alcohol is present. When they are confronted with this, it can help to build the expectation that it’s perfectly acceptable to drink. The majority of young people really want to fit in into their network of peers so much that they would practically do anything to fit in. Some young people may feel isolated and are vulnerable to peer influence. It is well known that adolescence is identified by the appearance of an identity crisis and some of them have no self esteem, thus this low self esteem is linked with greater conformity. So if a young person has a low level of self esteem, they are obviously going to be susceptible to peer influence. Peer influence for drinking is without a doubt the most powerful explanatory variable of drinking habits among young people. If there was no peer influence there would be very little drinking. The drinking behaviour of the young person’s best friend or friends does have an effect on the young person. They usually like to hang out with peers who perform behaviours that they too would perform. This could involve just having a laugh, mixing and mingling with others and just simply enjoying themselves under the influence of alcohol.

These are the questions which this thesis addresses. *Young Adults drinking* behaviour is examined in the context of the peer network in which it occurs in order to examine the meaning of drinking for these young adults and the process how which it occurs.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND ALCOHOL

Alcohol is known to be the first and most popular and psychoactive drug consumed by young people. It is definitely the only type of drug as well as cigarettes, which young people can share with their parents. It is evident that drinking is already normalised and it is undoubtedly the most commonly practised form of recreational drug use among the young people of Ireland. *“Whatever pathway status young people take, whether they drink or not, whether they take illicit drugs or not, they almost invariably talk about the importance of ‘time out’ from everyday life, of socialising with their friends, having a good time, having a laugh and relaxing from the stresses and worries they feel”* (Parker, Aldridge and Measham, 1998, Pg 50). For a lot of young people alcohol plays a big role in this time out, thus making alcohol their ‘favourite drug’. It is a known fact that young people are quite fond of their alcohol when they are out socialising. The media would often mention the problem of drinking behaviour among young people. As drinking is a problem alone it can lead to other problems like crime, drug abuse and illicit sexual relationships. *“Many young people regard taking a drink as a passport to the adult world, and this anticipation of the adult role may produce serious problems for those responsible for such young people’s care, discipline and welfare”* (A Report To The Churches In Ireland, 1974, Pg 11). A lot of people presume that when young people drink, they just get drunk and engage in anti social behaviour. It’s unfair to suggest that young people who drink are on their way to becoming alcoholics or troublemakers. For young people drinking is seen as a normal part of entry

into adult life. In several ways young people are a reflection of the society which raises them and what society is turning out to be.

### **PEER INFLUENCE AND DRINKING BEHAVIOUR**

Even though young people are encouraged to be self assertive and not to be influenced by their peers. It's a fact that young people would feel more at ease drinking with friends than with their parents. Their first drink is usually taken outside the home, when they are 14 – 15 years, in the company of their friends. The three crucial reasons why young people take their first drink are linked with sociability, recreation and they enjoy the taste of it. Young people who drink like to hang out with other young people who drink. As time goes on the younger person will increase in the amount that they drink and their friends may be a bad influence. Evidence has proven that the nature of a friendship group in a way can determine the patterns of drinking that take place. Sometimes young people feel intimidated to drink by their peer in order to stay in the crowd and be invited to join other occasions. This can happen a lot, but sometimes it can just be in a young person's head. They may think, without testing reality, that if they don't drink they won't be accepted into a particular group. The rewards of drinking would involve approval and acceptance. It would also take a lot of courage to carry out a dare or risk and feeling powerful and secure.

### **DRINKING BEHAVIOUR IS LEARNED**

Drinking behaviour is "*learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication/ this communication is verbal in many respects, but it also includes the communication of gestures*" (Sutherland,Crossley&Luckenbill, 1992, Pg 89). The dominant part of the learning of drinking behaviour takes place within a close personal network of peers. Negatively this shows that any impersonal



agencies of communication like magazines, films, newspapers play a rather insignificant role in the formation of drinking behaviour. When drinking behaviour is learned, this involves participating within a network of peers and following their drinking patterns which can be easy for some young people and difficult for others. Some of them may favour or disapprove of this drinking behaviour. The Jessors believe that heavy drinking is linked to a variety of factors; these are connected with tolerance of deviance and risk taking behaviours. *“This problem behaviour theory is characteristic of social psychological theories which are based on the assumption that most social behaviours, including those relating to health and substance use, are largely a result of rational decision making processes”* (Bagnall, 1991, Pg 132”). When a person is trying to make a decision about whether to partake in a specific behaviour like drinking, this is known as behaviour intentions. These are known to arbitrate between the beliefs that individuals have and their actual behaviour. The behaviour intention will be more positive if the attitude is positive in the first place, thus there will be a higher chance that the behaviour will be carried out. But if the person does not have the skills that are needed to accomplish a behavioural outcome, or if the chance of partaking in the behaviour does not happen, the intentions may not foresee performance.

### **DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUANCE OF DRINKING**

Research on 2,057 students in a Dublin post primary school was carried out (Grube and Morgan). The sample was divided equally between males and females and their average age was 15.8 years. The report looked at the development and continuance of drinking among these young people. Around two thirds of these young people have tasted alcohol on at least one occasion. Their favourite drinks

included beer, wine followed by cider and spirits. Even though a lot of them have been drunk before there was still a high proportion of abstainers in this group. Boys consumed drink more than the girls and it was the best friends' influence resulted in them drinking more rather than the influence of other friends. Neither their fathers' socio economic status nor their mothers' employment had an influence on how much they would drink. If young people believe that by drinking they will become popular and cool and in their eyes this is highly valued among their peers, subsequently this set of beliefs will influence their likelihood to drink. These young people are known to receive more social support for engaging in this drinking than the other young people who don't participate with them. Even though their parents would not be impressed with their behaviour, they carry on doing this because it's strongly approved by their peers. It is now expected that parental disapproval and peer behaviour are the most powerful influences. Out of the entire group two fifths had taken an alcoholic drink before the age of thirteen and it was more boys than girls who taken a drink. In comparison to smoking there is no specific age at which young people decide to drink. 12% – 15% of the group admitted that they are current drinkers, which means they had alcoholic drinks during the previous month. From the age of thirteen onwards there was an increase in current drinkers and around one third of them experienced being drunk and this too increased over time. In comparison to other countries Ireland had a lower consumption than Israel and higher than France, and the number of abstainers is decreasing (Grube and Morgan) For the boys they continued to consume drinks, their social bonding and problem behaviours didn't make an increase in their drinking behaviour. In the case of girls, the addition of social bonding and problem behaviour explained for a slight increase in prediction.

Overall for both the boys and girls peer influence was the biggest factor but it appears to be stronger for girls rather than boys.

### **GROUP DRINKING**

Young people are known to value peer influence more than anyone else's. They learn a lot about alcohol through their peers and what they have learned about alcohol is a vital determinant in how they behave while out drinking. Both males and females would consume a lot of alcohol at college. Males would drink more alcohol than females and these young people are known to drink with their network of peers. It is usually the males and those who are the drinkers in the group who drink their alcohol very fast. It's obvious that those who are drinking in a group would have an influence on their friends to continue drinking and this would affect their alcohol behaviour. Research that was carried out by Collins and Marlatt (1981) concluded that if normal moderate drinkers socialise with a peer who is a heavy drinker are more than likely to drink more than when their partner is drinking less. This indicates that young people do follow the footsteps of their peers. *"On a more interactional level, a by now large body of data implicates peer group influences as the most potent extraindividual set of determinants of the transition to drinker status"* (Blane and Chafetz, 1979 Pg 108). A person may give actual recommendations to another individual within a group of friends that he/ she should act and behave in ways that are indicative of group solidarity. Peer drinking can in fact make alcohol more freely accessible within society. Peer drinking is capable of changing a person's outlook towards drinking, which could result in them taking a drink. So basically different types of peers can have a different impact and different influencing processes on us. A study carried out on alcohol actually came up with the result that peer behaviour,

like drinking, and participation in peer activities, like parties, does predict later use of distilled spirits by earlier non-drinkers. *“Friends’ influence become increasingly influential as students progress through high school, while parent modelling effects remain steadily influential rather than decreasing with maturation”*(Blane and Chafetz,1979,Pg109).

### **DRINKING BEHAVIOUR**

It's during adolescence that young people begin to experiment with their behaviours, unfortunately if they are continued long term it could have a negative effect on their health. Millar and Plant found out that 80% of females and 81% of males who were all aged between 15 – 16 years had already been drunk at some stage in their lives. Some young people feel that they are socially incompetent and are therefore easily influenced by their peers and intervention programmes have been set up to help them build their self esteem, self control and self worth. But despite this some people do believe that young people do grow up in a wet culture and to drink alcohol is a cultural rite of passage into adulthood. A lot of young people just associate drinking with having a good time with their peers. They like to go binge drinking and they would classify this as normative behaviour, as this type of behaviour does not occur as much in adulthood because binge drinking is complex and incompatible with the adequate fulfilment of the social roles required by marriage, work and parenthood. When a person is drinking, this can change other people's outlook on him/her. When male social drinkers found out that a female accomplice drank alcohol before their interaction, there was a decrease in the males level of anxiety unlike the drinkers who were not informed. The female accomplice carried out an experiment for the experimenter and was not known by the subject and she drank alcohol without

her subject knowing. The males found her to be more personally attractive and were not as anxious as when no information was produced about her. An accomplice who was drunk and acted accordingly was judged by the subject as being friendly, likeable and admirable compared to when she acted sober.

### **DRINK REFUSAL**

A social situation, which arises regularly, is when friends are trying to influence other friends to have another drink and this is when the drinker has to be strong willed. In this type of a situation the person who is taking a drink has to deal with a persuasive friend as well as the presence of alcohol and not to mention the drinking buddies. In order for a young person to be able to drink in moderation or to be a non-drinker it's vital that they are taught how to say no directly and assertively and they should feel content with the response that they will give.

This is really relevant for young drinkers as they are more than likely to drink with their peers. *"In addition, they are more susceptible to influence by peers because of such factors as need for acceptance and fear of social rejection"*

(Blane and Chafetz, 1979, Pg 397) An experiment was carried out by

Eisler et al (1976), they wanted to develop a drink refusal

training programme. The whole purpose of this was to help to teach

those who don't drink to deal with those who try to influence you to drink. Before they received training, alcoholics constructed sample scenes illustrating certain situations in which other people had put them under pressure to take a drink.

Subsequently the scenes were acted out with two 'pushers' who came up with a lot of debates in order to influence the person to drink. *"One drink won't hurt you" "what kind of a friend are you", "Just have a little one", "I'll make sure you wont have any more"* (Blane and Chafetz, 1979, Pg 397). These various

scenes were recorded and the people's responses were given ratings. Components of an appropriate refusal response were then shown in a sequential order. Take for instance the people were taught that when they were giving the pusher an answer they had to look at them directly, address them in a determined strong tone, with the right facial expression as well as the appropriate body language. They were encouraged to ask for a mineral instead and to ask the pushers politely to refrain from their persuasion. They were also taught to change the topic of conversation. They were then shown a videotape of a model illustrating the correct refusal response. They were told to pay particular attention to the models eye contact and facial expressions, thus they were encouraged to practice these behaviours during role- playing sessions and feedback was produced about the progress of their performances, which proved that there were improvements. Before the people received good advice they would just smile inappropriately and uncomfortable and basically could not say No. But after the training they were able to confront their pusher in a firm straightforward manner. Three months later a clinical and videotape follow up and evaluation was carried out. The people still held onto the skills that they had learned. *"Patients also noted that their ability to refuse drinks increased feelings of confidence, self esteem and a sense of personal control over their lives"*(Blane and Chafetz,1979, Pg 398).

### **ALCOHOL EXPECTANCIES**

The majority of young people who consume alcohol just like to have fun. One of the strongest predictors of intention to drink and subsequent drinking behaviour among young people is the belief that alcohol aids social interaction. Alcohol expectancies are the impressions that a person has in connection to the effects of

alcohol and the longing of those effects. These expectations are developed through observation, assimilation of cultural stereotypes as well as vicarious studying. So Smith et al, firmly believes expectancies are already learned before a young person begins to drink and predict the commencement of drinking. Alcohol expectancies are known to have a connection with the drinking behaviour of young people. It's thought to influence both the initiation and the continuation of the drinking behaviour. Thus when the drinking commences, it's not just directed by these existing expectancies, but the drinking also foresees subsequent expectancy. Even peer influence contributes to alcohol expectancies and has a strong connection with drinking behaviour.

### **DRINK SETTINGS.**

A lot teenage drinking would take place in homes of friends, parties and car parks. Who a teenager drinks with and the number of persons present is a major influence. Also the behaviour of the person is based on the function of the interaction between the settings and the person. There are always different atmospheres created by the behaviour and different personalities of the young people. Some people may be dull and boring while others would be livelier and outgoing. The actual physical setting like the size of the room, music being played, the amount of people present and their expectations for the occasion, as well as their attitudes about their own responsibility and the availability of alcohol all contribute to the drinking behaviour. A survey was carried out in two Mississippi communities and it was based on teenage drinking. It reported that peers were known to be the most popular drinking companions, for those who drank regularly and occasionally. Companion status is known to be linked to problem drinking. Young people who drank alone and with peers were more

likely to develop problems later in life, in comparison to those who drank with their family were more than likely not to suffer with problems. Kline (1972) carried out a study on 567 Junior High School students in California stated that teenagers preferred to drink with other people (62%) rather than drink on their own (11%), or with another person (27%). A lot of the young people began drinking because of peer influence. Usually the more time a young person spends with their peers, the more they are inclined to drink.

Thus the adolescent drinking became more regular and heavier as the amount of perceived drinking that occurred among the peers increased. Young people like to drink in an environment with their closest friends instead of an environment where they don't really know other people because they will only feel more disconnected from each other. Peers like to get together at teenage parties, local hangouts where other friends would be drinking without the presence of parents and other adults. They like to drink at home when there are no elders around. They like to drink more away from home and there is usually an increase in the amount of alcohol that they consume on each occasion.

A study that was carried out on two state comprehensive schools on the east coast of Scotland showed that cider, beer, and lager were the most popular drinks for the young people. They had a whole variety of social settings, which included the streets, local parks, clubs, discos, pubs, and beaches or friends houses. There was actually a gender distinction; the boys were more inclined to go drinking on the streets while the girls preferred to in friends houses. They were asked several questions including why do they drink? And a very common answer that kept popping up was peer influence.



INTERVIEWER: "Are you aware of situations that you might be in that you drink more than other".

RESPONDENT: "It just depends when I am out, how much money I've got. I mean like if everyone else is come on get drunk tonight, come on or something like that. I am just, I will say, all right then, go on then"

So young people see alcohol as a social activity, which they undertake with their peers. When a young person moves either to a work or college environment the people with whom they associate can have an impact on their behaviour. This is a time when young people face new social situations and relationships. New fellow workers are obviously going to be a good source of friendship and quite often can help young peoples movement into new and mixed social activities. Some of the respondents who decided to further their education did experience differences in their social networks because of the way the schools changed their classes and the respondents undertook new subjects. There was a chance that those who stayed on at school lost contact with those who left school, so their lives branched off in different directions. There were obviously changes in friendship networks and their drinking behaviour. *"Greater alcohol consumption was most frequently facilitated by a movement into a new social situation or taking part in a social activity where many other people smoked or drank"*( Mac Intyre,1998,Pg 1416).The respondents began to spend more of their social time in pubs and clubs with their new peers.

INTERVIEWER: "Do you think that there have been any changes in your smoking and drinking in the last six months".

RESPONDENTS: “a bit, a bit, well, last time... I had not smoked or drank at all. But eh, now its just eh, since my social circles has got bigger, there’s more people that I know that are smoking and drinking, it’s, well go and try it, so I tried it and liked it. I dinnae really like the drinking much and I do not really like smoking that much, you know, I just do it to socialise”.

RESPONDENT: “I didn’t use to go out so I suppose it is the two things just go hand in hand, if you go out then the chances are you will drink or, well smoking as well, so eh, just, when you go out folk do drink so you just join them”

INTERVIEWER: “Were you drinking last time you were interviewed?”

RESPONDENT: “Occasionally”.

INTERVIEWER: So how often would you say that you are drinking now?

RESPONDENT: “Practically every Saturday night”.

INTERVIEWER: “Can you think of what’s brought about that change from being occasional to regular?”

RESPONDENT: “Well I go to Johns bar every week now, so you know, it is just, you go in and that’s what you do really”.

These changes in the respondent’s behaviour were due to the influence of their new peers and how they spent their leisure time. These young peoples friendship group drank a lot and their social lives rotated around the pubs and clubs were they could consume alcohol. It’s quite important that young people experiment with a whole variety of new behaviours. This need and wish to act in a different manner comes along with a whole variety of risks and anxiety about succeeding and doubts about the future as well as extreme excitement and creativity.

## SUMMARY

It's clear from this literature review that young people value their peers' beliefs and values more than anyone else's. Their peers have a big influence on their drinking behaviour. It appears that adolescents select their closest friends on the basis of similar interests. It's unusual for a young person who does not drink to select a friend who doesn't consume alcohol. For a young person being accepted by his/her peers is so important, whether or not the expectation is linked to the threat of being left out. They obviously like socialising with their friends and having a laugh as they feel more at ease drinking with friends rather than their parents or other adults. In general boys are known to consume more alcohol than girls and are more susceptible to peer influence from friends encouraging them to drink. Even though some parents don't approve of their drinking behaviour, young people really don't take this into consideration, if friends approve of drinking. But at the same time it's important that they will drink in moderation and should feel confident with whatever answer they give when they are offered a drink. If they are given the proper guidance, they should be able to deal with those who are trying to influence them to drink. Thus where a young person consumes alcohol – house parties, pubs and clubs, and who is present, has an influence on their drinking behaviour. If they develop new friendships a lot of their social lives will revolve around the pub and club scenes, as they feel the need to make an effort to fit into their new network of peers.

# **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## **DRINKING FOR PLEASURE**

A lot of young people like to drink for pleasure and enjoyment; this can only be achieved if they know how to drink in moderation. The amount of drink that young people consume has always received a lot of attention. The existence of a specific type of behaviour is the outcome of a series of social experiences in which the individual obtains a knowledge of the meaning of the behaviour and understanding and judgements of objects and circumstances, which combined are capable of making the activity possible and desirable (Becker, 1953, Pg 235)

Young people like to drink for pleasure and the term pleasure highlights the noncompulsive and casual character of the drinking behaviour. It also intends to remove from consideration the cases in which drink is consumed for its prestige value only, indicating that one is a particular kind of person, with no enjoyment what so ever being obtained from the drink.

Young people are always willing to try alcohol and they know that other people drink to get a good buzz. Unless they have a bad experience with alcohol they will consider it's use to be a pleasure. They are always curious about the experience of getting drunk, and they don't all get drunk the first time that they drink. So they are deriving pleasure from their drinking experiences and they are more than likely going to be drinking with their network of peers. They learn a lot from their peers through the more direct means of observation and imitation. They let go and lose their inhibitions, fit in socially and are really happy and laugh more. They like to experience these kinds of feelings, then they will continue to drink for pleasure, thus they will develop a greater appreciation of the alcohols effect and enjoy the experience. So basically its when they go through

this process that they know that they can have a lot of fun when they are drinking. “*The taste for such experience a socially acquired one*” (Becker, 1953, Pg 239). The alcohol will produce some new experiences for them and they will continue to experiment with it as they normally enjoy these experiences. Sometimes they may ask older peers about their good experiences that they have when they drink and they can learn from them.

### **GOOD AND BAD EXPERIENCES**

There are times when young people do drink too much and they can be capable of engaging in anti social behaviour. They will get dizzy, confused and misjudge situations. These kinds of unpleasant experiences might convince the young person not to continue drinking unless he/she learns to redefine the sensations as enjoyable and pleasurable. In interaction with their peers they derive more enjoyment in the effects of the drinks and eventually become regular drinkers. If they were having bad experiences the majority of the time they would not want to continue, so by associating with peers who are well experienced drinkers, who can teach them in several ways to seek pleasure in the experience, especially if they previously had any bad experiences. “*They may reassure him as to the temporary character of the unpleasant sensations and minimize their seriousness, at the same time calling attention to the more enjoyable aspects*” (Becker, 1953, Pg 240). So if they experience frightening and unpleasant happenings, they will not continue drinking until they know how to redefine the sensations as enjoyable. It’s usually when they interact with their peers that they seek more enjoyment and fun, especially if their friends are more experienced drinkers. They will make them aware of the silly and stupid things that they can carry out while under the influence of alcohol, but they can reassure

them that any unpleasant experiences that they have only lasts for a short period of time and at the same time they make them aware of the enjoyable aspects. So, by reassuring them, they can gain more confidence. Friends that are more experienced drinkers can teach their peers to regulate the amount of alcohol that they consume, in order to avoid any negative outcomes and to retain the pleasant ones. Finally they can teach their peers that they can really enjoy it after a while. *“He teaches him to regard those ambiguous experiences formerly defined as unpleasant and enjoyable”* (Becker, 1953, Pg 240). In an incident like this, the person who is trying to help others to enjoy their drink, may have had a bad experience before and is really trying to teach others not to have bad experiences but to enjoy the effect of drink. *“In short what was once frightening and distasteful becomes after a taste for it is built up, pleasant, desired, and sought after / Enjoyment is introduced by the favourable definition of the experience that one acquires from others”* (Becker,1953, Pg 241). If this does not happen, they will not continue drinking as the person will see and seek no pleasure from it. Of course everyone has experiences that they don't enjoy at some stage, when they drink way over the limit and engage in bad behaviour. Sometimes they may decide not to take another drink, or else their friends may help them to change their mind and tell them that everything will be fine the next time.

### **ENJOYMENT IN DRINKING**

A lot of young people just like to have fun and they find that Alcohol contributes to having fun. It is seen as the norm that alcohol is harmless. Young People have a lot of positive beliefs about alcohol, they enjoy drinking it, it makes them feel happy, relaxed more outgoing and confident and they would worry less.

They also find it easier to talk to people and express feelings. Like Becker, they see this as harmless behaviour which is based around the whole aspect of enjoyment. Sometimes after a hard week of college or work, they would have a drink as a reward for their hard work or even to celebrate special occasions. Some people just enjoy the taste of certain drinks or just alcohol in general. It improves their mood making them happier, they become more energetic and can dance better. Increased laughter among drinkers is the result not only of the effects of the alcohol but also of the positive associations with alcohol consumption which leads to heightened anticipation and enjoyment. If someone is quiet within a group, alcohol can help to bring out that persons hidden wild side and this can make the person more popular and improve their personality only if they drink in moderation and are enjoying themselves. But most people do feel happy and cheerful and alcohol makes them feel good. Most young people who consume alcohol indicate that they anticipate a positive change in experience from drinking. So no one can enjoy drinking unless they learn to recognise the effects and "*to enjoy the sensations*" (Becker, 1953, Pg 242). In the duration of this process they develop a disposition to drink which could not have existed when they started drinking, as they had to learn how to handle and enjoy taking a drink through this whole experience. So it's through this process that they drink for pleasure. As long as they firmly believe that drinking is part of fun and enjoyment they should be able to continue drinking merely for that reason. People in general would hold their own view about the concept of drinking and This may interfere and inhibit young people's drinking. But as long as they remember the whole enjoyment aspect of it, they will continue drinking.

## CONCLUSION

So when young people come in contact with alcohol, they have a whole range of different ways to respond to it. *"If a stable form of new behaviour toward the object is to emerge, a transformation of meanings must occur, in which the person develops a new conception of the nature of the object"* (Becker, 1953, PG 242). This occurs in a whole range of communicative acts in which other individuals highlight new aspects of the drinking experience for them. They present to them new meanings of events and help them to acquire a new conceptual organizational of their world, without which the new behaviour is not likely.

Becker's theory of taking marihuana for pleasure seems very appropriate to this study. Here his theory is applied to young people taking for pleasure. I will discuss whether his theory is, in fact, appropriate when I have discussed the findings from this study.



## METHODOLOGY

### THE ROLE OF PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Out of all the research methods, I decided to use Participant Observation as it appealed to me to be the most suitable approach for this particular research. Participant observation or ethnography research is a qualitative style in which a researcher dedicates a lot of time and directly observes and participates with a certain group. Participant observation is suitable when the research question is based on learning and understanding the behaviour of interacting people. Through participant observation I would like to carry out an intensive qualitative study on a network of friends, in connection with their drinking influence on their peers. *“Participant observation combines participation in the lives of the people under study with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data”* (Fetterman, 1989, Pg 45). Through this method of investigation I will hopefully be able to define the research problem and it will guide my observation of certain aspects of the object deemed theoretically important. Participant observation is known to represent most ethnographic research and is vital to effective fieldwork. *“Field research is appropriate when the research question involves learning about, understanding or describing a group of interacting people”* (Neuman, 2000, Pg 345). Participant observation is part of all social research; it includes participating in the social world, in whatever way and pondering on the products of that participation. It is not majorly different from other types of practical everyday activity, but it's a lot closer in character to some than to others. As we are all participants in the social world, we are capable of observing our activities from the outside, as objects.

We are able to co-ordinate our actions through this capacity. *“The value of being a participant observer lies in the opportunity that is available to collect rich data based on observations in natural settings”* (Burgess, 1984, Pg 79). There is a lot of time dedicated to the research over an extended period. Usually in the first few days of observing, the data is not too significant, it will take time to build it up and then I will begin to understand what’s going on. So basically no matter how intelligent or skilful we are in dealing with a role that permits observation of an event, a lot of information will not be available first hand. Even though there is a lot of time involved in Participant observation there is no expense required for elaborate equipment and processing. Participant observation provides numerous learning opportunities that cannot be duplicated by other research methods. It’s a typical mode of information gathering and it’s a lot more effective than questionnaires for this particular study. *“Participant Observation opens up possibilities for encountering the completely unexpected phenomenon that may be more significant than anything the field worker would have foreseen, suggesting important hypotheses worthy of further study”* (Whyte, 1984, Pg 27). It’s a great opportunity to collect a whole range of detailed information based on observations in normal settings. It also gives the opportunity to compare and contrast these accounts with other research that has already been carried out.” *The result is that the researchers can utilise their observations together with their theoretical insights to make seemingly irrational or paradoxical behaviour comprehensible to those within and beyond that is studied”* (R G Burgess, 1995, Pg 79). This method also gives the researcher the freedom to go where the research is taking place instead of being confined to the one place.

## ROLE OF RESEARCHER

Everyday life with its ongoing changing social relations as well as ordinary demands is “observed” and “participated” from time to time. A lot of research that will be carried out will involve watching and listening, field researchers take advantage of these skills. They will also use their short term memory and do a lot of regular writing. It’s vital to have a good knowledge of the area but to be open to discovering new ideas. Good, dedicated researchers recognize and seize any opportunities that come their way, they also “play it by ear” and automatically adjust and fit into social situations. *“A field researcher is a “methodological pragmatist a resourceful talented individual who has ingenuity and an ability to think on her feet while in the field”* (Neuman, 2000, Pg349). This should not be classified as unproblematic or residual. Every different type of research will require various levels and kinds of involvement with other people. People reveal their culture through their behaviour in particular social circumstances. How they behave does not necessarily give meaning instead meaning is presumed or someone tries to resolve meaning. Moving from what the researcher hears and observes to what is really meant is one of the most central aspects of ethnography. Take, for example, when a young person is asked to go to a party with other peers their own age, based on his/her cultural knowledge there will be alcohol available. Cultural knowledge includes ways of behaving, facts, symbols, songs and objects. We learn the culture by observing other people as well as listening to them. An important aspect of ethnography is a thick detailed description of what occurs. Some locations will provide more information than others *“sites that present a web of social relations, a variety of activities diverse events over time provide richer, more interesting data”* (Neuman,2000 Pg 352).

Fieldwork is based on social relations and it involves social relations and it involves personal feelings. Personal experiences are important for helping to interpret events in the field. Also instead of being objective and disregarding personal reactions, researchers should treat their feelings toward field events as data for their research. It is the researcher who is the main instrument of social investigation when participation observation is being carried out. *“On this basis participant observation facilitates the collection of data on social interaction, on situations as they occur rather than on artificial situations or constructs of artificial situations that are provided by the researcher”* (Burgess, 1995, Pg79). Researchers would not view people as a neutral medium through which social powers functions and they don't regard social meaning as something “out there”. Instead they believe that people form and explain the social world through their interactions. *“Human experiences are filtered through a subjective sense of reality, which affects how people see and act on events”* (Neuman, 2000, Pg 347.)

## **HOW I CARRIED OUT THIS RESEARCH**

### **OBSERVING PEERS**

In order to carry out this research effectively, I decided to focus on a network of my peers. It was such an advantage that I was able to observe a group of friends as they did not have any objections to me participating in their social lives and observing their drinking behaviour. Another positive factor about observing my own friends was, if I had to observe a group of strangers they may have altered their behaviour and put on a different act in front of me and they may have found it hard to accept me into their network of peers. Fortunately I did not have to accomplish the impossible task of not being a member of the group. There were

no complicated statistics, maths or complex hypotheses. This approach really suited me as I like to observe people and try to understand their behaviour. Trust, being well liked, a good understanding of peoples feelings were important factors, as they help with the communication. This was not difficult for me as it was my own network of peers that I was focusing on.

I decided to study my friends in different settings where they like to socialise - house parties, pubs and clubs. They socialise and interact with each other regularly in these settings, this was the best way to gain access to the whole experience and to get this inside perspective. I wanted to witness a whole variety of different situations and settings and it was important that I carry out my research in a place where events occur, a socially defined area with shifting boundaries. One of my main aims was not to interfere too much in the beginning but to be a “fly on the wall”, but as time went on I began to participate more in order to gain a good insight to the whole experience. I began by watching the ordinary details of the situations such as who was present, physical characteristics such as age, sex and status as people socially interact differently depending on their age, status and sex. I also took note of where they were sitting, non verbal communication, how they expressed feelings, attitudes and facial expressions. So I was alert at all times, paid attention and was well disciplined about recording data. I also joined in drinking with them as I didn't want them to feel uncomfortable or awkward at any stage. I didn't want to make them feel paranoid that I was watching every move that they made. So through my active and conscious participation in my friends' lives, this helped me to acquire meaning as well as being the main method of discovering their drinking influence on one another. It was only through interaction with the group that this was achieved. *“It's a methodology of where the notion of success*

*replaces truth as criterion of validity and where the participation of the researcher becomes the main means of verifying his account*" (Ellen, 1984, Pg 30). I was aware that there would be different things that would influence drinking behaviour like the music being played, the actual setting and the size of the room, lighting and how the room was arranged. In order for my observation to be of benefit, it had to lead to an insight and they had to make connection. So in order for me to achieve this, I had to associate closely with my friends and build up data on a group structure through careful listening and note taking. I had to listen really carefully both to what they were saying, how they were saying it and what was implied. With the loud music it was very difficult to hear what exactly was being said and there was also various conversations occurring at the same time. But I did come up with important themes and some events also kept recurring. A lot of the research that I will be accumulating will be in the form of written notes.

"Good notes are the bricks and mortar of field research"(fetterman, 1989), (Neuman, 2000, Pg 363). I actually spent more time writing the notes than being in different social settings. I gained good practice by taking notes from every night out and this helped me to produce numerous pages of detailed observations. Writing these notes was a very long boring process and it involved a lot of self discipline. These notes comprise of lengthy, descriptive detail drawn from my memory. I wrote up these notes immediately after leaving the different settings. They were written out neatly and were organised to perfection as I had to refer back to them a lot. There is a lot of valuable information in them so I have treated them with a lot of care and respect and I have kept them all together. It was going to be difficult to take notes in the various settings and it would have looked strange to other people. If I did take notes while I was out. I could have missed out on important things. So I decided to take

the direct observation notes. Basically I wrote up these notes immediately after I left the settings. I kept them in order – date, times and places and they were the exact recordings of what took place. There is some dialogue in them such as tone, non verbal communications and gestures. This really helped me to gain an insight into my research question.

## PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

### EASTER WEEKEND – Observation 1

For the bank holiday weekend Katie, the American girl who is one of my room mates at college, decided to come to Donegal for the weekend and we made plans to go out on both the Saturday and Sunday nights. On Saturday we decided to go to the off license during the day to get drink for our night out as the off license is a lot cheaper in comparison to buying drinks in a pub or a nightclub. I bought a six pack of Smirnoff Ice. Kate, who is my friend from Kerry, and Ann Marie my best friend, both bought a bottle of white wine each. Nadine who is also a very good friend of mine, Aishling my sister and Katie all bought a naggan of Smirnoff vodka each. They bought a 2-litre bottle of orange to mix with their vodka. At around 8pm we all met up in Ann Marie's house as she was having a party so we all brought our own drink. Her parents were also there, but they gave us the big sitting room so we would have more room and there was a hi fi system there and we could listen to music. Myself, Nadine, Kate and Ann Marie sat on the couch and Aishling and Katie sat on the two armchairs. We all poured our first drink at around 8.15pm, the whole group was just talking and we were all mixing and mingling with each other. Ann Marie and Kate were drinking their wine quicker than the rest of us, they had two glasses drunk by the time we were starting our second drink. Ann Marie and Kate are really into going out and they just love partying so much. Paul who is 24 and is Ann Marie's older brother, came into the sitting room at around 9pm. He was drinking a can of Heineken and was coming out with us as well. He sat down on the armchair across from us and was asking us how we were all getting on in college, he is a friendly fella and just like his sister he loves going out clubbing. My brother and his girlfriend Laura,



who was also here for the weekend, walked into the sitting room. My brother Shane, who is 23, is a great friend with Paul and his girlfriend Laura is 21, they brought a six pack of Budweiser with them. Paul got up and got them two seats and they sat down and joined us. Both Ann Marie and Kate got up to go outside to have a cigarette as Ann Marie's mother does not allow smoking in the house but she doesn't mind anyone drinking in the house. Kate topped up their third glass of wine and they took their drinks with them. I was just finishing off my second bottle of Smirnoff and Aishling and Katie were about to start into their third vodka and white. They were both drinking at the same pace. Shane gave Laura her first can of bud. He offered everyone else a can but we all said no as we had our own. Ann Marie and Kate came in from outside and they started talking to Shane and Laura as they haven't seen them since Christmas. I opened my third bottle of Smirnoff and I went over to the hi fi system and I put on a dance cd. Both Aishling and Katie got up and started dancing; they were getting very merry as they were on their fourth vodka and white. We all started laughing at them as they both looked so funny. Nadine was starting her third vodka. She wanted to take it easy as she had to go away early the next morning. It was now 9.40pm and Ann Marie wanted to go on to a pub. No one else wanted to go so we all decided to go in half an hour. Shane and Laura were just finishing their first drinks and Paul was trying to get them to drink faster, "*Come on you's two you're so slow!*" I noticed that they were drinking their second cans faster. Nadine, who is so lively no matter how much or how little drink she has in her, started singing "The Hills of Donegal" and we all joined in. The boys sounded so funny and all the girls were making fun of them. Paul told us that we were all a crowd of lightweights as all the girls were well and truly tipsy apart from me and Nadine

and Laura. Katie then dared the two boys to knock back a can of beer each within 40 seconds. Neither of the boys hesitated and thought this was a great way of getting drunk quicker as they have both done this at college before. So the boys got a can of bud each. Nadine counted to three and they starting drinking, Paul drank his in 25 seconds and Shane drank his in 29 seconds. Everyone started cheering and the two boys were delighted. Paul then declared "*Didn't I tell you all we are better drinkers than girls*". We all sarcastically agreed with him. I began drinking my fifth bottle and I offered my last bottle to Laura which she took as I wouldn't have time to drink it before I went out and I didn't want to be rushing myself too much and feeling sick. It was around 10.20pm when our two taxis arrived. We all hopped in apart from Shane, Paul and Laura who weren't ready to go and they said that they would meet us in the nightclub. We went straight to the mono bar, which is a disco bar for young people. It's very trendy and has two floors, TV screens showing music videos, a dance floor. We were all stopped for ID on the way in. We went upstairs and it was totally packed. We found it hard to get up to the bar; everyone just ordered his or her own drinks. Nadine got a coke, Aishling and I got a Smirnoff Ice each, Ann Marie and Kate both got a bottle of bud each. We had to stand up while having our drinks, people kept pushing into us as it was so crowded. The DJ was playing chart music and there was a great buzz in the bar. Within 15mins we all finished our drinks and decided to move onto the nightclub as it would be quiet at this stage and the queue would be quiet. It was after 11pm when we got to the nightclub. I was feeling a little bit tipsy, Nadine was still sober and all the others were drunk. There is a takeaway in our nightclub, which is called the Grill. Aishling and Ann Marie were hungry so they decided to get food. Katie and I went to the bathroom

while Kate and Nadine went to the cocktail bar. The Grill is a massive nightclub; it can hold up to 2000 people. There are two clubs, Bellas that plays chart music and club 2000, which plays dance music. There are also three dance floors; two bars, a cocktail bar and a chill out area called the tunnel bar. It's a really funky modern nightclub and has won loads of awards for best layout, best DJ and dance venue. We all met up at the cocktail and Kate was knocking back a cocktail, Nadine was laughing at her and she was sipping on a coke. Katie thought the cocktail looked so tempting and she had to order one. We all sat down on tall stools the dance floor and we were just talking about our favourite drinks, when Ann Marie and Aishling joined us, they both had an orange bacardi breezer in their hands. Both Katie and Kate agreed with Ann Marie that white wine was their favourite drink as it's easy to drink. Ann Marie also said that it's the type of drink that doesn't get you too drunk unless you drink a ridiculous amount. Katie's favourite drink is beer and vodka is her second, but it can get her drunk really quickly and she has to be careful when she is drinking it. Aishling interrupted us and suggested that we should all get a sambuca each, I didn't bother and neither did Nadine. But when the girls returned back from the bar Nadine said "*Girls you have twisted my arm, I'm going to get one as well*", so off she went to the bar and she returned with a sambuca. They all knocked them back together and we all went out on the dance floor except for Ann Marie and Kate who were having a smoke and watching our bags and coats. We were out dancing for a good 20 mins when the boys, who were drunk, and Laura, who was sober, arrived. I went over to talk to them and Laura said that the boys met up with two of their friends who they hadn't seen in a long time and they talked them into going to a bar first and they had three pints each, but Laura only had a bottle of bud. We all hung around

the side of the dance floor for the next hour. The nightclub was packed and it was so hot and stuffy. The boys got another pint each, they wanted to buy us all drinks but we all had enough and didn't want anymore, it took a while for them to accept our answer because they really wanted to get us a drink each, so Ann Marie and Nadine gave in just to keep them quiet. After a few minutes we all went out dancing, it was so cramped on the dance floor and everyone seemed to be drunk. Katie took a few photos of the boys messing around. It was coming up to 2.15am and Aishling and Nadine were feeling really tired and they wanted to go on home. Everyone else agreed with them. Laura was messing with the boys on the way out and was telling them that they were a bad influence on each other. So all my friends were drunk except for myself, Laura and Nadine, so we all agreed that we set a good example for a change! We got two taxis before the crowds came out and got home safely after a great night out.

### **EASTER SUNDAY NIGHT – Observation 2**

On Easter Sunday night I planned for all of my friends to come over to my house for a few drinks before we went out. At 7pm both Ann Marie and Nadine called over to my house and Aishling let them in and brought them straight into our sitting room. She offered them both a glass of red or white wine, vodka or a can of bud. They both took a can of bud. Both Kate and Katie who were staying in my house were still upstairs getting ready. I went downstairs and joined the girls in the sitting room. I didn't bother taking, any alcohol and just took a glasses of orange juice. The two girls were in great form and were just talking about how we had a great night last night and it's a pity that we don't get to see each other that much. Katie then joined us in the sitting room and sat down beside me on the

two-seater couch. She was telling the girls how tired she felt after her eventful weekend and she was going to take it easy tonight. Kate came in just as she said that, she started laughing and saying "Miss America, you are going on a session with us tonight because it's your last night in Donegal". Katie started laughing and said "I will have a few drinks with you guys but Im not getting drunk tonight, and I can guarantee you that! So I asked Kate and Katie what would they like to drink and they both said that they would have a glass of white wine. The girls were all drinking a lot slower tonight, the TV was on in the sitting room, and so we were just relaxing and talking. Aishling came into the room again and offered everyone another drink. The girls all had the same drinks again, as they didn't want to start mixing. Once again I didn't bother and I just stuck to orange. It was now 8pm and we decided that we were just going to go to Sr Sarahs, which is a bar. We all agreed that we would get a taxi for 9pm. We wanted to be in the pub early enough as Sunday night is always the biggest night out on a bank holiday weekend. I had prepared some crisps and dips for the girls, so I took them in and the girls started munching on them. My Aunty joined us in the sitting room and she gets on really well with my friends. She noticed that their drinks were going down, so she gave the two girls their third can and she filled up Kate and Katie's wine glasses.

As I wasn't drinking myself I noticed that the girls were getting very merry. Katie then asked me "why I wasn't drinking". I just said that I couldn't be bothered as I was drinking the night before. Ann Marie who is my best friend said, "*Come on Lisa Marie you are really disappointing me, I thought you would be having a few drinks with your best buddy tonight!*" I just smiled at her and said that I preferred to take it easy tonight, even though I knew she would love me to be drinking

tonight. Nadine jokingly said to me that I was getting too sensible in my old age! All the others started laughing including me. Next thing we heard was the taxi driver beeping the horn, so we all made our way out to the taxi. When we arrived at Sr.Sarahs, we were all stopped at the door for ID. We all showed our ID and went on in. There are three levels in this bar, the music was blaring and the bar was half full. So we got great seats right beside the bar. Ann Marie insisted on buying everyone their first drink. So Kate and Katie had a white wine each and Nadine and Ann Marie got a pint of bud each. When Ann Marie came back from the bar she had gotten me a Smirnoff Ice, even though I didn't ask for it. She said that she didn't want to leave me out and she had a big smirk on her face. So I just gave in and drank it. The bar was full within the next 20mins, so we were really lucky to have gotten seats. We were sitting around a circular table, so everyone could talk to each other. Katie, the American, was saying how much she enjoyed the Irish nightlife in comparison to the American nightlife. She said there was a better, livelier atmosphere and the bars were trendier. She said that she couldn't help noticing that the young Irish consumed more alcohol than the Americans. I asked her why did she think that and she said that's it's probably got to do with the law. You have to be 21 to drink in America. Another thing that she noticed was that the Irish seemed to drink in rounds all the time and maybe this influenced young people to drink more. So, after saying all, that she bought the next round, everyone got the same drink. I got an orange instead. The girls were now on their fifth drink and seemed to be enjoying themselves. They were actually getting a bit loud and getting really giddy. Nadine and Kate were eyeing up the boys at the next table. I dared them to go over and talk to them, as the girls would be quite shy and would not be forward at all. They both looked at each

other and Nadine said to Kate, "Come on lets get a shot of Tequila and that will pluck up our courage". So without any hesitation Kate went straight to the bar with Nadine and they got their two drinks. They came back to the table and, within seconds, Nadine got talking to one of the lads. Whatever they were talking about she brought Kate in on the conversation and it was more than obvious that the two girls were really happy with themselves. Ann Marie was just saying that neither of them would have dared to approach those fellas unless they had drink in them. The girls carried on mixing and mingling with the lads. We went out dancing for a while, but came off the dance floor after 20 mins. Katie went to the bar to get herself a drink and she offered to buy everyone a drink but we didn't want another. She kept on insisting on buying me another drink because she was staying in my house and she just wanted to say thanks and even though I said no, she still bought me one. After we finished this drink it was nearly time to go. The girls were all drunk and were very chatty, especially the two who were talking to the boys and they were out dancing with them as well. Nadine and Kate wanted to stay on with their new friends and the rest of the girls wanted to go on, so I went along with them. We offered to stay on with the girls but they said that they would be ok. So went ahead and got our taxi. It was definitely another enjoyable night.

### **LAST COLLEGE NIGHT OUT – Observation 3**

For our last night out at college, a group of my friends decided that we would go out in the city centre to celebrate our last college night out. At around 7.30pm Rose, who is 20 and has been one of my room mates for the past 4 yrs, Paul, her boyfriend who is 23, James, who is a friend of ours is 22, came back to the

apartment after spending the day shopping in town. As they were making their way back they stopped at the off license. Rose bought a naggan of vodka and she got one for me as well and we got a two litre bottle of lilt to mix with it, James didn't get any drink because he wasn't going out, Paul got a 2 litre bottle of Bulmer's. It was also the night of the Eurovision and by the time 8 o'clock came we were all having our first drink. There was a bit of vodka left over from the night before and Paul poured it out for James along with lilt and he left it sitting in front of him. At first James didn't want it and Paul was really enticing him and James just gave in. *"Well if all my buddies are drinking, I may as well join in"*. After 8.30 we were all starting our second drink, Paul was making Rose's drink really strong. He said that she should get hammered as she has finished up all her exams and deserves a great night out. Paul Mc G arrived. He is one of Rose's friends from college. He had already drunk a half bottle of wine and he took the other half with him. He was actually a bit tipsy. He sat down beside Rose on the couch and they were laughing and joking about. At the same time we were in and out of the rooms getting ready for our night out. We only had 30 mins left before we had to catch our bus. At this stage we were all on our fourth drink, also, because we didn't have much time left, Paul suggested that we should knock our drinks back. No one hesitated and we all counted to three and knocked it back quickly. We grabbed our coats and ran up to the bus stop to catch the 9.50 bus into Dublin. We just made it to the very second and we all sat upstairs near the front of the bus. The whole way in to Dublin Paul Mc G was telling us jokes and Rose was so giddy, we had a great laugh at the two of them. When we finally reached Dublin we got off the bus, crossed over O Connell Bridge and made our



way to the Q bar. We were all stopped for ID and when we got in, we went straight to the bar. Everyone was going to buy his or her own drink, but Paul kept on insisting that he wanted to buy us all a drink. Paul is an engineer and is the only one from our group who has a full time job, so he can afford to buy us all drinks and the rest of us are all students and we can't afford to be buying everyone drinks. We all gave in, he bought me a Smirnoff ice and Rose and James got a pint of bud each and the two Paul's got two pints of bulmers. As the bar was so packed we had to stand, I spent most of the time talking to Rose, as the others couldn't hear me, so I just gave up! The three boys were laughing and joking amongst themselves and James suggested that they should buy two shots of sambuca each and see who could drink them the quickest. While they were at the bar ordering their drinks, myself and Rose went to the toilets. By the time we made it back the boys were about to take their second shot. They were all happily drunk at this stage and were getting really loud. Myself and Rose didn't bother getting another drink and we suggested to the boys that we should make our way to Fireworks night club as it was after 12 and it was getting late. When we got to the nightclub we left our coats in the cloakroom and Paul went to the bar. He bought us all a shot of sambuca without telling us, so we took them. Rose and I were getting well tipsy and the boys were basically hammered. As it was our first time in this nightclub we took a walk around. It was massive, there were five floors, and it was really cool and trendy. There was a big crowd that night and the music was fantastic. The lads all made their way to the bar again and got 3 pints of bud. There was just no stopping them when they get together! Paul bought Rose a vodka and white and even though she didn't really want it, she still took it. I just got a diet 7 up. We got seats, and just relaxed for a while. I noticed a

group of fellas across from us who had at least 3 drinks each in front of them lined up, they were obviously having a drinking competition. Rose asked me to go out on the dance floor with her, so we were out dancing for a while, when the boys decided to join us. They could hardly dance as they were so drunk, but they were hilarious to watch as they were trying to maintain their balance. By the time we got off the dance floor we were wrecked. James decided that the boys deserved a drink after all that and went to the bar to buy them all drinks but the bar was closed and they were disappointed. Rose just looked at me with a big smirk on her face and we just burst out laughing. Paul Mc G thought we were being mean! There was a great atmosphere in this nightclub and the lighting was very effective. We spent the last half hour just relaxing and we had to listen to the boys ranting and raving on about the football. So when the lights came on, I went to the cloakroom and got our coats and we made a quick exit. The boys were staggering the whole way to the bus. I said to James jokingly that they couldn't handle their drink. He said that they had a lot more than Rose and me and if we drank the amount that they did we would not be able to stand, never mind walk. Rose just rolled her eyes up and laughed at him. It was a fantastic night out but we were delighted to get home at the same time.

#### **JUNE BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND – Observation 4**

On Saturday night I called up to Ann Marie's house at 9pm. It was the bank holiday weekend and we had planned to go out clubbing. When I arrived at Ann Marie's house I went straight into the kitchen and Ann Marie was sitting at the table with her younger sister Cathy who is 16. Ann Marie bought a big bottle of white wine and she poured a glass for herself and for me. We were listening to

our local radio station, which was playing dance music, and this was really getting us in the form for going out. At around 9.20pm Nadine, our other friend, called up to Ann Marie's house as well and she was going to join us as well for our night out. Ann Marie offered Nadine a glass of white wine as well and she accepted it. She also poured me another glass as well without asking me, but I didn't mind at all and she poured one for herself as well. I was sitting on the opposite side of the table to Ann Marie and Nadine. We were trying to decide what bar to go to, as there is such a good selection in our hometown. It took us around 20 mins to finish our glasses of wine. Ann Marie offered me another glass but I didn't want one. She asked me a second time and then a third, so I just gave in and took another glass. Both she and Nadine had another glass as well. In the meantime I was straightening my hair and the two girls were talking amongst themselves. Nadine and I were more excited about going out than Ann Marie. She was in good form but wasn't too pushed about going out. At 10pm Ann Marie's Dad came into the kitchen and he offered us a lift down the town as he was going to meet up with friends. We were delighted with the lift and he dropped us off in the Cavern, which is another disco bar for young people. It's not as big as Sr Sarahs or The Mono. It has two floors, there are also wide screens showing music videos but it would not be as nicely laid out as the other bars as it can get very cramped at times. When we went inside, it was as packed as there was a private party going on upstairs and we could hardly move downstairs. We had to stay here for a while, as Nadine had to meet Emer, one of the girls who used to go to school with us. It was so hard to get to the bar, so I just bought Smirnoff ices for the girls and myself. We were standing over beside the main entrance and we were just talking about going on holidays at the end of the summer. Nadine's

mobile started ringing and it was Emer and she was just at the main doors about to come in. She saw us the second she came in. Emer is a really nice friendly girl, she would be very sensible when she goes out drinking and wouldn't even think about getting drunk. Nadine went to the bar and bought us all a shot of baby Guinness each. At first Emer said no, and Nadine said, "*Emer you are letting me down, its really yummy!*" and she started laughing and just handed Emer the drink again and she said "*sure I might as well*", and she knocked it back and said that it was "*yummy*". Nadine was delighted and said "*Didn't I tell you!*" Emer just laughed at Nadine, as she is such a funny little character and wanted us all to get drunk tonight. We decided to go to the Mono Bar, it wasn't as packed as the Cavern but there was a really good crowd there, we got seats downstairs for a change as we are usually inclined to go upstairs. I held onto our seats and the girls went up to the bar, this time everyone was buying their own drink and I asked Emer to get me a diet 7up. Nadine and Ann Marie both stuck to their Smirnoff Ices. As they were coming towards the table I could see my brother and his girlfriend coming up the stairs. They came straight over to us. Laura got a seat and sat down beside me and Shane went to the bar and got himself and Laura a pint of Heineken each. When Shane came back he grabbed a seat and sat beside Laura. Ann Marie and I were talking to Shane and Laura and Nadine and Emer who were also sitting beside us was talking amongst themselves. After a short while Ann Marie went to the bar and bought Shane and Laura another pint each, Shane said "*Ann Marie what did you do that for, you shouldn't be wasting your money!*" Ann Marie replied, "*Yous two were so good to me out in America, so its just a little pressie for you both*" They both said thanks and really did appreciate the drinks. I went to the bathroom and on my way I could see that two boys, who

were obviously really drunk, were having an argument. I didn't know who they were, but they were on the verge of having a fight when two bouncers came out of nowhere and pulled them out.

They were trying to get away from the bouncers but they were far too strong for them. I just went on to the bathroom and had to queue for around 15mins, which is not unusual in girls' toilets. There were two girls over by the mirrors and they were actually really funny. One of them was saying to the other how much she liked some lad called Garry and she was flirting with him the whole night and he was taking to notice. She sounded a bit upset and her friend who appeared to be a real bubbly girl was trying to console her and was giving her a big hug. I overheard her saying to buy him a pint and he would be really impressed. The two girls, were well tipsy, made a quick exit back into the bar. When I returned, the others thought that I got lost because I was gone for a good few minutes. They were just being sarcastic. My bother went up to the bar and landed back with a vodka and white for everyone in the group, even though Ann Marie didn't want another drink she still took it. She said that if she was going onto the nightclub she might as well get a bit tipsy. We spent the next half hour talking about the time that we all spent in America and the great night outs that we had. Nadine and Emer wanted to go on to the Grill, so myself and Ann Marie went on with them. Shane and Laura didn't want to go so they stayed on in the Mono. So we said our goodbyes and went to the Grill. Nadine was getting very merry but the rest of us were still sober but at the same time we weren't too far from being tipsy. Nadine was trying to make a silly little pact with Emer to get a cocktail each when they got to the grill. It was the first thing that they did when they got there. They practically ran to the bar. We thought they were so funny. Even though Emer is

really sensible when she goes out, she is so much fun and is one of these kind of people who don't need drink to get them in good form. We all went out on the Dance Floor and I bumped into Paul who is Roses boyfriend. We were having a great time dancing away when I suddenly got pushed. I turned around and there were two boys fighting on the dance floor. There were four bouncers trying to separate them. This went on for at least a minute, a lot of people including us had to get off the floor. The bouncers opened the emergency exit doors, which are right beside the dance floor and took them outside to try and calm them down. Paul took me up to the bar and got me a Smirnoff ice, to help me get over the shock. But I knew fine well that he just wanted to buy me a drink, he is so good like that. I went for a walk around the club with the girls to see if there was anyone around that we knew and there wasn't. The club was so packed so it would be hard to meet up with anyone. Emer bumped into her ex boyfriend, so she spent the remainder of the night with him and his friends. Nadine and Ann Marie wanted to go to the bar and get another drink, so they got a Smirnoff Ice each and I just stuck to my glass of water. We sat down in the tunnel bar and Nadine was beginning to fall asleep. I kept trying to wake her up, but it was pointless she only drank half of her drink and had enough. Ann Marie gave her a big dig in the side and she jumped up. We started roaring laughing and grabbed her by the two arms and got a taxi. It was after two o'clock, so we didn't mind leaving. Nadine was ranting and raving the whole way home and the taxi driver thought that she was hilarious. She got off at the first stop and we made sure she got in to her house safely. Ann Marie was the next stop. She was a bit tipsy and was in great form and she really had a good night like me. I finally got home at

around 3pm and was so tired. I had a great night with the girls and was looking forward to the next one.

### **SATURDAY JUNE 14<sup>TH</sup> – Observation 5**

I wasn't too pushed going out on this particular night as I wasn't feeling too well and had really bad hay fever. Ann Marie really wanted to go to the pub for a drink, I just went along because Ann Marie was going to meet up with two of her friends and I said I would just go down for a while. I went up to Ann Marie's house at 9.15pm. By the time I got up there she was already on her third glass of white wine and I knew by the big smile on her face that she was tipsy. When I went into her kitchen her Mum was sitting at the kitchen table drinking a glass of wine with Ann Marie and she was also reading a book. I was talking to Theresa, that's Ann Marie's Mums name about the leaving cert and she was telling me how her son was getting on with his exams. Ann Marie poured me a glass of wine, I was sipping it very slowly, and it was the last of the bottle of wine, so Ann Marie threw the bottle in the bin. We then went upstairs and I started straightening my hair with Ann Marie's straighteners. Ann Marie sat on the edge of the bed sipping her glass of wine, she was very chatty and was telling me how her other brother was getting on working in London. Within five minutes her Dad called us to go out to the car and he was going to give us a lift to the Mono Bar. I gulped down my last mouthful of wine, Ann Marie had already finished hers and we out to the car. It was now 10pm, we went straight upstairs in the Mono, it was really quiet and we got a nice seat on the couch. I really wanted to buy Ann Marie a drink, she said no because she said that I wasn't working and it would not be fair on me. I told her not to be so silly and I got her a pint of Harp and I just

stuck to a 7up. I returned to the table and Ann Marie thanked me for the drink. She was drinking her pint a lot slower than when she was drinking her wine, I actually said this to her and she just said that she wanted to take it easy because it was still early in the night. Rosin and Antonio, who is Italian, arrived in and joined us. Ann Marie and Rosin went to college together and they got on so well and are both known to be mad into partying. We were just talking for a few minutes and Antonio went to the bar to get us a drink each, I told him I wasn't feeling well so he just got me a 7up and got the girls two pints and he got a pint of Guinness for himself. Antonio was telling us about Italy and how much he liked Ireland. He went to university here for the past year and he loved the mad Irish nightlife. Rosin then went up to the bar and bought three shots of sambuca for herself, Antonio and Ann Marie. I was sitting at the end of the couch and Rosin was on about going to the Grill. I said that I couldn't go because I really wasn't feeling too good. She was begging me to go, but I honestly could not face a nightclub. The three of them were really getting drunk now and they were getting up and down off the couch a lot and were dancing. The bar was so packed now and the music was fantastic as there was a DJ playing and loads of people were out dancing. Ann Marie and I were talking about drinks and I was telling her how much I liked sambuca. She immediately offered to buy me one, but I said no, "*Please Lisa, it might make you feel better*", Ann Marie is so funny she likes to see everyone out on a session when they are out, only for I wasn't feeling well she would have went ahead and bought me one. I decided that I wanted to go on home as the smoke was really bothering my hay fever but Ann Marie told me to wait until Rosin came back. A minute later she said that Rosin was at the bar with Antonio getting me a drink because they really wanted me to go to the Grill. They



thought that it would make me feel better, any excuse. They actually bought me a brandy, which is a drink that I can't look at. I said thanks; it was really kind of them. They weren't putting pressure on me to go out; they just wanted me to join them all in the Grill. They were really trying to entice me to drink, only for the fact that I wasn't feeling well, I would have given into them. But I had the sense not to. I took one sip and I could not drink it, it was just too strong. When Rosin had her head turned talking to Antonio I poured the brandy into an empty pint glass, Ann Marie was laughing at me. There was only a small bit left in the glass so I put it down on the table. Ann Marie suddenly realised that she lost her handbag. We all started searching for it. Antonio found it underneath the couch, we were all so relieved. She can get very careless and is capable of losing things when she has a few drinks in her. I decided to go on and get a taxi, the others were disappointed that I couldn't stay on but I really had to go. They started chanting my name and pleading with me to stay on. I couldn't stop laughing at them they were hilarious. I eventually got to say goodbye and they went on to the nightclub and I just hopped into a taxi and off home I went.

### **FRIDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> JUNE – Observation 6**

Nadine decided to have a party in her house tonight as her friend Denis was coming up from Kerry for the weekend. We were all looking forward to the night. We decided not to go out clubbing but just to stay in her house for the night. Her parents were away for the weekend, but we didn't realise this until we got to her house. Myself, Ann Marie, Paul and Shane arrived at her house after 9pm. Nadine told us all to bring our own drink, I just brought up 4 bottles of Smirnoff Ice, Ann Marie had a bottle of white wine and the two boys had a six pack of bud each. Nadine opened the door when we arrived there, it was a lovely, warm bright

summer evening so she said that we should sit out in the patio out the back. Denis was sitting out drinking a can of Heineken. He got up immediately when he saw us coming, and shook hands with us all. Myself and Ann Marie met him before but the boys didn't. Nadine was actually cooking some food on the barbecue, which was a nice surprise as we weren't expecting that. We all joined Denis at the table, I sat beside him, Ann Marie sat next to me, Shane sat down beside Ann Marie and then Paul. It was a round table, so everyone could talk to each other. There was a bottle opener on the table, so I opened up my bottle of Smirnoff ice; the boys were starting into their cans. Ann Marie went into kitchen and got an opener for her bottle of wine. The boys were chatting away to Denis about the Donegal Rally and they appeared to be getting on really well. Nadine was busy cooking, so I went over to help her. She said that Denis was a bit nervous of meeting the boys and he was hoping that they would get on well. We could hear them laughing away, so we thought everything was going great. Ann Marie came over and she had a glass of wine for herself and one for Nadine as well. We dished up the food for everyone and brought it over to the table. The boys were delighted and dug into it immediately. The food was delicious and everyone enjoyed it so much. We were all sipping our drinks slowly while we were eating; the boys spent most of the time telling jokes. We were just laughing at them the whole time. Shane and Paul are really funny when they get together. Denis cleared up the dishes after we were finished our food. We were all well into our second drink and everyone was just relaxing and enjoying themselves. Nadine had the local radio station on, which was playing chart music which was really adding to the atmosphere. We stayed outside talking for another hour. It was nearly 11pm and it was getting quite dark, so Nadine suggested that we should go

inside. So we all moved on in, Nadine poured Ann Marie another glass of wine. They were now finished the bottle. I was on my third drink as well and the boys were nearly finished their third can. Denis said, "*Girls come on and drink up, Yous' are slowing down*". Nadine and Ann Marie just looked at each other and knocked back their two glasses of wine. The boys started cheering. Ann Marie told them it was their turn. So without any hesitation they picked up their fourth can each and started drinking them quite rapidly. Paul finished first, then Shane and Denis. They were all beginning to get really hyper now. The three of them got up and started dancing, just for the fun. We were in stitches laughing at them and they were really trying to sing as well and Nadine joined in too. Denis took his camera out and he took some photos of us all messing around. After an hour we began to calm down a bit, the boys were now on their sixth can. Nadine opened another bottle of wine for herself and Ann Marie. I was chatting away to the boys, we were talking about our favourite films and Nadine suggested that we should put a DVD on later, which was a great idea. In the meantime we all started telling jokes, the girls were tipsier than the boys and they were very giggly. The boys were making fun of them and were taking them off, it was really hilarious. Nadine had a bottle of sambuca in their drinks cabinet, so she took it out and poured them all a shot each without asking them. They had it gone within seconds. As we had been sitting out in the kitchen, Nadine suggested that we should move into the sitting room as it's more comfortable. The girls got the couch and the boys sat on the separate armchairs. We spent the next hour and a half talking about places where we would like to go on holidays. Shane was saying that there was nothing better than a boy's holiday and going out clubbing every night. The other two agreed with them. The girls said that they would

prefer to spend their time on a beach and going out the odd night. But the boys said that they would only get bored sun bathing. The boys were nearly finished their fifth can, they were drinking at the same pace. The girls had stopped drinking; they said that they didn't want anymore. The boys started smirking at them. Nadine got up and put on a DVD, it was Silence of the Lambs. So it kept us quiet for the next while. After the film, Denis was feeling really tired, as he had travelled up from Kerry that day and said that he was going to bed. The boys told him to stay and finish off his last can; it took no persuasion for him to stay. Paul poured Ann Marie and Nadine another glass of wine without asking them and they took it without any hesitation. Nadine said that we could all stay the night, which was great. We all stayed up talking until 3.45am, we were all exhausted. She brought us out blankets and sleeping bags, we all went to sleep straight away.

### **SATURDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> JUNE – Observation 7.**

On Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup> June my sister's boyfriend, Cian, celebrated his 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday. There was a party out in his house and we planned to go out in town afterwards. Myself, Aishling, my sister, and my Aunt and Uncle arrived out to his house at 8pm. When we got there his family were all sitting out in the back garden and his Dad was cooking food on the barbecue. I sat down on the bench beside my sister and Uncle. My Aunty sat down beside Cians Granny and Aunty and Uncle who were all up from Dublin. Cian was actually in town, he had to go in and pick up his friends. His Mother offered us a glass of either white or red wine, Aishling and I took a glass of white wine each and my uncle had a beer. My Aunty doesn't drink so she just took a glass of sprite. Just as we were having our drinks, Cian arrived back with his friends.

There were five of them altogether – Joe and his girlfriend Camilla, David, Kevin and Damian. Joe, David and Camilla brought their own drink with them. They sat down on the bench across from us. The two boys opened up a can each and Camilla opened up a bottle of Smirnoff ice. Cians mum then called us for our food, so we went up in twos and threes. We sat down and had our food, the adults sat over at the table and all the young people sat in a group. I spent most of the time talking to Kevin; he is studying in Limerick so we were just talking about college. No one was rushing their drink; everyone was just eating and talking to one another. The weather was absolutely beautiful and there were so many midgets about. So we had to move into the garage, which is like a games room. Cians sister Elise is an artist and she has paintings on the wall and its very bright and cheerful looking. Once again all of the adults sat around the table and all the young people were sitting on the benches. I sat beside Aishling and Camilla. The boys were talking amongst themselves. They were all on their second beer at this stage. Damian wasn't drinking because he was driving. Joe got Camilla her second Smirnoff ice from the fridge. Cians little sister Laoise started telling us all jokes. She was so funny and everyone was in stitches laughing at her. After another half hour Cian's Mum brought in his Birthday cake and everyone started singing Happy Birthday. I noticed that Cians two sisters Elise and Etaon weren't drinking. I think they just wanted to behave themselves in front of their relations. Also the boys were not as loud as they usually are, they too were behaving well. We stayed out in the garage for the next hour and everyone was mixing and mingling. We then moved into the sitting room and the boys took their drink with them and Camilla took her Smirnoff ice with her. Cians Mother offered Aishling and me a glass of wine and we both took another glass. We were listening to

music in Cian's house. His parents got him a guitar and he was trying to play it. The boys were getting a bit tipsy now as they were drinking a lot faster now. Next the bus arrived. We could hear the driver beeping the horn so we got our coats and the boys had three cans each left, so they took them onto the bus. When we were on the bus going into town, the boys were knocking back their beer really quickly. We had the radio on and they started singing to some of the songs. When we got into town, the boys had one can left, so they obviously could not take them into the pub, so they went up the lane beside the pub and drank the remainder. I went into the pub with the girls. Aishling bought me double vodka with 7up and she got one for herself as well, Camilla bought another Smirnoff ice for herself. We got seats and sat down and the boys came in. They obviously drank their last beer really quickly. They went straight up to the bar, they all got a pint each and Kevin bought Cian his. The pub we were in was really for an older crowd, but because it was going on to 12 o'clock and with it being the rally weekend we really had to go up to the nightclub early because there was going to be big crowds and this was the nearest pub to the nightclub. After we had our drinks we made our way to the nightclub David was really drunk and he tripped and blamed Joe who wasn't even near him for tripping him. They started fighting, but were only messing and we were all laughing at them. When we got to the Grill, it was absolutely packed. Cian got in for free and he got a bottle of champagne as a present from the nightclub. He poured us all a glass each and we all drank it in seconds, then we all sang Happy Birthday to him again. I went up to the bar and bought him a pint, I bumped into Ann Marie and she wasn't drinking. She bought Cian tequila. We gave him his drinks and he drank the tequila immediately and made a grab for a glass of water. We went over to the

tunnel bar and joined the boys, they were about to have a drinking contest, when they saw Cian coming along with his pint they told him that he had to join in and he did no problem. The girls and I went out dancing. The dance floor was packed and the music was fantastic. The boys came out after half an hour after us. They were jumping around and Kevin fell twice, the bouncers came over and told them to calm down a bit. After a few minutes we all went back to our seats. Joe offered to buy all the girls a drink. We all said no, but he came back with a Smirnoff ice for each one of us. Even though Ann Marie wasn't drinking she still took her Smirnoff as she said that she didn't want to be ignorant not drinking it after Joe buying it for us. When I looked over at the boys both Cian and Kevin were standing on top of the couches doing the chicken dance. We all started laughing, they were hilarious. But within seconds two bouncers came over and told them to get down and they did so immediately. Next the lights came on and the National Anthem was being played, so we all stood up. We sat down again and everyone was finishing off his or her drinks. The bouncers were trying to chase everyone out, so we all had to make a quick exit. When we got outside we all sat on the wall. We could hear shouting from the car park and we could see that a fight broke out. There were four fellas fighting and one of them had blood dripping from his face. The guards pulled up within seconds, two of them ran off and the other two were arrested. Apparently we missed the whole scene. We could overhear people talking about them. The fight had been going on for at least 10 minutes before we came out. The boys decided that they were going to get a taxi, as they live outside the town. It was going to take them at least half an hour to get home. Cian and Ann Marie came home with Aishling and me. When we got into the house I made them all sandwiches, but by the time I went back into the sitting

room they were all fast asleep. So I just left them lying there. It was another great night and everyone seemed to have really enjoyed themselves, especially the boys.

### **FRIDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> JULY – Observation 8**

On Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July Ann Marie's Aunty Sheila and her family who are Americans, decided to have a party in her house to celebrate Independence Day. It was also Ann Marie's Mother's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, so it was a double celebration. My family and I went up to Sheila's house at 9.15pm. There was already a good crowd of people there already and we went straight into the sitting room. We wished Ann Marie's Mother whose name is Theresa a Happy Birthday and gave her a present. We sat talking to her for a few minutes and Sheila came in and told us to go out to the kitchen to get some food. So far the house was full of Theresa's friends and family. When I got out to the kitchen I saw Nadine, Ann Marie, Emer, Christopher and Paul eating outside. So I got some food and I joined my friends and my sister Aishling was also with me. We sat down at the table and all of the others had a glass of white wine, they said that it was their first drink. Within 5 mins, Sheila came out and had a glass of white wine for both myself and Aishling. It was actually really cold outside and everyone was eating their food really fast, so they could go back inside, with the house being really full we didn't want to be taking up too much room. Around 20 mins later we all got up and took our glasses of wine, which no one had finished off and made our way into the house. There was a real jolly, lively atmosphere in the house and everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. A lot of the adults were in the kitchen and the big sitting room. Sheila's husband was running around making sure everyone was



ok. We all went into the small sitting room, which is like a computer and games room and sat down on the two couches. Joe who is Sheila's husband, came in and gave each one of us a bottle Smirnoff Ice without asking, we all took one each. Nadine suggested that we should go to the pubs early, but we thought that we should stay for at least another hour. Emer said that she took a bottle of Morgan Spice with her to share with everyone. Paul went out to the kitchen and got glasses and a big bottle of coke to mix with the drink. Aishling said that she didn't want any because she didn't like the look of it and apart from that she didn't want to go clubbing as she had to get up early the next morning for work. Emer was really trying to get her to change her mind, "*Come on Aishling its going to be a great night, just try the drink it's really nice*". Aishling said "*No way, it looks horrible*", Emer wouldn't give up, "*Honestly it's really nice, just a wee bit, please and she had a big smile on her face*". Aishling gave in and took a small mouthful and she did not like it whatsoever and made a horrible face. The rest of us had a glass each, but everyone was sipping it really slowly. We heard everyone else singing happy birthday to Theresa, so we went into the sitting room and joined in, everyone had a toast for her as well. There were also a lot of photos being taken as well and Ann Marie, Paul and Christopher were in them as they are all part of the family. We stayed around for another half hour and then we got a taxi and went straight to the Mono bar. It was now after 11pm and the Mono was really packed. Paul went straight to the bar and bought us all a Smirnoff Ice each, he is always buying us drinks whenever we go out. Aishling didn't bother going out as she was too tired, we were disappointed that she couldn't make it out. We were really lucky to find seats, we stayed upstairs and got seats right across from the bar. Nadine and Christopher were getting really giddy; they

weren't tipsy but were just on a high as soon as they got to the Mono. There is always a great atmosphere in this bar, especially at the weekends. Paul went to the bathroom and I was just talking to Ann Marie and Emer, the girls were in great form. Nadine and Christopher went up to the bar to buy another Smirnoff ice for themselves. In the meantime Paul came back and he had bumped into his friend Richard along the way and he was really drunk, but he is hilarious when he has a few drinks in him. He sat down beside us and was talking to everyone and he then went up to the bar and bought a Smirnoff Ice for us all and told us to get the "*drinks inside us quick*". Nadine and Christopher really wanted to go onto the Grill, so we all drank up quickly and made our way to the grill. The Grill was actually really quiet for a Friday night, we stayed in Bellas as club 2000 was empty and everyone seemed to be staying in Bellas. I went to the bar and got a coke and all of the others got a cocktail each. We got seats beside the DJ box, which was a bad idea as we couldn't hear ourselves speak. Emer wanted to go out dancing, so herself and Ann Marie went out to the dance floor. I stayed talking to Nadine, Christopher and Paul. We were just laughing and joking around. I noticed that they were all getting a bit tipsy, also I noticed that they were drinking faster than when they were in the house. Christopher who doesn't usually dance got up and joined the girls; they were hugging him when he joined them. So it was obvious that they too were getting tipsy. Christopher is usually quiet and he was getting really chatty. I looked over to the dance floor and Ann Marie was waving over in our direction to come out to the dance floor. I got up and said it to the others and they too came along. We were having a great time and there was great chart music being played. The boys can't really dance and we were laughing at them, Emer started taking them off and the boys left the dance floor

after a few minutes. They weren't thick with her, they were actually laughing at themselves as well, so they made their way to the bar and I could see that they bought 2 pints and they went back to our seats. After a while we too joined them. Nadine wanted to buy everyone a drink, the others put their orders in but I just asked for a glass of water. Paul told me to get a decent drink like another Smirnoff Ice, but I really didn't want one and said that I had enough for the night. Nadine got the others their drinks and she gave me my pint of water. We sat and relaxed for a while, no one was getting drunk. I noticed that Emer had disappeared, I said this to Ann Marie and she said that Emer met some nice lad when she was coming out of the bathroom and she was up at the bar talking to him and having a drink. There wasn't really anyone out that we recognised, but we were just enjoying each others company. The time was flying it was now nearly two o'clock. The boys wanted to get some food and we joined them. Ann Marie went to tell Emer and Emer introduced her to some fella, so Ann Marie stayed with them for a while. We went on to the take away which is in the night club and stayed there until 2.30am and the lights came on in the clubs and the music stopped. We went back to get the girls but they didn't want to leave, the boys had bought them both a cocktail and they were both in their elements. We made sure that they were going to be ok, but it worked out that Paul knew who the two boys were and he said that they were really nice and decent. We made our way on outside, luckily enough we didn't have to wait too long for a taxi as the nightclub wasn't too packed. Paul flagged one down for us and we all jumped in and went back to our own houses.

## SATURDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> July – Observation 9

I had planned during the week to go out tonight with my friends, with the marches going on in the North a lot of the young people from the North were going to be out in LetterKenny as they didn't want to be in the North for the weekend. Ann Marie and Charlotte called over to my house at 9.30pm. Charlotte is Ann Marie's friend from America, she is 22 years the same age as us and she doesn't really drink. The people in the town where she comes from in America doesn't drink at all and there are no pubs in it, which is quite unusual. I was still getting ready when the girls called, so they came straight up to my room. They sat on my bed talking away, while I was getting ready. Ann Marie said that Nadine wasn't coming out as she had to go out for a meal with other friends, but she said that she would meet us for just one drink. At 10pm my family gave us a lift down the town and they dropped us off at Sr Sarah's pub. When we went in the pub was packed, we knew immediately that we would not get seats but we didn't mind at all. I went up to the bar and I just got a diet 7up, Ann Marie got a Smirnoff Ice and she bought Charlotte a bailey's with milk through it, this is what she usually drinks when she goes out. We stood over beside the cigarette machine and we were just chatting about where we should go clubbing. I suggested that we should go down stairs in Sr Sarah's to the nightclub as its free and apart from that the other night clubs in the town were going to be packed tonight. Ann Marie suggested that we should go make a move and go on down as it might not be too packed. We grabbed our drinks and went on down stairs. Luckily enough it wasn't too packed, there were a few free seats beside the bar so went on over and sat down. There were a few people out dancing and there were loads up at the bar. We were just relaxing and chatting away to Charlotte and she was telling us

all that was happening with her in America. Someone then tapped me on the shoulder, when I turned around it was my brother and his friend Emmett. We were all so happy to see them and we had no idea that they were coming out. Shane said that they just intended coming out for a quiet drink, but Emmett really wanted to stay out for longer but he had no choice but to stay out with him and he started laughing. The boys had already had a few pints, Emmett wanted to buy everyone a drink, so he didn't bother asking, he just took a look at what everyone was drinking and went to the bar and returned with the drinks. Everyone thanked him and took the drinks. He actually got me another diet 7up; I was kind of surprised because usually he would buy me an alcoholic drink. I actually asked him this and he said "*sure you have to be on your best behaviour, after all you have to be in your full sense when you have to observe us*" and he started laughing. This is a typical answer from Emmett, he is always messing and joking around. I noticed that Ann Marie was drinking really slowly, as we all had our drinks finished and she wasn't even half way through hers. She said that she wanted to take it easy as she had to go and practice her driving early the next morning as her driving test was just around the corner. Ann Marie's mobile started ringing and it was Nadine, she was on her way to join us but she said that she was just staying for one drink. Shane went up to the bar and he too bought a round of drinks for everyone without asking. Charlotte said that he "*shouldn't have bothered*", but he said "*sure it's nothing, just a drink*". Nadine then came in and Shane got up immediately and bought her an orange Bacardi Breezer. She thanked him for it and said that she didn't realise that he was going to the bar to get her a drink, he said that "*he didn't want to leave her out*". We were really having good craic, the boys were keeping us all entertained as they were really

tipsy, and all the girls were still sober. Nadine went up to the bar and bought them all a shot of sambuca, they knocked them back and then grabbed their other drinks to get the strong taste out of their mouths. I thought they were really funny. It was now 12.30am and Nadine said that she was going home. Everyone including myself told her to stay for longer, "*Come on Nadine, we will have a great night / you might meet someone nice*".

After a few minutes persuasion she decided to stay. Ann Marie then went up to the bar and bought them the usual round of drinks, Charlotte was now beginning to get really tipsy, this is unusual for her as she is usually on her best behaviour. After this drink Ann Marie too was getting a bit giddy, Charlotte wanted us all to go out dancing. So no one objected and we all went out. It was great fun; we were out for nearly an hour, when Nadine asked me to go to the bar with her to get a glass of water, so I went up with her. Ann Marie and Charlotte followed us too. It was just so hot and stuffy; we just had to get off the dance floor. The boys were still out dancing and they were messing around with some of their other friends that they met up with. Nadine was getting a bit tired and we all sat down for half an hour. The boys then came over to us and said that one of their mates had a free house and they were going to go for a while. They said that we were invited but we didn't want to go. They kept trying to persuade us, but we said no. I said to my brother "*I thought you were going to have a quiet night in*" and he said "*sure I might as well go, just in case I might miss out on something, sure you's might miss out on some fun as well*". We told them to go ahead and they did. Charlotte was feeling really hungry, so we decided to go and get some food in the Four Lanterns which is directly across the road from Sr Sarahs. We went on over and we all got curried chips and Charlotte got a chicken burger as well. She was

talking non stop and she was saying that her head was spinning because of all the drink that was bought for her and she isn't really used to that. We stayed there for half an hour and went out to get a taxi. The street was so packed and the queues were really long for the taxis. Ann Marie rang her Mum and she said that she would come down straight away for us otherwise we could be waiting for a taxi for up to two hours. She picked us up within 5 minutes and she was asking if we had a good night. We said that we did, we had a quiet night for a change, and no one went too mad apart from the boys who were probably just beginning to start their partying for the night.

### **SATURDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> JULY – Observation 10**

Ann Marie rang me on Saturday evening at 7 o'clock to see if I would go out with her and her two brothers Paul who was home from London for the weekend and Christopher, who is the youngest. He is 19. They were going out for a family meal, so I decided that I would meet them in Mc Ginley's bar at 11 o'clock. My uncle gave me a lift down town and dropped me off at the pub. It was really packed. There are two floors, the ground floor is for an older age group and the top floor is for young people. This bar is not as trendy as the other bars that we normally go to. The floors are all wooden, there is no big screen and there is always a band playing live. It took me a few minutes to find my friends; they were sitting upstairs at the back. They all gave me a hug when I went over to them. Paul had already bought me a drink and it was sitting on the table for me, he got me a vodka and red bull. The two boys were drinking pints and Ann Marie was drinking vodka and black. I was chatting away to Paul about London and

Ann Marie and Christopher were talking to each other. Some people got up off the couches, so we moved on over to their seats as it would be more comfortable than sitting on stools. There was a big group of fellas sitting next to us, they were really loud and were cheering and laughing away, they were just out enjoying themselves. Ann Marie went and bought us all a drink, but I told her that I really only wanted a mineral, she said "*are you sure, I would really like to get you another vodka*", I said "*no, Im really ok with a mineral*" and I just smiled and she replied "*sure what ever you want miss Lisa is fine with me*". I sat talking to the boys; they said that they had three pints so far as they were out for their meal beforehand. Paul was saying that it was a pity that none of the lads were able to make it out as they were all working or were away elsewhere. But he said that it was nice to be home for the weekend. Ann Marie came back with the drinks and she sat down beside me, it was only her second drink tonight so far. There seemed to be more and more people coming in, it was really getting noisy so we decided to move to another bar, the Mono which is next door. We put our coats on, everyone was finished their drink at this stage and went next door. There was a really good crowd in the mono, I went up to the bar with the others and I offered to buy a round of drinks, they all got the same again. We got seats over beside the doors we came in; on my way over I bumped into my two cousins Dermott and Patricia. I was chatting to them for a while they were going to The Grill. So they said that they would see me there and they had to go. I sat over beside my friends. The boys were getting a bit tipsy and were eyeing up a lot of the girls, so myself and Ann Marie ignored them for a while! One of Ann Marie's friends was working and she came over and chatted to us for a few minutes, she was really hyper and was actually jumping around. She looked so funny; I have



never before seen anyone so hyper at work before. Paul asked us if we wanted to move onto the grill as it was nearly one o'clock, I could not believe that it was that time already. So we made our way to the Grill, it was actually packed. I had to go to the bathroom, so Ann Marie came along with me and the boys waited for us. When we came out Paul went up to the bar and got us all a drink, he actually bought me a Smirnoff ice this time, I told him that he shouldn't have " *sure I am only home for the weekend, we might as well enjoy ourselves*". People kept walking into us. The majority of them were drunk. We were all having a great time. We finished off our drinks and went out to the dance floor. We only stayed there for 20 minutes as it was so cramped. The boys went off for a walk, it was obvious that they were going to check and see if there were any nice girls about. Myself and Ann Marie went into the take away to get some food. We met a girl in there who we used to go to school with. It was great to see her again and she was having a great night. Ann Marie stayed talking to her and I went for a walk to see if I could find my cousins, I could not see them anywhere because of the crowds. I spotted Paul and Christopher. They were talking to a group of girls, so it didn't take them long to find themselves nice girls, they appeared to be enjoying themselves. I looked at my watch and it was nearly 2.30am, the night just went so fast. I went back and got Ann Marie, she was finishing off her chips and there was some drunken fella talking to her. She looked so relieved to see me coming. She grabbed my hand and said "*come on, we really have to go*". We went outside and walked down the street to get a taxi, we decided to leave the boys as we didn't want to be waiting for them all night! Luckily enough we got a taxi after 5 minutes and we went home.

## SUNDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> JULY – Observation 11

On Sunday night my brother decided that he wanted to go to Sr Sarah's bar as he didn't have the chance to go out over the weekend as he was working. I rang a few of my friends and Nadine was the only one who could make it out. We all decided to meet up in the bar. When we arrived there at 10.30pm, Nadine was waiting for us at the front door along with Joe, my brother's friend. We all made our way in, it was a bit quiet and there was only one floor open. My brother offered to buy the first round of drinks, I just ordered a coke, Nadine got a Bacardi breezer and the two boys got a pint each. Myself and Nadine got seats while the boys were at the bar getting drinks. Nadine was out in Westport the night before, she had a great night of partying and was feeling a bit tired, so she said that she was going to take it easy. She was also telling me that her cousin's friend kept buying them drinks the whole night and she spent hardly any money. It was a cheap night out for them. The boys returned from the bar with our drinks. Nadine starting telling the boys about her night in Westport. Neither of the boys have been out clubbing in Westport before so they said that it sounded so tempting and they wouldn't mind going there some time. There was a good atmosphere in the bar, even though there weren't many people about. No one appeared to be drunk; they were all out having a quiet Sunday drink. Shane and Joe haven't been out together in a long time and they were fairly drinking their pints fast. Joe started telling myself and Nadine some jokes which weren't funny but the boys were in hysterics laughing at them. Joe went up to the bar and bought everyone the same drinks again. He asked me if I wanted something different but I just said that I wanted to stick to my coke. Shane said that he was tempted to go to the Grill, but Joe had to go to work in the morning so they

weren't going to bother. Nadine got up and went to the bathroom, she was gone for a good 20 minutes, when she came back she said that she bumped into a lad that she used to go out with and they were just chatting. The boys looked at her and started laughing, Joe said "*whatever you say Nadine, I bet you were after him again*". She just laughed and ignored them, they kept teasing her for a while but she didn't mind at all. The boys are so funny when they get started. Myself and Nadine were only half through our drinks, when the boys went up and bought a pint each for themselves. They were really in great form tonight. When they came back from the bar they had a shot of tequila each as well. They wanted to buy Nadine one, but she would not let them as she hates the drink so much. They knocked it back really quickly and made sour faces. It really is a rotten drink. Nadine was getting really tired and wanted to go on home. It was nearly 12.15am and she had to go to work the next morning. Joe said that he was going to go as well, he really wanted to stay and Shane was trying to persuade him to but he honestly couldn't because of work the next morning. They both said goodbye and got a taxi home. I stayed with Shane for another half hour until he finished his last pint, he actually drank this lot slower than any of the other pints he had beforehand. He said that he had good craic with Joe and it was a pity that he had work in the morning, but there would be plenty of other nights. We finished off our drinks and Shane wanted to get a burger, so we went to the Four Lanterns and he got his food and then we headed home.

## **PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION FINDINGS**

After carrying out my participant observation over a period of time, it helped to bring a few factors to my attention. There were several different patterns which kept arising throughout the various nights when I was out observing which I thought was very interesting.

### **THE DIFFERENT SETTINGS**

Primarily there were the settings in which my friends drank. I noticed that they were more relaxed and comfortable drinking among their peers rather than in the company of adults. The Easter Saturday night (obs 1) that we were in Ann Marie's house having a few drinks, everyone was drinking and behaving normally, despite the fact that Ann Marie's parents were in the other sitting room. Even though my friends were knocking back their drinks, dancing and messing around, there is absolutely no way that they would behave like this if Ann Marie's parents were present in the same sitting room as us. They would have been on their best behaviour and acted a lot more sensibly. Also the evening that I was in Cians house for his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday (obs 7), I noticed how well behaved his friends were in the company of older adults. This was very unusual, as I have been out with these boys before on several occasions and they are quite a lively group of fellas who are always messing about. It was when we got on the bus to go into town, that I noticed the immediate change in their behaviour. They began drinking a lot faster in comparison to earlier on in the night and they were also getting very loud and very chatty. This is how they normally behave among themselves. Even when the girls were drinking in my house (obs 2) they too were on their best behaviour, as they knew my aunty was in the house. But it was when we left the house that they began to liven up, just like the boys. All of the groups

really enjoyed drinking in the pubs and night clubs without the presence of adults. There was always a great buzz of excitement among them in these settings. This is because they are surrounded by other young people who are behaving in the same way as them. This includes knocking back drinks, having drinking competitions and engaging in silly carry on and joking around. When they go out they like to have fun because in the home not a lot of parents would accept this type of social behaviour from their sons and daughters as they would not be impressed. So it's quite clear that young people feel more at ease drinking with their peers without the presence of adults.

### **REASONS FOR DRINKING**

Out of these various groups of young people, it was more than evident that they liked to drink for enjoyment, they got more relaxed the more that they drank. Drink also gave them confidence in the case of approaching someone from the opposite sex. This was obvious when Nadine and Kate approached a group of boys who they didn't meet before (obs 2). As I already mentioned beforehand, they would not have attempted to do this only for they had been drinking and the drink certainly provided them with courage to do so. They all enjoyed having a laugh while they were drunk. When some young people are drunk, they are only interested in starting fights and maybe engaging in other deviant behaviour. This was not the case within my network of peers, which indicates that not all young people partake in anti social behaviour while under the influence of alcohol. A lot of them are just out having a good time with their peers and mixing and mingling with other people. Friends really do have a big influence on their peers drinking habits; this was blatantly obvious where there are several peers drinking together. As there was a lot of drinking going on; people were usually encouraged to join

in. They would see their peers having a few drinks and as they drunk more and more, they began to have more fun and would subsequently give in and start drinking as well. Knocking back shots and drinks proved to be very popular and it was also another easy way to influence peers to drink and they had a lot of fun doing this. Nadine proved this when she was meant to be taking it easy on Easter Saturday night (obs 1) when she gave in and joined her peers when they were taking a shot "*Girls you have twisted my arm, I'm going to get one as well*". The funny thing is no one said anything to her to get one; she just wanted to join in for some fun and the drink clearly looked tempting to her.

### **PEER INFLUENCE AND SUPPORT FOR DRINKING**

Sometimes the case may arise where a person sees their peer having a drink and they find it so tempting that they too would go and buy the same drink. This episode occurred when Katie saw Kate having a cocktail on Easter Saturday night (obs 1). Cocktails are always presented really well with their umbrellas and fruit and are always served in fancy glasses. Katie could not resist buying a cocktail when she saw Kate drinking one she had to go and buy one, as she could not resist the temptation.

I also noticed that the boys played a big role in influencing the girls to drink, this actually happened a few times. Take for instance Shane and Paul wanted to buy all the girls drink on Easter Saturday night (obs 1), even though both Ann Marie and Nadine genuinely didn't want another drink, they had to give into the boys. The two boys were really being polite and they presumed that the girls too were being polite by saying no. The boys did not put fierce pressure on the girls to drink, the two girls were laughing when they said that they would take a drink. It

was the same case with Paul Roses boyfriend on our last college night out (obs 3) when he was insisting in buying the boys and girls their first drinks in the bar, he too was being generous. Both Joe and Shane did the same on Cians birthday (obs7); they too went and bought drinks even though some of us didn't want another drink. When I asked them about this, they said that they really didn't think about it and just bought the drinks for everyone and didn't want to leave anyone out.

The Girls too played a part in influencing their friends to drink but they did were not as big an influence as the boys. There were times when some of the girls bought drinks for their peers despite the fact that they said that they didn't want a drink. No one had a real serious or stern face on them when they said that they didn't want a drink, it was always a smile on the face and a polite no. So this is why they went ahead and bought the drinks. This happened with me on a few occasions when the girls bought me drinks, but I honestly didn't mind, as I knew that they were not putting real pressure on me to drink them (obs 2,5) Both the boys and girls were all just enjoying themselves and they wanted everyone who was out to join in and have just as much fun as they were having. An example of this was the night that I wasn't feeling well in the mono and my friends really wanted me to join them in the Grill (obs 5). It was Rosin who went off and bought me the brandy; this was her way of enticing me to go to the Grill. She thought that if I had the drink I would have a sudden change of mind. Usually this technique would work for a lot of people and it would have worked on me only for I wasn't feeling well. So there was a lot of buying of unwanted drinks going on, there excuses made for buying these drinks – birthdays, thank you's (obs 2,7)

These were bought out of politeness and it was also used as a good excuse for getting drunk.

### **DIFFERENCES IN BOYS AND GIRLS DRINKING**

Another thing that I noted was that the boys drank a lot more than the girls. They are known to have a higher tolerance than girls in the first place. Even though the girls are influenced more than boys when it comes to peer drinking I couldn't help but notice that the boys were a big influence on each other when there was a big group of them out drinking (obs 1,3,7,11) They were easily influenced by each others drinking patterns. None of them had to be forced to participate in the drinking competitions and they were very proud of how well they could hold their drink, as they had previously classified the girls as being "*lightweights*". They were inclined to go on rounds, which meant that everyone in the group would end up taking a drink at some stage in the night (obs  $\Rightarrow$  Cians birthday.) Even when Shane and Paul were on their way to the grill with Laura they could not resist but go to the pub with two of their friends who they hadn't seen in a long time (obs 1). They had only planned to have one drink, which resulted in them having three pints. Also the night that Emmett and Shane were in Sr Sarahs (obs 9), Shane had no intentions of going clubbing. He just thought that they were going out for a quiet drink. But he did not just end up going to a club but he also ventured on to a party. The boys are inclined to go on big drinking sessions when they got together and Cian's birthday was the perfect example (obs7). The boys were buying rounds of drinks, they even had a drinking competition and as the night went on they got really hyper and giddy. So in this way no one was left out and would have ended up taking a drink some stage through the night.



## **DRINKING IN PAIRS**

On Easter Saturday night (obs 1), I noticed that when Ann Marie and Kate who were drinking in pairs and Aishling and Katie who were also drinking in pairs had an influence on each other's drinking. As both Kate and Ann Marie were sharing a bottle of wine, they kept topping up each other's glass all the time just like Aishling and Katie who were both drinking vodka. This went on the whole time that we were in Ann Marie's house; they would top up each other's glass without asking the person if they wanted another drink. I just thought that this simple observation played a part in influencing their peer to drink, even though no one complained about getting a top up, I thought that maybe if they weren't having the same drink maybe they might not have drunk as much. When young people are in a bar or nightclub and are surrounded by not just their peers but other young people who are drinking and are clearly having a great time can influence them to take a drink.

## **THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF DRINKING**

The whole significance of drinking for young people is all revolved around the whole aspect of enjoyment and fun. Throughout the different observations that I have carried out a clear picture kept emerging based on the meaning that drink had for young people. Most young people are concerned with having fun and they have a strong belief that alcohol does contribute to having more fun. They also see it as a positive way of bonding with each other as well as other people. They like to be accepted by others, so the more that they have to drink the more confident, chatty, and outgoing they will be. This kept emerging nearly every night that I was out, take for instance, Easter Saturday night (obs 1) in Ann Marie's house, Katie and Aishling got up and started dancing when the music

was put on. They were quite tipsy at this stage and as a result they were getting really lively, even though they looked so funny dancing away and we were all laughing at them, they were having fun knowing that they were providing entertainment for us. Even the night Charlotte the American girl was out with us (obs 9), after a few drinks she was talking non stop and was really making the effort of trying to bond with our group, so the drink was obviously giving her a boost of confidence. It also helps some people to express feelings, I witnessed this when I was queuing for the toilets one night and I overheard a girl telling her friend how much she liked some fella (obs 4). This girl did have a good few drinks in her and it was helping her to express how she felt about someone and maybe she was trying to build up her confidence to approach him later on. Alcohol helps them to have a better night out and it improves a social event. Every night out, nearly everyone was drinking except for the odd night, the more that they drank the more fun they would have and it always resulted in a great night out. Examples of some of these nights were our last college night out (obs 3) and Cian's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday (obs 7). Everyone enjoyed themselves more as the night went on and had good craic, especially when the boys were getting tipsy and drunk because they were always messing around and acting silly.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overall it was more than evident that young people see alcohol consumption as a normal part of life. Drinking was a very popular activity among the young people whom I observed and they derived a lot of pleasure from it. My findings also demonstrated that not all young people participate in anti social behaviour, although some adults firmly believe that this is the type of behaviour that young people engage in while under the influence of alcohol.

This was evident in the various nights out like Easter Weekend (obs 1 &2), when everyone was just interested in having a laugh and were enjoying themselves. My findings also supported my literature review, which stated that young people feel more relaxed drinking alcohol with their peers rather than in the company of older adults (Parker, Aldridge and Measham, 1998). This was more than obvious on Cian's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday (obs 7) as well as the night that the girls were drinking in my house (obs 2). Without the presence of adults they drank more and drank at a faster pace. Most of them did follow their friends drinking patterns, especially when drinks were being bought in rounds, this occurred on our last college night out (obs 3) and also in drinking competitions (obs 1,7). Sometimes some young people who have no confidence feel that they have to drink in order to be accepted into a group of peers. This was something that I didn't discover in my findings. No one was ever put under pressure to drink by anyone at any stage. There were nights that I didn't bother having any alcoholic drinks (obs 10&11) and no one ever gave me a hard time or made me feel uncomfortable. Situations did occur when they wanted me to have a drink, take for instance (obs 5). Roisin was really trying to influence me to drink by buying me a brandy. But she did this out of politeness, just like Katie bought me a drink to say Thank You on Easter Sunday

night (obs 2). It really depends on the type of peers with whom a young person associates. Some peers may be harsh and put pressure on a peer to take a drink by making fun of them and totally excluding them from a group, which is very unfair. While this does happen in some cases, It did not once appear in my observation findings. These findings indicates that not all young people feel intimidated to drink in order to win approval from their peers and to remain within the network. Another important fact that was clarified is that boys do consume more alcohol than girls. Every night that I was observing, I couldn't help but notice that the boys did drink faster and had more to drink in comparison to the girls (obs 1,3,7,11). They were just enjoying their get togethers and were always in great form when they where out. They really did enjoy keeping up with their friends' drinking patterns and liked the fact that they could consume more alcohol than the girls whom they regarded as "lightweights" (obs 1). There was always a lot of heavy drinking taking place when groups of young people got together, they were an influence on each others drinking patterns (obs 1,2,3).

When young people do take a few drinks, they do expect to get a good buzz, feel more relaxed and confident and get really giddy. This happened every night out (obs 1 – 11). No one misbehaved at all but was just having a great time. The various drink settings certainly did prove to have an impact on young people's drinking behaviour. There is always a lively atmosphere in the bars and clubs that they go to as they are packed with other boys and girls of a similar age, all having a great time as there are no adults or parents to disapprove of their drinking behaviour.

My findings also supported Becker's theory about drinking for pleasure and enjoyment. He firmly believes that people like to drink for pleasure and

enjoyment, provided that they drink in moderation. For him the term pleasure highlights the noncompulsive and casual character of the drinking behaviour. Young people have always been curious about drinking and they have seen how other people behave while drinking. My findings also clarified that not every young person gets drunk every night that they go out with their peers (obs 2,10,11). Even the nights where there was a lot of heaving drinking going on – (obs 1,2,3,7) no one got involved in any anti social behaviour, like fights. Even though most of them were either tipsy or happily drunk, they were just enjoying themselves with their closest peers. They certainly did let go and felt relaxed during their drinking experiences, by doing this they did appreciate the effect the alcohol had on them as they always had great nights out. So by following this process that Becker believes in – drinking in moderation and appreciating the effects of alcohol, young people will therefore enjoy this experience which was made evident in my findings. So it's evident that the whole significance of drinking is based around the whole aspect of enjoyment and pleasure. When they go out with their peers, they just all want to have fun and the alcohol obviously contributed to them having more fun. This was a form of individual as well as communal pleasure. When every person goes on a night out with friends they want to experience pleasure on an individual basis as well as on a communal basis. If they are with friends who are having a great time and really enjoying themselves, they too want to experience this and therefore join in. It's better to see people deriving pleasure from the effects of alcohol rather than having bad experiences. If someone in a group has bad experiences, it will more than likely affect other People in the group and this could result in them not enjoying themselves ruining

and their night. This is what Becker was trying to emphasise – that's its so important that we learn how to handle our drink and appreciate its effects. The major conclusion from my study are, therefore that Peer Influence is the biggest factor which encourages young people to drink, they enjoy each others company and feel relaxed drinking with their peers in the various setting like pubs, clubs and house parties rather than in the company of older adults. It was also made evident that they derive a lot of pleasure and enjoyment from drinking and just like to have fun. These findings are consistent with Becker's theory of taking marihuana for pleasure. In this study, of course, the young people were taking alcohol for pleasure. The detailed notes from the observation sessions (1-11) give ample support for this conclusion, that that drinking among this network of young people was focussed on fun and enjoyment at an individual and communal level.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY.

- (1) Becoming A Marihuana User,  
Howard S Becker,  
American Journal Of Sociology: 54 235 – 242, 1953.
- (2) Outsiders,  
Studies In Sociology Of Deviance,  
Howard S Becker,  
Free Press 1966/1973.
- (3) Youth, Alcohol and Social Policy,  
Howard T Blane & Morris E Chafetz,  
Plenum Press, New York 1979.
- (4) In The Field,  
An Introduction To Field Research,  
Robert G Burgess,  
Routledge 1995.
- (5) Principles of Criminolgy,  
Sutherland, Cressley & Luckenbill,  
General Hall Inc, 1992.
- (6) Ethnographic Research,  
A Guide to General Conduct,  
R F Ellen,  
Academic Press, 1984.

(7) Ethnography,

Step by Step,

David M Fetterman,

Sage publications, 1989.

(8) Young Drinkers,

A Report To The Churches in Ireland,

Report of the Working Party on Tenance Drinking,

Eric Gallagher & Robert Murphy, 1974.

(9) The Labelling Of Deviance,

Evaluating a Perspective,

Walter R Grove,

Sage Publications 1975.

(10) The Development Maintenance of Smoking, Drinking and other

Drug use among Dublin Post Primary Pupils,

Joel W Grube & Mark Morgan,

The Economic and Social Research Institute 1990.

(11) Ethnography,

Principles In Practice,

Martyn Hammersley & Paul Atkinson,

Routledge 1983.

(12) Adolescent Substance Abuse,

A guide To Prevention and Treatment,

Richard Isral and Mark Singer,



The Hawthorn Press 1983.

(13) Alcohol Related Problems,

Room For Manoeuvre,

Neville Krasner, J S Madden & Robin J Walker,

John Wiley & Sons 1984.

(14) Drug Use and Misuse,

Stephen A Maisto, Mark Galizo & Gerard J Connors,

Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc 1991.

(15) Social Science and Medicine An International Journal (vol 47,

No 10),

Sally Mac Intyre,

Pergamon,

1989, Elsevir Science ltd.

(16) Women Under the Influence,

Brigid Mc Conville,

Virago, 1983.

(17) Social Research Methods,

Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches,

W Laurence Neuman, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition,

Allyn and Bacon 2000.

(18) The Young Drinkers,

A Cross National Study of Social and Cultural Influences,

Joyce O' Connor,

Tavistock Publications 1978.

(19) **Illegal Leisure,**

The Normalisation of Adolescent Recreational Drug Use,

Howard Parker, Judith Aldridge and Fiona Measham,

Adolescence and Society Series,

Routledge 1998.

(20) **William Foot Whyte & Kathleen King Whyte,**

Learning from the Field,

A Guide from Experience,

Sage Publications, 1984.